

*Partial transcript  
No sound out  
RSM / draft copy*

PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

William Casey, Director, Central Intelligence

CIRA LUNCH

Fort Myer, Virginia

Monday, May 4, 1981

APPROVED FOR RELEASE □ DATE:  
12-08-2008

CHAIR: The CIRA newsletter carries all the relevant biographical information on our speaker today. So I'm not going to repeat that in the interests of time.

When I first met our speaker, it was in the winter of 1945. And as you all know, or most of you know, the winter in England at that time of year is bleak and raw and cold. At that juncture, Bill Casey had been put in charge of putting agents into the heartland of Germany. The days of reception committees, bonfires on airfields, the resistance forces [words inaudible]. This was the period when the United States was going to the enemy. And the OSS had decided to mount operations on its own without any reference to the British, the first time that that had happened in the European theater during the war.

Joseph Principal (?) in his book, Piercing the Reich, has a sentence in which he describes. He says the agent penetrating Germany was asked to parachute amid the predators. He jumped blind, with no reception committee, no safe houses, no friends, into a hostile world.

Bill Casey sent me out in the middle of one night to watch the takeoff of one of these flights. And if you all run your memories back, you'll remember that the airplanes used in those days were small, had two propellers and looked very frail indeed to go all that distance to Germany. And there was the fellow wrapped under more harness and gear than you could imagine obviously pumping himself up to have the courage to jump through that hole a couple of hours later.

I mention this because it was Bill Casey who was in charge of these very difficult operations. And from that time on, he had a very shrewd, keen and appreciative feeling for what goes on in

the guts of a guy who has to be a spy. The human factor he understand from the word go.

To quote Joseph Principal again, "In Casey, the OSS had a man with an analytical mind, tenacious will, and a capacity to generate high morale among this staff. He delegated authority easily to trusted subordinates and set a simple standard for us all."

Time passes on, and it was in one of those halcyon periods before Watergate, before Frank Church, that Bill Casey came out to the agency to see me. We had a protracted session. He had a couple of other things he wanted to see. Elizabeth [name inaudible] got a car for him, and we sent him off back to Washington. An hour or so later the phone rang in my office. It was the receptionist downstairs. She said there's a taxi cab waiting outside the gate to see Mr. Casey.

So Elizabeth, in her inimitable way, looked at special funds, picked up some money, went down and paid off the cab. And as she did so, the cab driver smiled, expressed his appreciation and said "Well, now, what I do with the briefcase?"

[Laughter.]

Our speaker today, in my opinion, is the Director of Central Intelligence. In this period, I am profoundly glad he is where he is. He would have been my choice.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce an old friend and former comrade in arms, William J. Casey.

[Applause.]

DIRECTOR WILLIAM J. CASEY: Thank you very much for that very warm welcome. Dick, I'm glad to accept that little bit of history. [Words inaudible] always thought they could pay their taxi bills.

[Laughter.]

I've offered him the eight or ten or twelve dollars. He's always rejected it, which shows what an honorable colleague he is.

But I'm very pleased today to have someone to carry my briefcase around. I'm very pleased to be here with all of you. I'm an oldtimer too. On the other hand, in my present job, I'm a newcomer. If that makes me a two-timer, so be it.

[Laughter.]

You know, I know that CIA retirees are a special group.

I've known it all along. But it made a new impression on me when after I was designated as DCI by President Reagan, I almost immediately got a letter, a letter from the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers. And in the letter was a \$20 check, which I spent a week or so ago for my dues. And I was informed that I was no longer a member; they were returning my dues. I was kicked out before, but never so promptly for violating the rules.

I came to this job with a high respect for the agency and the caliber and professionalism of its staff, past and present. What I've seen so far has strengthened that view. And I bring to the job a longstanding dedication and a belief in the mission that the CIA has.

As Dick indicated, it's almost some 40 years ago I worked with Dick and worked with David Bruce in London in command of the OSS detachment in the European Theater. One of my jobs was to serve as secretary of a small group charged with studying the British and other European intelligence organizations, to develop recommendations for a permanent peacetime central intelligence agency in the United States, something we never had. I reported back to Washington to help General Donovan prepare a memorandum that he was putting together for President Roosevelt urging the creation of such an organization. So in effect, I was there at the beginning. Nobody really saw me, but I was there.

I know many of you, Dick, Don Cross (?), Barry Houston (?), all friends of 25 years' standing or more. And you've got to preserve friends like that, because you're not likely to make any new 25 year-old friends.

I met here today one of your numbers. He came up and said hello to me. [Portion inaudible.] It turned out I knew him almost fifty years ago. We both lived in a little, small town on Long Island called Bellmore. And this is about the first time I've seen him in 40 to 45, 46 years. So I feel at home.

I carry a vivid recollection of Dick Helms -- I stayed with him on one occasion -- talking about the [word unintelligible] caliber of young people who would come in, almost out of school....

DCI REMARKS TO CIRA

Woolett  
at  
CIRA lunch  
Put in  
RSM  
NO HAND  
OUT

I am pleased to be here with the old-timers. I'm an old-timer too. On the other hand, as DCI I'm a new-timer. I hope that doesn't make me a two-timer!

I came here with a high respect for the Agency and for the caliber and professionalism of its staff, past and present. What I have seen so far has strengthened that view. I bring to this job a long-standing dedication to and belief in the mission of this Agency.

Some 40 years ago, I went to London to set up a secretariat for David Bruce. He was then Commander of the OSS Detachment in General Eisenhower's Command. One of my duties was to serve as secretary of the committee charged with studying intelligence organizations--the British and others. The idea was to develop recommendations for a permanent peacetime central intelligence service in the United States. As you know, that was something we had never had before. I came back to Washington to help General Donovan prepare a memorandum to President Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It urged the creation of a central intelligence service. So in a sense I was there at the beginning. Nobody saw me, but I was there.

While in the European Theater, I worked closely and formed life-long friendships with Bill Quinn, Director of the Strategic Services Unit after World War II, Allen Dulles, Dick Helms and Bill Colby--the last three all

-serving in the role I have now assumed. That means quite a lot to me, and I am delighted to follow in their footsteps.

I carry a vivid recollection of Dick Helms saying on one occasion in the sixties--before he became DCI--that he had remained in the Agency for over 20 years. He had resisted offers of more money in the private sector because his work reminded him daily of how "beleaguered" our country is in the world. The word "beleaguered" made a very deep impression on me. I understand it to mean surrounded by danger. I am always reminded of the dedication to country which Dick Helms conveyed on that occasion--and which he exemplified in his 30 years of service to intelligence. I have a comparable admiration for those of you who have lived intelligence careers -- for your dedication and professionalism.

The work of intelligence is even more important today. If Dick Helms had to use the unusual word "beleaguered" to describe the condition of the United States in the late 1960s, how would we describe our situation today? We face an adversary over which we no longer have military superiority. An adversary which has demonstrated a will to use military force outside of its borders. An adversary constantly using skill and resourcefulness in providing weapons, training, organization and leadership to proxy armies, revolutionary groups and terrorists throughout the world--even on our very doorstep in Central America.

Our country depends heavily on intelligence if it is to cope adequately with these threats. We've got to summon the will and find the resources to

revive and apply the whole range of capabilities developed in this Agency over the years. The President and Congress need what we have to offer.

*adch  
muh  
luc.* We face these new challenges after having been severely kicked around in the political process and in the organs of public opinion. We must not let that deter us from the job we have to do.

The intelligence profession is one of the most honorable professions to which Americans can aspire. You know that and I know that. More importantly, the President knows it--and so does the American public. We can hold our heads high as we serve our country--as we call on young Americans to serve in intelligence--as we ask American scholars to serve by sharing their insights and their scholarship with us. We have one of the largest scholarly communities in the world--with enough PhDs today to staff a university. Intelligence work is the one activity in the whole government which has a direct impact on our ability to address the many concerns that may threaten the security of our country or our way of life. I feel that very deeply, as I know you do.

President Reagan has promised to strengthen intelligence where it needs to be strengthened. He has talked frequently to me about his admiration of and support for the CIA. He has given CIA a deputy, Admiral Inman, who brings rich experience and universal acclaim from inside and outside the intelligence community. The President has signaled his intention to do what he can to support our work by affording me Cabinet rank and by giving Admiral Inman a fourth star.

This is a time of budget concern, and I intend to define overall needs with care and restraint, but I will not be bashful about asking for the resources necessary to carry out the tasks given to us. I am specifically interested in developing the resources needed to provide both the facilities and the incentives necessary to encourage the career-long building of analytical and other specialized skills.

I know that all of you are as anxious to see improvement in the Agency's capabilities and its performance as I am. All of us have heard a variety of opinions about the quality of intelligence performance in recent years. You can take your pick of those opinions. Nevertheless, I do know that over its history this Agency has developed the finest intelligence capability in the world.

There can be no doubt about the enormous creativity and ingenuity which has been displayed in developing new sources of information and new analytical tools. It is without precedent anywhere. We certainly have at CIA the finest and most highly developed staff of political, military and economic analysts ever assembled. Yet, as I have gone up to the Hill to testify before committees of Congress, I have heard specific criticisms which we cannot and should not shrug off.

The most frequent criticism is that our interpretations and assessments are overly optimistic. They tend to place a benign interpretation on information that should be raising danger signals. When you are specifically charged, as we are, with warning of danger in time for the U.S. to react, it's rather a good idea not to be optimistic. One of my aims will be to inject into the



intelligence process a greater degree of skepticism. Also, a greater care in weighing evidence to bring out the range of probabilities that a policymaker needs. It's our obligation to present conclusions which emphasize hard reality--undistorted by preconceptions or by wishful thinking.

We will question our assumptions and conclusions. We will call them as we see them, whether weighing evidence for an intelligence assessment or trying to improve some procedure. I intend to make our judgments meaningful by seeing that the President and his advisers get and pay attention to the full range of varying opinions which result from the collective work at CIA and throughout the Community. How do I get their attention? Being a member of the President's Cabinet provides the necessary leverage. How do I keep it? By making our judgments more useful, of course.

I have asked the people of CIA neither to trim their sails to any political, budgetary or bureaucratic interest, nor to permit any philosophical or personal bias to shade or modify the facts. I promise you I will preserve our independence of judgment and get our conclusions to the President and his advisers free of any political or personal considerations or philosophical bias. It remains essential that we keep our objectivity.

Moreover, I have asked our analysts to be willing to look beyond the immediate facts on occasion--even at the risk of being wrong. I have assured them that they will not be penalized for taking the calculated risk. We must be better--and we will be.

I will say that I came to CIA without any preconceptions. I have some ideas derived from my experiences as a consumer of intelligence--as a member of the General Advisory Committee on Arms Control (known as the SALT I negotiations), as Undersecretary of State and as a member of the Murphy Commission. I was also on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. I came to some conclusions during those times but that doesn't mean that I won't change my mind. I found in SALT I, for example, that some of the judgments were soft. They leaned toward a kind of benign interpretation rather than a harder interpretation of assessing or viewing a situation as being more dangerous. With the Murphy Commission I came down against breaking up the Agency into a lot of components, as some of the bills on the Hill have proposed. I don't expect to change my mind about that. At the PFIAB, I supported a competitive assessment process, but I am open as to how that can best be done. Like everybody else I am in favor of improving our analytical capabilities--that is something easy to be for.

| In my meetings and discussions at CIA I have been greatly impressed with the caliber of the people, with the professionalism, and with the dedication and loyalty of all those I have met. I intend to proceed carefully to do whatever needs to be done to get the benefit of all the experience and judgment that has been developed at the Agency. My general approach is that I will be careful to preserve what we have and to upgrade wherever we can. I know that all of you will approve that undertaking.

President Reagan has already requested that the entire community make recommendations on how to improve our capability to deal with terrorism, acquire intelligence, and deal with espionage by reducing over-regulation and by trimming

restrictions which are not essential to protecting individual constitutional rights. That process is well under way. Those Congressional committees I have spoken to have shown a universal disposition to support the Identities Act and to find a way to ease the burdens of the Freedom of Information Act. They generally support and want to work with the Community to improve intelligence collection and assessment. They want to stress the concept of oversight without the preoccupation of looking for real or fancied abuses or illegalities that allegedly existed in the past. I think the public and the Congress are basically very supportive of us. I am certain the Administration is.

I thank you all for your service to your country. My covenant to you is to preserve the best you have done, which is precious indeed, and to move ahead vigorously to deal with the new problems we face.

In parting, let me remind you that if the current generation at CIA stands tall, it is because it stands on the shoulders of its predecessors. Thank you.