

William E. Colby

'Professional's Professional'

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"Call Helms and tell him to give Colby to Komer," London Johnson barked at his national security adviser, Walt W. Rostow, one day in the fall of 1967.

The Colby to whom the late President referred was William E. Colby, the professional who was nominated by President Nixon yesterday as new director of the Central Intelligence Agency to replace short-tenure James H. Schlesinger.

The peremptory call from President Johnson to Rostow was made in the midst of a conversation between the President and his chief pacification adviser in South Vietnam, Robert W. Komer. "What do you need," the President insistently asked Komer.

"I want a guy I can train as a successor," Komer responded. "I've got my eye on Bill Colby at the CIA."

Former CIA Director Rich and Mr. Helms exploded when he learned of the unorthodox manner by which Komer had instigated the Presidential demand for Colby's services. Komer recalled in an interview yesterday.

his chief. In fact he told me: "You know, I would have given you Colby if I had had it."

"The professional's professional" was one admiring characterization of Colby.

"The complete" meant Colby was the more qualified description of an ex-foreign service officer who knew Colby during his last years of service in the Vietnam war. "He has lived his whole life in the clandestine service, and he came up through the ranks."

Stewart Alsop once wrote of the dichotomy within the Central Intelligence Agency as between the Hold Easters and the Proud Pro-fessionals. The first group was comprised of tweedy Crotonians with some money, social position and a touch of Anglophilia. They reigned in the pre-Bay of Pigs era.

In the second category were the professional intelligence men—specialists and technicians—who made their way on merit alone upward through the anonymous bureaucracy at Langley.

William E. Colby represents the triumph of the Professional. He is a man of medium height and unassuming dress. His face is a little taller, he would look like a third

Bundy brother" commented a Senate student of foreign affairs.

Most of his professional life has been spent on the dark side of the intelligence world, the large group of plans, known in the highest echelons as the "Special Activities" of the Department of Defense.

He was first in the field when, in 1946, he was named as chief of the Army's Special Activities Division. He worked in the Office of the Chief of Staff, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the State Department. He was the most estimable of credentials for a congressman who would make his career in the intelligence service.

Colby parachuted behind Nazi lines in France to work with the maquis and into northern Norway to blow up railway lines supplying German reinforcements.

But the centerpiece of his career was Vietnam, where he arrived in 1959 as "first secretary"—so described yesterday by a CIA spokesman—of the American embassy. Actually, he was well known in Saigon those days.

Colby was the CIA's station chief in South Vietnam and it was during this period that his long association with the war was first forged.

That was parhiment as the time several years before the big D.S. military build-up.

The CIA's role was an arm of the State Department, the Vietnamese Communist Party, and the CIA's operations in Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand.

Records show Colby and his program—under CIA management.

Colby was the working overseer of the Proud Professional in charge of developing these programs and making sure that they worked. Whatever the full name of Colby's intelligence work, he has been the "professional" of the CIA's operations.

The CIA's board of directors and the other professional segments of the CIA's operations were not involved in the Vietnam war. The CIA's operations in Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand were not involved in the Vietnam war.

Colby returned to Vietnam in March 1968, as Komer's underchief, and the following November took over the pacification job, which was by then under the jurisdiction of the State Department.

He lived during those three years alone in Komer's Saigon villa in Saigon and traveled out to the countryside almost every weekend, occasionally taking a long airplane for professional STPs with him.

On occasions he would come back to Washington to see the on-the-scenes of the program for which he had been an architect and chief enforcer of it.

Colby's last stint in Vietnam ended in June, 1971, when he returned to Washington and disappeared into the CIA's sprawling home office of Langley, where he showed into administrative work as a deputy secretary for the old intelligence operations.

Last March he was named by Schlesinger to lead the Directorate of Plans, where he had spent his life under various kinds of operations out by the CIA.

When he was named to the job, he was 57 years old, and for 20 years he had made