

Sharing secrets: Former and present CIA chiefs Helms (left) and Colby

A Peek in the CIA's Closet

Never before had the Central Intelligence Agency raised so dramatically its own traditional curtain of secrecy. In a 45-page report to a Senate subcommittee, CIA director William E. Colby last week confirmed that over the years the agency had infiltrated domestic protest groups, carried out surveillance of U.S. citizens, read other people's mail and amassed files on at least 10,000 American "dissidents." Colby denied that these and other CIA operations added up to a "massive, illegal domestic intelligence operation," as first charged last month by *The New York Times*. But his report seemed to substantiate so many basic elements of the original story—if not all the adjectives—that it stiffened Congressional resolve to launch a thorough investigation of its own.

Colby's statement left a maze of unanswered questions, but they were not the only prods to further investigation. Two former CIA directors also testified about the domestic spying charges last week—and also raised more suspicions. Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger, Colby's immediate predecessor at the agency, emerged from the first session of Vice President Rockefeller's blue-ribbon commission of inquiry to say there were a number of "misdemeanors" involved (he later modified that description to acts that were simply "regrettable . . . inappropriate"). More intriguing was the testimony of former CIA chief Richard M. Helms, now U.S. ambassador to Iran, who seemed to contradict several of his own past sworn statements on the subject.

Still, the big news was clearly Colby's report, released after his appearance before the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on intelligence. Like the original allegations by *Times* reporter Sey-

mour M. Hersh, the statement was vague on many points: a passing reference, for example, to one "excessive effort to identify possible 'threats' to the agency's security from dissident elements." But if Colby had not hauled out all the skeletons his agency had to hide, he had at least covered himself by pointing out the closets in which they hung. By making public some of what he had called the CIA's "bad secrets" (*Newsweek*, Jan. 20), Colby also put himself in a stronger position to request new legislation barring unauthorized disclosure of "good secrets"—about ongoing

THE SPOOKS WHO

CIA director William Colby isn't the only one telling agency secrets these days. Indeed, part of Colby's presentation to Congress last week was a plea for stronger laws to stop the spurt of tell-all books and articles by former CIA agents. Last year the agency was only partially successful in censoring a book entitled "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," co-authored by ex-agent Victor Marchetti. Now the CIA faces an even more difficult battle with a onetime spook who has gone outside the country to publish his exposé.

The book is called "Inside the Company: CIA Diary," and ex-agent Philip Agee avoided all attempts at prior censorship by having it published first in Great Britain.* Now an American edition is planned by Straight Arrow Press, a publishing house connected with *Rolling Stone* magazine, and the CIA brass is

*640 pages. Penguin Books. London.



Wally McNamee—Newsweek

estify about domestic operations

agency operations—such as occurred in several recent articles and books by former CIA agents (box). His report made these key admissions:

- The CIA ran at least two operations in which agents were “inserted” inside domestic dissident circles. In 1967 and 1968, Colby said, ten CIA agents infiltrated antiwar organizations in Washington, D.C., for the ostensible purpose of gathering intelligence on demonstrations or break-ins that might “endanger CIA personnel, facilities and information.” Beginning in 1970, similar infiltration of “dissident” circles around the country was begun by about a dozen CIA operatives, pursuant to growing White House concern over foreign links to domestic protest. Officially, the agents

were inserted “to establish their credentials for operations abroad.”

- In the course of the infiltration programs, the agency’s counterintelligence section established files on 10,000 citizens—the same figure cited by Hersh—and passed data to police and the FBI.

- From 1953 until February 1973, the CIA conducted several programs to read mail between citizens of the U.S. and two Communist countries (Russia and China, according to a separate, secret memorandum).

- Colby also reported a number of programs involving physical surveillance, break-ins and wiretaps, most of which were aimed at CIA personnel suspected of breaching security. But the surveillance also extended to five private citizens suspected of receiving classified information. The secret memo identified two of them as columnist Jack Anderson and Washington Post reporter Michael Getler. In addition, Colby said that one longtime CIA source in 1971 passed word of an alleged plot to kill Vice President Spiro Agnew and kidnap CIA Director Helms, and that this led to the surveillance of an unspecified number of Americans in two U.S. cities.

For all his unprecedented public candor, Colby left a number of loose ends. He did not explain why it took so long to stop or dismantle some of the programs after agency officials realized their questionable nature. Colby also said that the agency had developed other files on U.S. citizens “which do appear questionable under CIA’s authority” and cited as one motive for compiling them the belief that such lists “could identify later applicants or contacts who might be dangerous to the agency’s security.” The implication was that left-wing activists may have come under scrutiny mere-

ly because they might someday end up on the agency’s doorstep.

The agency’s excesses were a matter of human error, not evil intent, Colby seemed eager to stress. “Any steps over the line . . . were few and far between,” he said, “and, if wrong, stemmed from a misconception of the extent of the CIA’s authority.” A predictably more aggressive tack was taken by former CIA boss Helms, the man in charge of the agency when most of the alleged improprieties occurred. Helms said he remained proud of his 30 years with the agency and he denounced the press for making “irresponsible attacks” and allegations that, he contended, “remain unsupported.”

Upsurge: But Helms also appeared to contradict earlier testimony by himself and others. During his confirmation hearings in 1973, he denied point-blank that the CIA had engaged in domestic surveillance during the antiwar frenzy of 1969 and 1970. Last week, Helms said that the CIA had operated on the domestic front as far back as the early ‘60s “in response to the express concern of the President.” He cited the “sudden and quite extraordinary upsurge of extreme radicalism in this country” that began then and said CIA involvement was proper because “evidence appeared of [the dissidents’] involvement with subversive elements abroad.” That did not jibe, however, with numerous reports that the CIA was never able to establish a significant link between domestic dissidents and foreign powers.

Helms’s testimony, and Colby’s, will be the subject of further investigation by Congress, but not until some procedural wrangles are settled. On the House side, Michigan Democrat Lucien Nedzi had to postpone his scheduled hearings on the CIA pending the selection of a

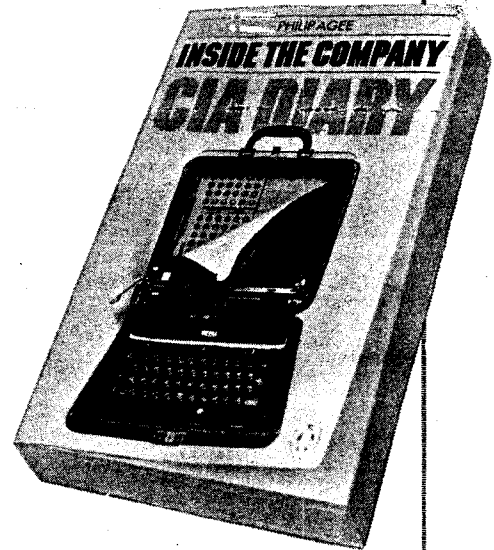
RUSH INTO PRINT

more than a little concerned. “Nobody could doubt Agee’s authenticity,” said one former CIA operative, and the book’s accuracy apparently extends right down to the ferocious wood ticks that infest “Isolation,” the secret CIA training base at Camp Peary, Va. More important, the book names dozens of undercover agents and collaborators whom Agee encountered during eight years in Latin America—including three Presidents of Mexico and a leader of the Communist Party in Ecuador. “I think it’s terrible, frankly,” Colby told NEWSWEEK in an interview two weeks ago, “because this puts people’s reputations in bad shape, it puts people in physical danger.”

Agee sees it differently, of course. A 1956 graduate of Notre Dame, he began his twelve-year CIA career as a conservative Roman Catholic, but eventually came to view himself as a revolutionary socialist whose mission was to warn the

world about CIA machinations abroad. “Reforms of the FBI and the CIA, even removal of the President from office, cannot remove the problem,” he writes. “American capitalism, based as it is on exploitation of the poor, with its fundamental motivation in personal greed, simply cannot survive without force—without a secret police force.” And to buttress that shrill argument, Agee lists a variety of U.S. organizations—from the AFL-CIO to New York’s First National City Bank to the International Police Academy in Washington, D.C.—that he claims are financed, controlled or influenced by the CIA.

Disclosures such as Agee’s, Colby told Congress last week, are not subject to criminal penalties under existing law unless “made to a foreigner or . . . with an intent to injure the United States . . . The irony,” Colby added, “is that effective criminal penalties do exist for unauthorized disclosure of an income-tax return, patent information or crop statistics”—but not for the darkest secrets of the nation’s most secret service.



Agee’s book: Bad for the ‘company’



Coleman: Detached but determined

chairman for his panel's parent committee, Armed Services. In the Senate, many Democrats wanted to entrust the investigation to a Watergate-style select committee with a broad, two-year franchise that could extend beyond the CIA to other organizations, such as the FBI, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency.

Caucus: First, however, Senate liberals had to wrest the inquiry from the "old boys" who have been the CIA's sympathetic watchdogs for years. At a caucus last week, Sen. Stuart Symington of Missouri forced "old boy" John Stennis of Mississippi to admit that he had not known about CIA domestic operations—or intervention in Chile. (Another "old boy," Mississippi's James Eastland, drew incredulous gasps by thundering: "What's wrong with overthrowing the government in Chile? It was a Commie government, wasn't it?") In the end, a select committee seemed assured, perhaps with Stennis in the chair—but not in full control of the investigation.

Judging from Colby's public and private statements, the CIA brass hoped that the pending investigations would clear the air and restore confidence in their agency. More broadly, the CIA chiefs wanted to persuade Congress and the public of the agency's continuing need for secrecy. Among those with a conspiratorial turn of mind, there was a growing suspicion that Colby or someone very close to him may have given Hersh the bones of his original story to achieve those objectives. Whether that was true or not, the CIA remained in a perilous position. Colby's tantalizingly vague testimony last week seemed to whet the investigators' appetites, and it could lead to more embarrassing disclosures in the months ahead.

THE CABINET: A Quiet Activist

After months of delay, Gerald Ford finally began to replace the Nixon holdovers in his Cabinet last week. As expected, he formally nominated Edward Levi to be Attorney General, apparently having persuaded balky conservatives on the Senate Judiciary Committee to accept the University of Chicago president. Ford also seemed to be on the verge of naming his best labor mediator, W.J. Usery, to replace pistol-packing Peter Brennan as Labor Secretary. And for Secretary of Transportation, he nominated William Thaddeus Coleman Jr., senior partner in a prestigious Philadelphia law firm and president of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. If confirmed by the Senate, Coleman will become the second black to hold Cabinet rank.*

His specialty is transportation law, and his style is scholarly restraint, but the 54-year-old Coleman has long been a quiet champion of civil rights. In 1948, he was selected by Justice Felix Frankfurter to become the Supreme Court's first black law clerk, sharing the duties with Harvard Law classmate Elliot Richardson. "He had a deep determination to redress the wrong of segregation," says Richardson, who is godfather to one of Coleman's three children, "but a remarkable degree of balance and detachment." Those qualities were useful in later years, when Coleman helped draft the brief that led to the landmark Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation, argued the first anti-miscegenation case and defended civil-rights marchers.

Reject: At the same time, Coleman carved out a career for himself in the top echelons of corporate law. In 1954 he refused an offer from the Philadelphia district attorney, Richardson Dilworth, to be a token black assistant D.A. and instead took a job in Dilworth's law firm. There he rose to senior partner and represented the city in mass-transit matters. He became a director of several corporations, including Pan American World Airways (he will resign from those posts upon confirmation). He worked part-time under four Presidents, including a stint with Gerald Ford on the Warren commission, and was a leading contender for the post of special Watergate prosecutor. Often mentioned as a potential Supreme Court Justice, he had fully intended to reject a seat in the Ford Cab-

*The first was Robert Weaver, who served as Housing and Urban Development Secretary in the Johnson Administration from 1966 to 1968.

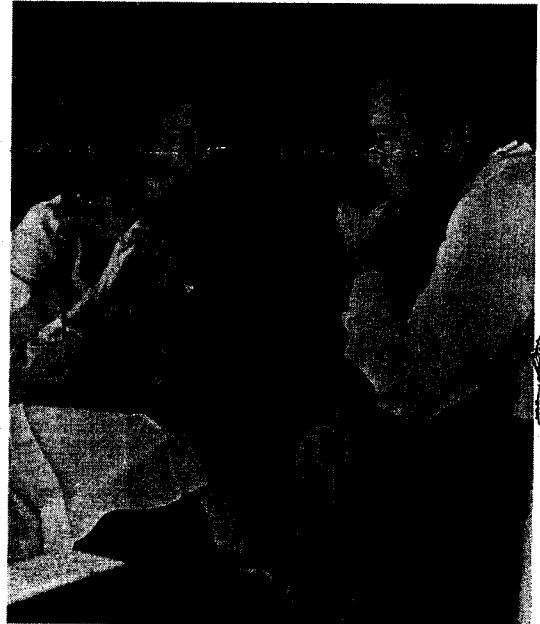
net, but as a lifelong Republican, he found the President "so persuasive that I couldn't say no."

Coleman's talents will be put to the test at Transportation. He may have to recommend that the government bail out troubled Pan Am—or let it go under. He will have to grapple with the bankrupt northeastern railroads. And he will have to juggle the tradeoffs between automobile safety, fuel efficiency and control of emissions. As the Administration's most visible black, he also will be called upon to serve as advocate for civil-rights leaders who want an intermediary with Ford. Coleman may well be reluctant to intercede in matters outside his own department. But as it always has, history may leave him little choice.

TEXAS: Boss Lady

Legend has it that the State of Texas grows big men who do things in a big way. Rumor has it, however, that the state's current big man is really no bigger than the little woman who almost never leaves his side.

Janey Briscoe, people say, is really the governor of Texas—her husband, Dolph, just happens to have his name on the door. People say that because Janey has been known to stay in the governor's office all day and go over his mail in bed at night. She sits in on political confabs and interviews with reporters, and on her rare absences from hubby's side, she spends hours monitoring sessions of the legislature. "Everytime I look up, she'll be sitting in the gallery," says one Republican state senator, "knitting and



Janey and Dolph: Who's in charge here?

D. Pounds

Newsweek



Schlesinger aboard U.S. tank in Germany: Is intervention really feasible?

strategy is based on brute strength, and to support that it has grown a massive logistical tail. A five-division force is roughly half the size of what the U.S. sent to Vietnam—and with support troops it could well total a quarter million men. It is inconceivable that so large an army could be secretly mobilized, much less moved halfway around the world for a surprise attack. Given the Soviet Union's spy satellites, air reconnaissance and Indian Ocean fleet, it is certain any major U.S. task force would be detected thousands of miles from its objective.

Hormuz: Even if secrecy could be achieved, military analysts say, a U.S. force would tip its hand anyway by sailing through the 22-mile-wide Strait of Hormuz at the gulf's mouth many hours before a landing. Surprise is not all that might be lost there. Iran's modern 280,000-man armed forces occupy one side of the strait and three islands in its channel. In a war, the Shah's artillery, or even ships sunk by Arab saboteurs, could seal Hormuz, trapping a U.S. fleet inside. U.S. carriers could stand to sea outside the gulf—but that would leave their planes at maximum range from the action and force costly extra flying and vulnerable air-to-air refueling.

Most invasion scenarios also presume Soviet neutrality, but the Russians have been driving hard to acquire influence in the Mideast, and they could lose it all in an instant if they failed to support the Arabs in a war. Seven Russian airborne divisions could be moved to Iraq within a week of the first warning. That, in turn, would confront the U.S. with the unpalatable alternatives of risking nuclear war or backing down.

So long as the Russians stayed out, there is no doubt the U.S. could defeat any combination of Muslim armies. Still, Pentagon strategists point out, that would

leave a major question unanswered: What would the U.S. do next? It is certain that an invasion would radicalize the Arabs, who have shown themselves increasingly adept at guerrilla war. The U.S. would face not months but years of armed occupation, the governance of a hostile population and the defense of oil installations tremendously vulnerable to sabotage. The prospect, in short, is a quagmire even deeper and more ruinous than the one in Vietnam from which the U.S. only recently withdrew, and that is something U.S. policymakers would contemplate only if it seemed a question of national life or death.

INTELLIGENCE:

Who's Got the Secrets?

The Central Intelligence Agency duty officer in Bonn studied the draft cable on his desk. It was addressed to the CIA's headquarters in Langley, Va., and its language was a bit pungent. Ordinarily the agent would have winked, coded it and sent it on. Last week, however, he penciled out the billingsgate and returned the draft to the spy who had written it. "I've fixed it," he reported, "so that it would look better on the front page of *The New York Times*."

As that remark indicates, the secret life of American spies abroad isn't so secret any more. With the press, Congress and the Rockefeller commission all threatening to throw klieg lights on their murky operations, CIA agents are trying to keep an even lower profile than usual. "There are times you feel the only ones left you can talk to are the KGB," says one frustrated agent in Western Europe. Last week, however, Bonn bureau chief Milan J. Kubic managed to interview one of "The Company's" senior officers.

Some comments by a spy in distress:

What's happening to the CIA is a demoralization of the old hands, who realize that they can't count on protection in Washington. There has been no order to reduce our activities, but I find myself more cautious. Suppose we tried to enlist a Czech official as a spy and Prague made a big public fuss. In today's atmosphere, I don't feel I have the support I would have had five years ago—so I don't do it. The question we're asking ourselves is, why can't anybody restore the respectability of our profession? The agency is on the verge of coming apart.

Our strength lies in talking to people who tell us things on a strictly confidential basis. Now, suppose I go to the West German FBI and ask them for a tracer on some prominent German, and they have reason to think that the information will show up the next week in *NEWSWEEK*. How much do you think they will tell me?

Suppose we go through the luggage of an American radical in a Paris hotel. Are we violating his constitutional rights? And if we don't do it, can we still keep abreast of the KGB, which is as aggressive as ever, and which still regards the U.S. as the prime enemy? I'm afraid that we're headed for an era when I'll be told to catch a spy but I'll be denied the means to catch him. It all really boils down to the question of whether an agency like ours can exist in a democratic society. [CIA director William] Colby still thinks so, but I for one doubt it.

[Young and talented agents] are just beginning to enter the service again—after the recruitment drought of the radical late '60s. One of the older hands in the Bonn station has taken it upon himself to collect all of the recent critical articles about the CIA and to circulate them among the young newcomers. It's much better to bring the whole business out in the open so they don't keep these disturbing questions to themselves and their wives. We're finally getting some first-class talent again. It would be a real blow to lose it.

FRANCE:

The Smoking Tower

The plot could have come straight out of Balzac. For more than two years, the eccentric Baron de Portal and his family, whose defiant motto is "We Are Armed for Vengeance," holed up in their dilapidated 30-room manor house in the foothills of the French Pyrenees. With legal writs and shotguns, they staved off all attempts to evict them from the land their family had held since 1672. Two weeks ago, after 22-year-old Baron Jean-Louis de Portal took a pot shot at a pair of farmers, police stormed the house, shot the baron to death in a battle—and