

# The C.I.A. and the Public

By William E. Colby

*The following article is adapted from a speech that William E. Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, gave before the Los Angeles World Affairs Council. In it, he alludes to the book "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," by Victor Marchetti, who worked for the CIA for fourteen years as a Soviet-military specialist and executive assistant to the deputy director, and John D. Marks, an analyst and staff assistant to the intelligence director of the State Department.*

The Central Intelligence Agency is currently engaged in the courts in an effort to enforce the secrecy agreement that one of our ex-employees signed when he came to work with us. In it he acknowledged that he would be receiving information and agreed to hold it secret unless we released it.

We are not objecting to most of a book he proposed to write, even including about half of the items that we initially identified as technically classified. We are struggling, however, to prevent the publication of the names of a number of foreigners, publicity which could do substantial injury to individuals who once put their confidence in us.

Similarly, we hope to withhold the details of specific operations where exposure could prevent our receipt of further information of great value. In some cases, publication of the fact of our knowledge of a situation can be of major assistance to another nation

in deducing how we must have learned of it and shutting us off from it.

I might add that we do not censor our ex-employees' opinions. We have cleared several such books full of criticism in which the authors have been careful not to reveal our sources or operations.

The most serious aspect of this struggle is that if we cannot protect our sources and methods, friendly foreign officials and individuals will be less forthcoming with us in the future, when it could be of critical importance to our country.

No serious intelligence professional has ever believed that George Washington's maxim could be replaced by a variation of the Wilsonian approach to covenants, or "open intelligence openly arrived at."

Another unique aspect of American intelligence is our relationship to Congress. Some of my foreign counterparts around the world display considerable shock when they learn that I appeared in an open hearing before the television cameras as a part of my Senate confirmation.

Many of them would never be subjected to detailed scrutiny by their parliaments, and their identities are frequently unknown.

Some months ago, for example, two journalists were prosecuted in Sweden—hardly a closed society—for revealing the startling fact that their country had an intelligence service.

In our country our intelligence authority stems from an act of Congress, it is subject to oversight by the Congress, and it depends upon funds appropriated annually by Congress.

Congress has provided for itself a way of resolving the dilemma between the need for secrecy in intelligence and the demands of our open society.

Those Senators and Congressmen designated to exercise oversight of the Central Intelligence Agency or review its budgets are fully informed of our activities, inspect us at will, and are given detailed and specific answers to any questions they raise.

Other individual Senators and Congressmen and other committees frequently receive the same intelligence assessments of the world situation as are provided to the executive branch, on a classified basis, but they are not provided the operational details of our intelligence activities. This arrangement was established by Congress and is of course subject to change.

My own position is that the method by which Congress exercises its oversight of intelligence activity is a matter for Congress to decide.

As a related aspect of American intelligence in this open society, I might say something about our relations with the public and the press. We do not conduct a public-relations program; we are not in the public-information business. But we do make as much information as possible available to the news media and to the public. Groups of our citizens, including high-school students, have visited our facilities, where we try to respond to their questions about the nature of American intelligence.

Thus we in the intelligence profession are aware that ours must be an intelligence effort conducted on Ameri-

can principles and that it must be more open and responsive to our public than the intelligence activities of other nations.

At the same time, we must respect the essential professional requirement embodied in the National Security Act to protect our intelligence sources and methods. We will consequently continue to arouse wonderment from some of our foreign associates as to our openness, and concern among some American citizens that we still must keep some information secret, if we are to conduct an intelligence effort at all.

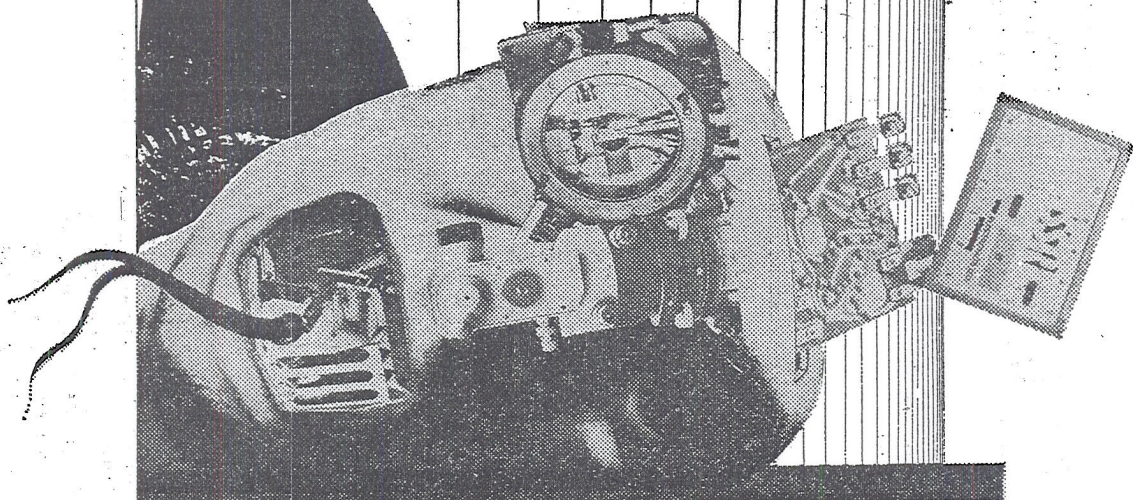
Technical intelligence, the intellectual process of assessment, and our exposure to our constitutional authorities and the public are three major contributions America has made to the intelligence profession.

I do not want to be accused, however, of concealing the fact that intelligence still requires clandestine activity. Our technical intelligence and our study and assessment of material openly available throughout the world have certainly revolutionized the intelligence profession in the last twenty years.

But they have not removed the needs of our national policymakers for information on the intentions of other powers. They have not removed the need to identify at an early stage research abroad into some new weapon which might threaten the safety of our nation, so that we do not become aware of a new and overpowering threat, especially from a nation not as open as ours, too late to negotiate about it or to protect ourselves.

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