

Thomas Polgar

Executive Registry

82-2000-17

Mr. John N. McMahon
Deputy Director Central Intelligence
Washington, D. C.

Dear John :

Please accept my thanks for your courtesy and consideration you have shown me on the 16th of June. It was especially nice that you covered my career in some detail with your kind words and that two of my children and my daughter-in-law could be present to hear you. They considered the medal ceremony and the visit to Headquarters a very great experience.

Now to business. You will recall that I left with you a memorandum reflecting on the state of U. S. intelligence. I concluded that the unfavorable trends must be reversed and that this could only be done by beginning with a comprehensive examination of the causes of our difficulties.

Bobby Inman's remarks as quoted in the New York Times on 5 July suggest that he, too -- and looking at it from a perspective quite different from mine -- feels that we will not be able to meet our requirements if we continue along our current paths. He said that the U. S. intelligence community "is marginally capable to deal with the world of the late 80's and 90's", he cited a "minimal effort both in collection and analysis about many of the non-communist countries" and he faulted our ability to "understand trends before we get to the level of a crisis."

Retirement gives me the luxury to read and think more than was ever possible on active duty. As I get older and presumably wiser I see that at the senior levels we tend to get so caught up in the urgency of daily business that little time and energy remain for reflection and conscious planning.

Indeed, planning as such has virtually disappeared as a substantive function in the Agency and to the extent that it exists, it is related primarily to budgetary requirements. During my June visit to Headquarters, where I had discussions with three operating components, I found little indication of plans beyond the tomorrow and I sensed a total preoccupation with the tasks at hand. The assumption seemed to be that everything is going to remain more or less the way it is.

(over)

L265

- 2 -

I know from my own experience that advice from the outside is seldom practical. Those on the outside do not have access to the daily flow of information which influences the decisions of the management, nor are they exposed to the cross-currents of inter-agency relations with delineate the possibilities in the governmental structure.

Having said that, I suggest that you establish an Agency Planning Board for the purpose of examining our generic problems and to attempt to develop some guide-lines for the longer range future. This would have to be a continuing undertaking and could be staffed somewhat along the lines of the old Office of National Estimates, i.e. a small, compact staff doing the research and the leg-work for a Board of rather senior, prestigious but mentally still active people. You will want individuals with a proven track record, capable of balanced judgment and with the independence that comes from no longer having to worry about fitness reports or promotion.

In addition to the substantive improvements which may result from a better planned approach as a basis for management decisions, the mere existence of a Planning Board could have the following beneficial results :

- A. Act as a catalyst for substantive suggestions from within the Agency ;
- B. Permit unhurried discussions of problems in an atmosphere free of bureaucratic jealousies ;
- C. Improve public relations, in the sense of demonstrating the desire of Management to prepare for the requirements of the future in a systematic and structured fashion.

Should you wish to discuss the above concept, or any other matter on which I may be of assistance to you, I would be pleased and eager to go to Headquarters on consultation at any time of your convenience.

Yours, as ever

Tom

Thomas Polgar

P.S. You are our great hope. If changes do not come from you, they just won't happen.