

RSM

DCI SPEECH TO THE EDWARD WEINTAL PRIZE CEREMONY

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

13 April 1983

Good evening to all of you. My congratulations to both of the award recipients, Mr. Beecher and Professor Stern.

When I was asked to address you on my views about journalism, I thought it an unusual opportunity for a Director of Central Intelligence. I am reminded of a Shogun in old Japan who was riding across his kingdom when he came upon one of his samurai, bloodied and woe-begotten. The Shogun asked him what had happened. "My Lord, I am just back from doing battle with your enemies to the East," answered the warrior. To which the Shogun replied, "But I have no enemies to the East." The samurai paused and then said, "You do now!"

As I look around the world today, I am certain I don't need any more adversaries. My objective here tonight is not to create any new ones. Some tension is inherent between the press and the Intelligence Community but we want to minimize tension and maximize cooperation. Journalists are committed to finding out the most they can about us. We are committed to protecting legitimate secrets. There remains a broad area for cooperation. We need to understand and develop information the

public should have. We prefer to make it available through more public agencies but there are exceptions. That does not mean our relationship boils down to "It's our job to protect secrets and a reporter's job to uncover them." That would put us in a position analogous to a tourist and a pickpocket. The tourist should not have to protect the wallet from the pickpocket.

As Director of Central Intelligence, my primary responsibility is to provide the most accurate and timely analysis of foreign developments to our national leaders. That must sound familiar to those of you in the press. Journalists are also responsible for accurate, timely analysis. To fulfill my responsibilities, I must also see to it that the Intelligence Community develops the broadest possible range of sources of information. Again this must sound familiar. We value and use information, observation, and analysis provided by embassy personnel, military attaches, and the world press. We maintain a large research organization and an around-the-clock news room and editorial organization to analyze information from all sources and make it useful to policymakers.

I am required by law -- the National Security Act of 1947 to be specific -- to develop the means to protect intelligence sources and methods. This is a serious responsibility and one I do not take lightly. Journalists take seriously their right to maintain the confidentiality of their sources--and have gone to jail rather than expose them.

Under our political system, I carry out my responsibilities as Director of Central Intelligence under the close scrutiny of the press -- certainly a unique position among the intelligence chiefs of the world. But while intelligence should not be divorced from public opinion, neither should it be overly concerned with the daily shifts, the ups and downs, of public criticism or praise. This is more properly the concern of the elected representatives. Elected officials, whether in the White House or in Congress, must stay closely attuned to the public's wishes. We in intelligence must be responsive to the President and Congress. We receive the public's direction through them. That is why we welcome Congressional and Presidential oversight. That our actions are reviewed and approved by the public's representatives gives them a legitimacy they would not otherwise have in our open society.

The press has an enormous impact on public opinion and, therefore, on policy decisions. Surveys show that most Americans receive news concerning their government from the media; two-thirds of our citizens listen exclusively to television for their news. Thus, journalists exercise considerable power and influence. That power must be accompanied by a strong sense of responsibility. I am not persuaded that a journalist must print any alleged intelligence information he or she receives because "someone else will print it anyway." Nor am I convinced by the argument that if a

reporter obtains some information, it is then correct to assume our adversaries' intelligence organizations must also have it. These are specious justifications.

The 1970s were a very trying period for us in intelligence. The intense scrutiny by the press, while harmful to morale, did have one valuable result -- the establishment of new, and the strengthening of old, oversight procedures. Again, I want to emphasize that we welcome this; it makes us stronger. The press is another means of ensuring checks and balances, if reporting is accurate and fair. But I would ask you to keep in mind that irresponsible exposure in the press of alleged intelligence operations -- correct or incorrect -- creates very real problems for us.

We must protect our sources and methods and often cannot correct inaccurate stories. False stories or partial truths send wrong signals to those who might choose to work with us. Allied intelligence services question cooperation with us out of fear their own programs could be compromised. Our own officers are also affected. An intelligence officer will not take necessary risks if he or she fears the sources or programs they are responsible for could be exposed in the press. And, as you know, timidity whether by a reporter or an intelligence officer breeds failure.

This is not to say there can never be a dialogue between intelligence and the press. I have witnessed admirable restraint and judgment by journalists. The American press, unlike the Australian press, did not sensationalize the absolutely false allegations that CIA had been involved in the illegal activities of the Nugan Hand bank. Nor, as far as I am aware, has any U.S. newspaper ever reprinted the long lists of alleged intelligence agents published in the infamous Covert Action Information Bulletin. I have been gratified by the readiness of journalists to carefully consider withholding publication of information which could jeopardize national interests and by treating a story in a manner which meets the public need as they perceive it, yet minimizes potential damage to intelligence sources. The trick is to recognize the potential for damage and to consult on how it might be minimized. We are anxious to do this. And since my appointment as Director, I have seen a growing understanding by the press of our efforts to improve the quality, timeliness, and reliability of the analysis we provide to our national leaders.

Unfortunately, inaccurate stories still appear; some of which damage our credibility and ability to function at the highest level of performance. Recent stories that the CIA was reluctant to get involved or take seriously the investigation into the shooting of the Pope and that the President was dissatisfied with our role are untrue. I have to wonder what the

motivations are for these stories. Likewise, I find that the press sometimes exhibits a very selective perspective. There was no meaningful analysis of the recent executions of 15 labor, bar association and other community leaders in Suriname and that regime's growing ties to Cuba until a month after the first reports of the slayings. Would the same delay have occurred if such violations had taken place, for instance, in El Salvador? In February of this year, when five men in Miami were convicted of conspiring with Cuban government officials to smuggle drugs into southern Florida, I was surprised there were no reports in such national newspapers as the New York Times or the Washington Post despite the fact one of the men testified that the Cuban government planned to "fill up the United States with drugs." The connection between the narcotics trade, terrorism in the destabilization of governments and the organization and support of insurgencies is a story which can bring a Weintal /WINE-tal/ or Pulitzer Prize or both.

An example of good reporting is the Wall Street Journal's articles on Yellow Rain. They were the only major national newspaper to treat this important issue in a hard-hitting manner. In general, the press has adequately and fairly reported on technology transfer. But press reporting concerning the alleged dispute between DIA and CIA analysis of the rate of increase in Soviet military spending was overblown. I believe the press has not conveyed the force, scope and intensity of the

Cuban threat in the Caribbean and Central America. This has not received the in-depth, extensive reporting it deserves. The media does extensive reporting and analysis on the Soviet missile and conventional military threat which we spend hundreds of billions of dollars to counter. But the big story out there is the possibly more lethal process of creeping imperialism by subversion and insurgency, which, in less than a decade, has positioned Soviet power on the southern flank of China, on both sides of the oil fields in the Middle East, at choke points in the world sea lanes, and at our very doorstep in the Caribbean and Central America.

I find a continuing misunderstanding of what we in CIA are trying to accomplish when we review former and current employees' manuscripts before publication. We are not attempting to prevent unflattering or unfavorable comments from being published. We are only concerned that classified information be protected. It is true that sometimes the process takes longer than we or the author may like. Reviewing a 600 page novel filled with references to fictionalized intelligence operations can be a laborious process. Nearly 75 percent of all manuscripts we have reviewed have been cleared without objection. Most manuscripts are reviewed in fewer than thirty days; some in a matter of hours to accommodate a press deadline. This is not the perspective readers find in press accounts. What I would hope is that the same skepticism applied

to the statements of public officials be applied to those few disgruntled former employees peddling their books. These authors may not be in a position to judge whether an intelligence source or method needs protecting. I would also hope that a reporter's skepticism would extend to those with tales of impropriety -- the whistleblowers. Some of these people may have legitimate complaints but they are obligated to first bring their stories to the appropriate oversight committees or internally to their Inspector General. Unless the whistleblower first follows these proper routes of criticism, he or she cannot be considered a responsible citizen nor should the reporter take their tale at face value.

Within the constraints imposed by my legal responsibilities to protect legitimate secrets, we do make attempts to respond to queries from the press. Every question posed by a reporter that comes into my Public Affairs Office at CIA is thoroughly researched before possible responses are considered. I am sure newsmen and women feel they receive more "unable to help" and "no comment" responses from us than from any other government agency and it must be frustrating for them. But we do try to contribute to the accuracy of a story whenever we can.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you tonight. My special congratulations, once again, to Mr. Beecher and

Professor Stern. If there is one thought I would like to leave with you it is that we in intelligence and journalists share the common responsibility of protecting sources. Perhaps this tie can lead us to a better understanding of each other's concerns. We would both benefit. Thank you.