



## He Told Too Much

**Joseph Kraft**

I USED TO lean toward the view that William Colby was a starry-eyed idealist so shocked by what he discovered on becoming head of the Central Intelligence Agency that he spilled the beans in an indiscriminate and damaging way. But that charitable theory does not survive a reading of Colby's book, "Honorable Men," still less the self-promotional performance he put in recently on the CBS show "60 Minutes."

Colby emerges from those self-portraits as the super-sharp bureaucrat. He anticipated the storm breaking over the CIA, and disclosed to the press and the Congress more than strictly required in the hopes of winning points that would limit the damage done to himself and the agency.

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COLBY BECAME CIA director when James Schlesinger was sent to the Defense Department. The first thing that hit his desk after he became director was a report by the inspector general ordered up by Schlesinger.

The report laid out in full detail the CIA horrors which have since seen the light of day. It seemed likely to me that Colby was horrified by what he learned. It seemed plausible that he then became determined to force out the truth almost as an act of contrition.

That theory is shattered by the most salient feature of Colby's book. The book centers on relations between Colby and seniors in the Nixon and Ford administrations. As director of CIA, Colby enjoyed their implicit trust,

and they said unguarded things to him.

Now he reveals these tidbits, to show that he was far more forthcoming when it came to making public CIA horror stories than such people as President Ford, Vice President Rockefeller and Secretary of State Kissinger. Thus he writes that Rockefeller wanted him to "take the traditional stance of fending off investigators by drawing the cloak of secrecy around the agency, in the name of national security."

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THERE WAS NO intrinsic need for Colby to finger the personalities who wanted him to stonewall the Congress and the press. Doing so — especially for the head of a secret intelligence agency — is an act of bad faith.

It not only repudiates the theory of Colby as a starry-eyed idealist. It lays bare his true motive. He sought — and still seeks — to calibrate the CIA on the issue of full disclosure. He wants to be on the side of the angels.

I do not criticize Colby for his performance as director of CIA. He had difficult choices to make. In the end it didn't make much difference whether Colby cooperated with the press or the Congress or not. What came out was bound to come out. The damage could not have been avoided.

What I don't understand is why Colby now feels obliged to wash the dirty linen all over again. In doing so he comes close to being a man who has lost everything, including honor.