

MORE OPEN C.I.A. SOUGHT BY COLBY

Intelligence Director Asserts He Has a Duty to Explain, in Part, Agency's Role

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 28—In the 16 months since he took office as Director of Central Intelligence, William E. Colby has made more public appearances, spoken to more reporters and testified more often before Congress than any of his predecessors—perhaps more than all of his predecessors put together.

Mr. Colby has said several times on the record that he believes these deliberate efforts to "go public," though seemingly paradoxical for an espionage chief, constitute an essential part of his responsibility as the head of the Central Intelligence Agency.

In a speech before the Los Angeles World Affairs Council last summer, Mr. Colby explained his credo as follows: "We in the intelligence profession are aware that ours must be an intelligence effort conducted on American principles and that it must be more open and responsive to our public than the intelligence activities of other nations."

Vietnam, Watergate Influence

Privately, Mr. Colby and his press aides acknowledge that the Vietnam conflict and the Watergate scandal have practically compelled the leadership of the C.I.A. to take defensive steps by letting the public know a bit more about the workings of the agency.

Certain sectors of public opinion held the C.I.A. responsible for both, even though influential figures in the agency warned in Administration councils against involvement.

Soon after Mr. Colby took command in September, 1973, it became possible for reporters to call the C.I.A. headquarters in Langley, Va. and make appointments for briefings with senior analysts on a wide range of foreign intelligence topics.

In one such "backgrounder," of more than 100, a C.I.A. specialist told a reporter in late August, 1973, that she expected some sort of military coup in Chile within three weeks. The analyst then listed the factors pointing toward a coup, all of which, she noted, were public knowledge.

At the time of the background session, the agency's idea was to demonstrate the expertise of its people. After the coup occurred in Chile on Sept. 11, 1973, however, the C.I.A. was accused of causing the downfall of the Government of President Salvador Allende Gossens through actions that were not public knowledge.

Colby Talks With Editors

Mr. Colby himself began meeting reporters for such briefing sessions early in the autumn of 1973. Recently he estimated that he had talked to more than 132 press representatives in one year.

In addition, Mr. Colby traveled afield to talk with editors and reporters of the Los Angeles Times, The Chicago Sun-Times, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Washington-Star-News and Time and Newsweek magazines.

These talks, too, were on "background," meaning that the information could be used, but not attributed to a specified source. Mr. Colby also gave several interviews on the record.

In addition to his public speech in Los Angeles, he addressed the Fund for Peace Conference devoted to C.I.A. and Covert Actions" last September in Washington. And he spoke to closed groups of citizens interested in foreign policy in New York and Chicago.

In his Washington address entitled, "The View from Langley," Mr. Colby set out something of his philosophy about the C.I.A.'s work and its public image:

"There have been some 'bad secrets' concerning intelligence; their exposure by our academic, journalistic and political critics certainly is an essential part of the workings of our Constitution. There have been some 'non-secrets' which did not need to be secret; I have undertaken a program of bringing these into the open. But I think that responsible Americans realize that our country must protect some 'Good secrets'."

Marchetti Book Cited

This, he said, was the rationale behind his year long effort to obtain legislation from the Congress that would impose strong penalties for the unauthorized disclosure of foreign intelligence secrets, particularly by former C.I.A. employees.

The effort was prompted in large part by publication of "The C.I.A. and the Cult of Intelligence," of which the main author was Victor Marchetti, a former agency employe. The C.I.A. sought to obtain a court injunction enforcing 225 deletions of classified secrets, but had to settle for 27 deletions.

Mr. Colby indicated recently that he intended to continue his round of public appearances and his responsiveness to reporters and members of Congress. He and his aides have testified 28 times before 18 congressional committees since he took office.

But in the midst of a controversy during the last week over allegations that the C.I.A. had conducted large-scale spying on American citizens within the country Mr. Colby has thus far elected not to go on record.