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STONEWALL COLBY OF THE CIA

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Washington Parade, the strange supplement that accompanies Sunday newspapers into millions of homes and often sounds as if it were written by a government propagandist, recently carried this description of William Colby, director of the CIA:

A practicing Roman Catholic, a pillar in community affairs, a hard-working (Saturdays until 3 P.M.) civil servant who earns \$42,000 a year, a good and understanding father to his four surviving children—a fifth died early this year of epilepsy—a loving and dutiful husband, William Colby has been a professional intelligence officer for half his adult years.

The United States is indeed fortunate in having him. As a lawyer he could be earning three times in civilian life what he earns in government service. "But it wouldn't give me the satisfaction," he says, "that I find in this job." Colby wears no flag pins in his lapel to demonstrate his patriotism. It goes much deeper than that.

Neither Colby himself nor his dedication nor his work was seen in quite that way by the participants and spectators at the recent Washington Conference on the Central Intelligence Agency and Covert Action, sponsored by the Center for National Security Studies and by its parent, the Fund for Peace.

Colby was hissed, he was jeered, he was laughed at in an unfriendly way, and he was asked a few questions that might have been embarrassing only if he had been subjected to torture sufficient to make him answer candidly.

As it was, Colby emerged from the conference in no worse condition than he entered and perhaps even with a couple of minor credits simply for having come forward to confront a group that loathed him.

The hearing room was packed. It had been widely anticipated that something interesting might occur, since Colby was surfacing just hours after it had been revealed, via a leaked letter of Rep. Michael Harrington, that the CIA had funneled \$11 million into Chile: \$3 million to block Salvador Allende's try for the Presidency in 1964 and \$8 million between 1970 and 1973 to "destabilize," if not overthrow, his administration.

But the only thing of any real value that occurred at the conference was the demonstration—if such is still needed—that unless a bureaucrat of Colby's steel is threatened at least with firing; and preferably with jail, he simply

will not reveal his dirty work. The panel couldn't lay a glove on Colby. He was much too smooth.

Him? Excessively secret? Nonsense. "The CIA has appeared before eighteen committees on twenty-eight occasions this year (Armed Services, Appropriations, Foreign Affairs, Atomic Energy and Economics)," he said in the written part of his testimony. "In addition, I have talked with 132 newsmen in the past year, and about 100 have come to CIA for briefings by our analysts on substantive questions involving foreign countries, thus benefiting from our accumulated information from our most sensitive sources."

While it was true, Colby conceded, that the CIA in the 1960s had subsidized the National Student Association in a propaganda joust with Communist students in foreign countries, it would be ridiculous to describe this as buying the minds of our youth. "I might quote Ms. Gloria Steinem, one of those assisted, who commented that the CIA 'wanted to do what we wanted to do—present a healthy, diverse view of the United States—I never felt I was being dictated to at all.'" (*Laughter from the audience.*)

Colby seemed unable to understand why his critics did not recognize the decorum of CIA operations. He mentioned the Bay of Pigs debacle as a particularly fine example: "I think the CIA people who conducted this effort deserve the praise of our citizens for the effective but modest manner in which President Kennedy's mission was carried out—a mission, by the way, that cost the lives of eight CIA officers there." (*Mock sympathy: "ahhhhhh."*)

Having finished his 11½ pages of mild defense, Colby promptly showed that he had no intention of going much beyond the written word and that he especially intended to give no satisfaction to those who were curious about CIA depredations in Chile: "With respect to Chile, since my testimony [about the \$11 million espionage fund] was given in executive session [to a House Armed Services subcommittee], from which it has unfortunately leaked, I will answer no questions. But I will say we had nothing to do with the military takeover. However, we did look forward to a change of government, through democratic forces, in the election of 1976." (*Laughter.*)

Some of the efforts to goad him into a detailed debate evoked these several exchanges:

Congressman Harrington: Let's go into the fiction of Congressional oversight. Were Congressman Nedzi and others on the Armed Services subcommittee that supposedly gives the CIA oversight informed of the specifics of the CIA's Chilean operation before last April?

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Colby: They were made aware at appropriate times of our procedures. We have periodic roundup recaps.

Harrington: Congressman Nedzi became chairman of the oversight subcommittee in 1972. Your testimony in April seems to me to indicate that that was the first time he had been told about the Chilean operation.

Colby nods.

Harrington quoted from the testimony of former Assistant Secretary of State Charles Meyer to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last year: "We bought no votes, funded no candidates, provoked no coups," and from the testimony of former Ambassador Edward M. Korry, who told a Foreign Relations subcommittee that "the United States did not seek to pressure, subvert, influence a single member of the Chilean Congress." Harrington asked Colby if testimony of this sort meant that the State Department had not been aware of the CIA's operations in Chile. Had it been unaware of the \$350,000 that Colby had privately admitted was sent to Chile to bribe legislators to vote against Allende when the 1970 election was thrown into the Congress?

Colby replied, "I'm not prepared, I can't say, which item [of information] was given to which State Department officials." He added, "I am prepared to go into the CIA's operations before the proper committees. Until then, I respectfully decline to answer further."

Then the futile cross-examination was taken over by Sen. James Abourezk, who took the chair for the second afternoon's ordeal.

Abourezk: You say you are willing to discuss these things with the appropriate committee. But discussions of that sort are always carried out long after the CIA action has taken place. We're always talking about what the CIA has done four or five years in the past. In general, shouldn't we now go into whether the nation approves of assassination, of overthrowing governments as a matter of CIA policy? If you don't want to talk about specifics, why not discuss the CIA's general policy?

Silence from Colby.

Abourezk: Did the chairman of the oversight committees know of the Chilean operation?

Colby: He knew of various of our actions. I'm not responding specifically. I'm not saying that every dollar of our expenditures was known to the chairman. I can't say that every individual instance of what was going on was brought to the attention of the oversight committees.

Abourezk: In this morning's *Washington Post*, it is reported that the CIA spent \$350,000 for bribing Chilean officials. Would you say if that is true or false?

Colby: With all due respect, I will not answer.

Abourezk: Is there anything in the *Post* story you admit or deny?

Colby: With all due respect. . . .

Abourezk: Is there anything the CIA does overseas that you wouldn't do here, and vice versa?

Colby: Of course. We are engaged every day in clandestine operations overseas that are illegal in closed societies.

Abourezk: Please answer the question. You do engage in operations in other countries that would be illegal here?

Colby: Of course. Espionage is illegal in this country.

Abourezk: Other than espionage?

Colby: Of course.

Marcus Raskin asked Colby if the CIA would continue "to use the Rockefeller corporations as a cover." Colby wouldn't answer. Would the CIA continue to use ITT as a cover? No answer.

Daniel Ellsberg asked Colby, "What is your best estimate of the number killed and the number jailed by the government that took over after Allende's downfall?" Colby replied, "I can't tell you for sure. I'm not sure of the number killed and tortured. I may have read how many, but I can't recall them here." (Recent *New York Times* stories place the number of political prisoners as high as 8,000 with hundreds of torture cases reported. More than 2,500 died in the military coup.)

When somebody from the audience yelled, "How many did you murder in Vietnam?" a reference to the Phoenix program which Colby directed in South Vietnam with the excuse of ferreting out Communist infiltrators, Colby-of course denied that he had murdered anyone but he did have some numbers available: 29,000 captured, 20,500 killed; but he insisted that "87 per cent were killed in

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military and paramilitary action and only 12 per cent by police actions." (Jack Anderson recently reported that a secret study sent to the U.S. Embassy in Saigon acknowledges that the Phoenix program was only 1 per cent effective, for all its bloodletting.)

Asked if he had had moral reservations about helping to send Vietnamese to jail without their having the services of lawyers, he replied: "In Vietnam there were only 200 lawyers" and therefore it would have been unreasonable to supply a lawyer to every defendant.

And so it went. Spectators were left to guess whether Colby was lying when he said that he informed the proper officials about the Chilean dirty work; whether State Department officials were lying when they feigned innocence and ignorance of the whole affair; and whether Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was the biggest liar of all when he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the "CIA had nothing to do with the coup to the best of my knowledge."

There may be some grounds for perjury charges here, as Sen. Frank Church was the first to suggest. The Foreign Relations Committee staff subsequently agreed that a perjury investigation should be launched. The staff is especially unhappy with testimony given by Colby's predecessor at the CIA, Richard Helms, when questioned in 1973 by Sen. Stuart Symington, one of the select few who allegedly have oversight regarding the CIA. This was at the time when Helms was being cleared to become ambassador to Iran.

Symington: Did you try in the Central Intelligence Agency to overthrow the government of Chile?

Helms: No, sir.

Symington: Did you have any money passed to the opponents of Allende?

Helms: No, sir.

Somebody, obviously, is lying. When Kissinger, for example, says that "to the best of my knowledge" he knew of no financial subversion being carried out in Chile by the CIA, one must remember that he was speaking as the chairman of the 40 Committee—the supersecret group that authorizes (or supposedly authorizes) all clandestine operations of the CIA. On the broader point of the true role of the 40 Committee, David Wise, author of *The Invisible Government* and *The Espionage Establishment*, pointed out at the conference that "We are asked to take on faith the assurance that secret operations conducted under secret directives are adequately controlled by a secret committee that makes its decisions in secret. Moreover, in the manner of the fox placed in charge of the chicken coop, the director of Central Intelligence is a member of the 40 Committee. Although it is difficult to arrive at final conclusions about a body that operates in complete secrecy, it seems most unlikely that a committee of five men, one of whom is the head of the CIA, and whose other members are busy men with important responsibilities in other agencies of the government, can exercise effective control over special operations."

In other words, maybe Kissinger *didn't* know the details of the CIA subversion in Chile. Maybe the other State Department officials didn't either. Maybe the CIA operates more tightly within its little cocoon of anarchy than even top government officials had heretofore pre-

sumed. Maybe it just takes its \$750 million budget (that is the figure, according to Victor Marchetti and John Marks, authors of *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*; and panelists on this occasion; but others place the CIA budget much higher) and does its espionage without anyone knowing the details until something goes wrong. Wise believes that such anarchy does exist; that the only possible control over the CIA as now organized is through the 40 Committee and that "there is simply too much going on [the clandestine services of the CIA employ 6,000 people] at any given time to be controlled by a part-time committee." Not even the President knows what's going on, which is probably the way he wants it because "the existence of the committee permits the President to disclaim personal knowledge of a covert operation if it should fail and prove embarrassing."

Morton Halperin, whose phone was tapped when he was an aide to Kissinger, told the conference that the problem was not merely the CIA's anarchistic disregard for the rest of the government. There was also the problem of its own internal anarchy:

None of the intelligence analysts in the office of the Directorate for Intelligence of the CIA, including the Deputy Director of the CIA for Intelligence, Robert Amory, were informed of the planned Bay of Pigs invasion.

Hence, all of the analytic talents of the CIA were absent from the consideration of whether the operation might succeed. When Mr. Allen Dulles, the Director of Central Intelligence, informed the President that the chances of success were very high, this opinion was based entirely on the views of the covert operators planning the Bay of Pigs invasion and on his own hunches—without any support from either the Board of National Estimates or the intelligence analysts in the Directorate for Intelligence.

In the Pentagon, knowledge of the operation appears to have been restricted to the Secretary and perhaps his deputy, Roswell Gilpatrick, and to military officers on the Joint Staff of the military services. No civilian officials in the Pentagon, including the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Paul Nitze, seems to have been informed or given an opportunity to comment on the planned operation.

Thus, although the key judgment in the Bay of Pigs operation was whether a sufficient number of Cubans would rise up to support the invaders when they landed on the beach, no one who had a good capability on the question was consulted and permitted to express an opinion, with the exception of the CIA operatives themselves who, being heavily committed to the plan, could not have been expected to have an impartial view.

Oddly enough, it did not seem like a restirring of ancient history at all when the panelists kept referring back to the Bay of Pigs tragedy of thirteen years ago. It seemed altogether contemporary, for obviously little has changed since then at the CIA. The kind of lunatic secrecy still prevails that allows a small band of bureaucratic brigands, by their mistakes, to force the rest of the U.S. Government into an overseas adventure that is not only dangerous but does not fit into the overall foreign policy of this country.

When Colby was asked what suggestions he had for better control over the CIA and for ways to guarantee

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that it not pull secret horrors, his answer was so grotesque that it just may have been the most frightening comment of the entire conference.

"As for disclosure," he said with a small smile, "the press does a good job of catching us when they can." And if that isn't enough, the nation can rely on the conscience of the CIA itself. "If anyone tried to use the CIA against the U.S.A., the CIA would explode from within."

If Washington has provided any black humor to top that, it was when President Ford later told a news conference that the CIA had helped overthrow the demo-

cratically elected administration of Allende and establish a terrorist military regime because Allende had tried "to destroy opposition news media and to destroy opposition parties." Three days later, Kissinger repeated that excuse when he appeared before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. What Ford and Kissinger say they feared would be brought about by Allende—but wasn't—has, of course, emerged as fact under the military junta that seized power in September 1973, promptly shut down the legislature, closed opposition newspapers and outlawed all political parties. □

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