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CIA: 'Things Have Changed'

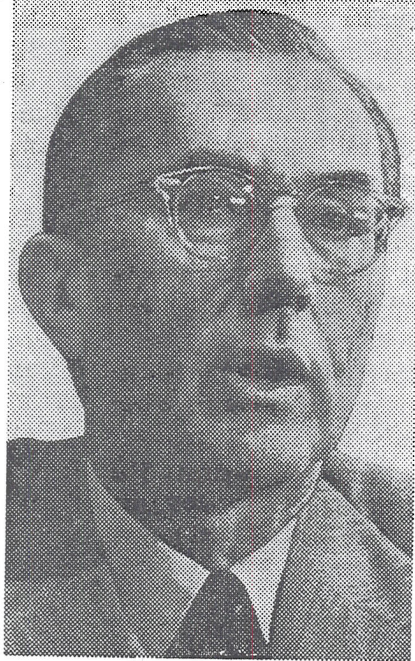
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WHEN TOM BRADEN'S recent article, "CIA: Power and Arrogance," appeared in *Saturday Review*, I was concerned about its basic line, but I was not roused to reply, as I have become somewhat inured to adverse comment. Its reprinting in *The Washington Post*, however, suggests that through repetition it might acquire more cachet, to the extent that I feel I must challenge its accuracy and its wisdom.

In it, Mr. Braden talks of a CIA he may have known some 10 and 20 years ago. I have news for him. Things have changed. CIA is no longer a sacred establishment of insiders "different" from outsiders in commitment and in freedom from the rules that bind ordinary men. It may have some of the restraints of American bureaucracy, and its personnel may live in Fairfax rather than Georgetown, but I think we have a stronger intelligence structure today, rather than one whose "power is gone," whose "arrogance has turned to fear," and which "is divided and torn."

Indeed, we now have a modern intelligence system. Its engineers and its scientists produce marvels of technology which deliver to our nation information about the world of which Mr. Braden could not have dreamed in his time. Its research and analysis staffs stand for independent and objective assessments, however much policy-makers might wish more pleasing ones, or whatever the reflection on departmental budgets and program proposals. Our clandestine operations are perhaps less exhilarating but are more productive than Mr. Braden's and my parachuting days together. The unfettered "power" which produced the "arrogance" he recalls has been replaced by intensive supervision and public as well as closed-door accountability.

Mr. Braden cites our box score in the usual partial way, only the strikes, not the hits. I note, for example, that he omits his own contribution to preventing Communist monopoly of the cause of "peace" during the 1950s and 1960s. Had they achieved this, our own anti-war movement might have become a vehicle for penetration comparable to that which produced the Philbys out of the anti-Fascist cause in the 1930s. His May, 1967, article in the *Saturday Evening Post* praised this work ("I'm glad the CIA is 'Immortal'"). I find it as strange to see him now repudiating that praise as I



William Colby: "Paratroopers" out.

then questioned his violation of his secrecy agreement by wrongfully revealing the details of his operation without authorization.

Most serious is Mr. Braden's solution to the "ridiculous myths" that exist about CIA and intelligence. Instead of undertaking to reveal the untold story of modern intelligence in the best journalistic tradition, he would "shut it down" in abject retreat before its critics. Indeed, this would in my view lead precisely to James Madison's injunction which he cited that "A popular government without the means to popular information is a farce or a tragedy, perhaps both" in the world in which we live.

BECAUSE our intelligence information today is popular information. Some of its sources and techniques must be kept secret if they are to endure, but its substance is made available in many and proper ways to our "popular government." It is provided to the executive branch and used in its deliberations and its discussions with the press. Our intelligence goes to a number of our congressional committees and members on a regular basis, where it is highly valued as a contribution to their role in American decision-making. And an increasing

number of our colleagues of the press are finding that a visit to Langley can expose them to independent, intelligent and learned spokesmen on subjects of interest to them, from nuclear proliferation to economic trends within the Soviet Union. If our government really should "shut it down," I do fear the result could be "a farce or a tragedy, perhaps both."

Mr. Braden's solution of turning the overt intelligence function to the State Department flies in the face of the proven desirability of separating from that policy-oriented institution an independent intelligence collection and assessment capability, a lesson learned in China in the 1940s and in Vietnam in the 1960s. I question even more seriously his reflection on the fine job the agency's paramilitary elements did in Laos with a handful of American personnel and a miniscule budget compared to some other experiences. "Paratroopers" like Mr. Braden and me have been replaced by a new generation who understand that political will is at the base of successful paramilitary work, and that parachutes and even helicopters play only a supporting role in such situations.

I note Mr. Braden's formula for future clandestine work to be run "out of some obscure toolshed." I have no comment on his name for the leader of such an effort, but I question whether such obscurity would not reestablish the "inside-outside syndrome, so essential to secrecy . . . making a mockery of representative government," which he wrongfully ascribes to today's CIA.

May I suggest that a better solution is the serious review being undertaken by the Vice President's Commission and the Select Committees of the Congress, to determine how outdated "ridiculous myths" about American intelligence can be replaced by a better understanding of the reality of modern intelligence and how it should fit within our free society. In this process, we will indeed replace the unaccountable power and the arrogance which Mr. Braden seems to remember from an earlier day by a new and American concept of responsible intelligence. And in the process, I believe that public understanding of the importance of our modern "means to popular information" will be increased so that we can strengthen them for the future rather than dwell only on the past.

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