

MAIL SEIZED IN '72
IS FOUND BY CIA

Colby Apologizes to
Postal Chief Over
Discovery on
Shelf of an Office

Special to the New
York Times

Washington, July 17 -
Postmaster General Benjamin F.
Bailar disclosed later today
that 85 postcards and 25 let-
ters intercepted more than
three years ago by the Central
Intelligence Agency had just been
found on a shelf at an agency office.

The mail, from the Soviet Union to
United States residents, had been
opened, read and relayed to Wash-
ington through Latin America in an
inexplicable process, according to
an apologetic letter to Mr. Bailar
yesterday from William E. Colby,
the director of Central Intelligence.

Mr. Bailar made public the
Colby letter, along with the
Postmaster General's angry re-
ply that "it is an understatement
to tell you I am shocked."

The Postmaster General an-
nounced that both the Depart-
ment of Justice and the Postal
Inspection Service would in-
vestigate the mail interception.
He said that the postcards and
letters had already been seized
by the Justice Department
"pending possible legal action
against those responsible for
opening and detaining it."

"The events you describe in
your letter," Mr. Bailar wrote
to Mr. Colby, "stand in clear
violation of the sanctity of the
mails and threaten to shake
public confidence in the in-
tegrity of the mail."

Other Information Sought

He urged the C.I.A. director
to determine whether other mail
had unaccountably been de-
tained as a result of the
agency's interception of mail to
and from the Soviet Union from
1953 to 1973. The interception
of millions of pieces of mail
was disclosed last month by the
Rockefeller commission, in a re-
port that termed the activity
"unlawful."

The letter to Mr. Bailar from
Mr. Colby, dated yesterday,
said that the mail had been
found "on a shelf in a securely
vaulted area" of an unidenti-
fied agency office facility. Mr.
Colby said that the mail, along
with a registered mail receipt
and two Hungarian and one
Swedish customs declaration,
had been attached to "a dis-
patch from one of our installa-
tions in Latin America dated
March 27, 1972."

Mr. Colby's letter said that
the dispatch, evidently from a
C.I.A. agent stationed in Latin

America, reported that the
intercepted mail had been sent
in a package mailed by an un-
named "New York firm" to a
United States resident of the
Latin-American country.

Although Mr. Colby said
there was no indication how or
why the mail had been sent to
the individual, it eventually
was passed on to the C.I.A.
and the contents recorded in
files of the Soviet mail inter-
cept that the agency operated
secretly in New York City.

Forwarded for Mailing

Mr. Colby's letter said that
the mail had been discovered
"in the course of a recent,
routine change in office space
assigned to a unit" of the in-
telligence agency. The letter
said that the C.I.A. files bore
no information as to why the
mail had been left on the shelf.

"As it is clear that the
senders of this mail intended
it to be delivered," Mr. Colby
wrote Mr. Bailar, "I am for-
warding it to you for appro-
priate handling."

He suggested that Mr. Bailar
notify the intended recipients
that the fault was the C.I.A.'s
and that Mr. Colby extended a
"sincere apology."

The mail having been seized
by investigators, Mr. Bailar
said he had drafted letters to
the intended recipients explain-
ing the situation and declaring
that the Postal Service "con-
siders this incident a serious
violation of your rights."

The Postmaster General said
he was assured by Mr. Colby
last spring that the C.I.A. had
discontinued its mail intercept
operations. As distressing as
that discovery was, Mr. Bailar
said, "the revelation that mail
was removed from the interna-
tional mail stream, opened and

Earlier clippings
on CIA interception
of mail begin
22 Mar 75.

retained indefinitely is doubly
disturbing."

He demanded of Mr. Colby
that "any such mail still held
by the Central Intelligence
Agency immediately be turned
over to the Postal Service for
delivery."