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INTERVIEW WITH VICTOR MARCHETE

JOHN WINGATE: My guest is former CIA officer Victor Marchete. He wrote the book, in a way an expose of the CIA, called "The Rope Dancer". Victor Marchete, has the CIA spied on you since you wrote the book?

VICTOR MARCHETE: Not in a clandestine sense, no, but they have had people get in touch with me. A security officer, for example, who pestered me for several months until I finally showed him a copy of the manuscript, after which -- after he read it, I never heard from him again.

WINGATE: Were you ever asked to change the manuscript?

MARCHETE: No. No one ever asked me to do that. They knew my feelings very well. I had worked in the executive suite for three years and knew the director personally along with all the other top people, and they knew that I felt this way and spoke out against these things while I was in the agency.

WINGATE: On the 6:15 interview, the guest, Victor Marchete, was for fourteen years in the executive suite of the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington. Who was the director then?

MARCHETE: The three years that I was in the executive suite it was Richard Helms, the current director, who was then the director. Prior to that time, when I was working my way up through assignments on the analytical side of the house, Admiral Rayburn was director, and prior to him John McCone. Prior to him, Alan Dulles.

WINGATE: What's life like in the executive suite on a day-to-day basis of the CIA?

MARCHETE: It's a strange mixture of some spooky elements where you know important decisions are being made behind closed doors, and at the same time very bureaucratic. A lot of paper

-2-

shuffling. A lot of meetings that have to be attended to. The normal kind of activities that go on in any executive suite of a large organization.

WINGATE: Do spies come stealthily in and out much as they would do in an old-time movie with George Sanders?

^{Gen. L.} MARCHETE: Not really, but some very famous people like General Galen, head of the German Intelligence, who just recently resigned, would pop in quietly for lunch with the director and some of the bigwigs. Other Intelligence leaders from other areas of the world would occasionally drop in.

WINGATE: Meeting in secret with the CIA.

MARCHETE: Meeting in privacy with the CIA. Their visits were not necessarily advertised, certainly not their visit to the CIA.

WINGATE: Did the CIA often confer with the White House?

MARCHETE: Yes, in a number of ways. During the Johnson administration, the director used to attend the Tuesday afternoon lunches along with MacNamara and Rusk, where Intelligence matters would on occasion be discussed. Usually, unless it's a highly sensitive matter, so extremely so that only the director can discuss it with the President, things seemed to be handled largely through the President's national security advisers.

WINGATE: Now, who directs and where is it directed from, the day-to-day operations of our Intelligence agents around the world?

MARCHETE: Well, speaking only of the CIA, they're directed by the director, Richard Helms, through his...

WINGATE: Does he know where every spy is?

MARCHETE: I don't think anybody knows where every spy is. That is a fact. There have been times when I have been assigned to do studies to find out for the director if there were any Fulbright students being used as agents.

WINGATE: Why?

MARCHETE: Because Senator Fulbright had been told by some of his students that they were recruited by the CIA, and the director wanted to find out if this indeed was the case. We were unable to unequivocally and absolutely say that no Fulbright students were recruited, because although the director said they shouldn't be and the chief of the clandestine services said they shouldn't be...

-3-

WINGATE: They didn't want Fulbright students.

MARCHETE: That's right, but by the time one got out to the field one couldn't be sure of what the station chief was doing or the actual case officer.

WINGATE: But, Victor Marchete, I'm trying to nail down who actually says out there, "You in Vietnam or you in Italy, get that man." Who gives the order?

MARCHETE: There are times when the director gives it. There are times when the chief of clandestine services gives it. There are other times when nobody gives it. That is the point. Insofar as the bulk of the Intelligence community is concerned, there is very little direction on specific issues because there is very little review of specific issues. It's usually done on an ad hoc basis. The CIA and the US Intelligence community, a six-billion-dollar annual business, is not reviewed thoroughly enough by Congress or by the leading administrative executive officials.

WINGATE: Are you telling me we don't know sometimes what our spies are doing?

MARCHETE: I am saying yes. There are times when we learn after the fact what has happened.

WINGATE: After fourteen years, why did you quit the CIA? Had you breached security?

MARCHETE: No, I left because I had in the last few years up in the executive suite come to realize that the Intelligence community was too large and needed to be reformed. It required much more direction and control. It has much too much military influence, which is bad in a variety of ways.

WINGATE: How?

MARCHETE: One of the ways is that the military delays and tries desperately to influence Intelligence which they consider -- this is the final product, like national Intelligence estimates -- which they feel do not support their military programs. For example, if the CIA is doing a national intelligence estimate on anti-ballistic missile development in the Soviet Union, which I have done in the past when I worked for the CIA, and as the staff man I may want to say, based on all the research that was provided to me, that the Soviets are doing very little in this field. They're not likely to have much success in the next few years. The military sees this as hampering their attempts for funds for their own ABM program. So they begin a campaign to prove that the Soviets really are doing this.

-4-

WINGATE: Well, what are the Soviets doing?

MARCHETE: As of the time I left, they had a rinky-dink system up around Leningrad and they were putting in some ABM's around the Moscow area. Most of this information has been little by little leaked to the press...

WINGATE: But at this point I don't know whether to believe you, the military, or what. Is this what this sort of bureaucracy leads to?

MARCHETE: Exactly. You can't get...

WINGATE: I don't know what to believe.

MARCHETE: You cannot get a definitive answer. This is why the Intelligence community must be reviewed.

WINGATE: You mean spies must be made to work and do their work well is what you're saying.

MARCHETE: Exactly.

WINGATE: You're not against an intelligence community.

MARCHETE: No, I firmly believe in Intelligence. I just think it should be run properly.

WINGATE: The guest, Victor Marchete, for fourteen years a top-ranking CIA officer. He wrote the book, "The Rope Dancer", a spy novel on the black art of espionage. Quick question: is the art black?

MARCHETE: At times it is, yes, and at other times it's gray.