

The Central Intelligence Agency is the subject of yet another media and political feeding frenzy. It is a familiar experience, from the post-Bay of Pigs period to the Ramparts disclosures of 1967 to the mid-1970s investigations to Iran-contra. As usual, the air is full of proposals to dissolve the agency, reorganize it according to anyone's favorite wiring diagram and punish its errant operatives. Outside reporters assert that inside morale has reached a "new low," a phrase that has been heard many times.

Does the agency have problems? Absolutely. Are they such that its existence is in question? No. Some perspective on its problems does not eliminate them, but it can at least bring them into proportion with other problems of government and society.

In the 40-odd years since its founding in 1947, CIA has had the massive total of three traitors who served the Soviet Union, Aldrich Ames, Edward Lee-Howard and William P. Kampiles. Terrible, but perhaps not so bad in comparison with the traitors from our military and allied services, and certainly nothing like the flood of defectors from KGB and GRU (the Soviet military intelligence agency) over the years. Ames revealed something like 10 Soviet citizens who were in secret cooperation with the CIA and who were subsequently punished. My initial reaction to this, beyond obvious dismay and anger, was some satisfaction that the intensive and difficult efforts of the agency over the years against the fearsome discipline of the KGB had produced such a number, with no clarification whether it was the total or a portion of the total.

It is also popular to complain that the CIA did not foretell the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. This criticism passes by the huge contribution made by Mikhail Gorbachev, who refused to suppress the explosion of Eastern Europe as his predecessor Leonid Brezhnev certainly would have done. CIA knew full well that the Soviet Union produced lousy shoes for its population—it also knew that it produced excellent weapons for its forces, which were pointed at us and our allies and primarily concerned us.

Congressional criticism has also been levied at James Woolsey, the new director of Central Intelligence, who walked into a buzz saw of problems for which he bore no responsibility. He and I are by no means close—I have had one lunch with him since his appointment. But I think he has handled himself with skill and integrity. He first tried to bring the problems of the agency into some perspective (being

criticized as being defensive about it) to generate loyalty among its employees for so doing. This accomplished, and properly so, he has indicated that he will be moving to change the fraternal ethos of the agency and impart a sharper discipline. He is right, and as a graduate of the fraternity, I can say the weaknesses he identifies existed.

The reason they did will be understandable to members of any elite corps responding to the nation's or the community's defense—military, police, firefighters or intelligence officers. A bonding does take place among those who share dangers and sacrifice, physical and moral, and we do try to help our fellow officers through personal and other problems without immediately denouncing their failings.

In more than one case during my career in the field and in Langley, I was slow to act against officers who were obviously failing to meet our disciplinary

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standards despite repeated interviews in which I tried to edge them gently toward a dignified exit or fruitlessly sought their acknowledgment of an alcohol problem. But in each case I was aware that they had made a major contribution to our nation in better days, and I tried to allow their careers to end on the positive note they deserved. Loyalty down is as important as loyalty up, if a hard and risky service's morale is to be maintained.

Will there be changes? Yes, and there should be. I approach the prescription of these with some diffidence, because if I can be so smart today I wonder why I did not insist on full financial disclosure by CIA employees when I was there. But clearly the end of the Cold War will bring retargeting, some budgetary savings of the high-cost technology and covert actions that were necessary then and plain efforts to build congressional and public confidence. But we can also ask for some calming of the frenzy so that these tasks may be done rationally. Perhaps the remark in the Outlook section July 24 by one of CIA's most knowledgeable critics, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, is appropriate: "The CIA will be with us half a century from now."

The writer was director of Central Intelligence from 1973 to 1976.

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The CIA: Everybody's Favorite Scapegoat

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