

3 on the CIA — the good soldier vs. the others

IN SEARCH OF ENEMIES: A CIA Story, John Stockwell
(W.W. Norton & Co., \$12.95)

HONORABLE MEN: My Life in the CIA, William Colby and
Peter Forghatch (Simon and Schuster, \$12.95)

UNCLOAKING THE CIA, Howard Frazier, ed., (The Free
Press, \$12.95)

It is hardly possible to have a neutral opinion about the Central Intelligence Agency these days. The nation's chief intelligence-gathering arm has been in the news on a more-or-less regular basis for the past ten years, and most of it has not been of the type to gladden the hearts of Agency supporters.

Assassination attempts against Patrice Lumumba, Fidel Castro, Salvador Allende and Rafael Trujillo, escapades with right-wing insurgents all over the globe, domestic surveillance, letter-opening campaigns, brush-fire wars, alliances with Howard Hughes and the Mafia — this is the stuff that news of the CIA is made of. Reports of successful operations to help freedom fighters, save American lives or produce useful intelligence operation — these have a more difficult time reaching our ears.

The three books at hand aren't likely to help anyone make up his or her mind. "Uncloaking the CIA" is, according to the publisher's notes a "collection of twenty-five electrifying accounts of CIA wrongdoing" that were presented at Yale University in 1975. The list of contributors gives an indication that this makes no attempt at a balanced presentation; it includes Allende's widow and a Communist Party official.

One essay, by writer Kirkpatrick Sale, is valuable. By its very nature, Sale notes, the CIA has been involved in domestic surveillance during every day of its existence. Part of its function is contacting foreign travellers coming to the U.S. and Sale says the Agency maintains 36 field offices around the country. Sale examines the CIA in terms of its bureaucratic function, determines that it can hardly be anything other than it is, and urges its abolition.

THERE IS MORE MEAT, and more credibility, to be found in "Honorable Men" and "In Search of Enemies." Reading the two as companion works, however, is distressing — they give diametrically opposing views of similar events. For reasons that will be explained, Stockwell's account is more convincing.

William Colby is the quintessential civil servant, spending most of his working years in the CIA. He was appointed director during the height of Watergate in 1973, receiving the news from Gen. Alexander Haig, and was summarily fired by Gerald Ford in 1975.

He appears to be a genuinely brave man, having parachuted into occupied France and Norway during World War II. He feels his term at the head of the CIA was marked by courage, too. Colby made almost daily trips to Capitol Hill to talk about the agency's activities, acts denounced by his opponents but that Colby felt were his constitutional duty.

His memoirs read like those of a career civil servant — drained of life. One problem may be Colby's preoccupation with arcane internal politics; a greater problem lies in the fact that the CIA received the text of this book before it was published, through a long-standing agreement with its employees.

Like the good soldier he is, Colby writes, "I do not agree with all the excisions the Agency required, but I have conformed to them because I thought them reasonable, even if mistaken. I believe them well within the proper limits of concern for the legitimate secrecy of our intelligence sources and for the avoidance of diplomatic conflict over intelligence sources."

His story reads like the official account that it is; one would like to see what he left out. And although Colby continually speaks of his duties under the U.S. Constitution, the feeling is left that his real loyalty is to the Agency. Assassinations are banned because they are impractical as well as immoral; although the Phoenix program which Colby ran in Vietnam identified Viet Cong, he accepts no responsibility for their subsequent execution by the South Vietnamese.

THE STORY of John Stockwell, a 12-year CIA officer who ran the Angola Task Force and later quit in disgust, by comparison, reads like a good guy vs. bad guy shoot-em-up.

Unlike Colby, Stockwell left the blood in his tale; it was published without the usual advance copies to prevent the CIA from blocking its publication.

By his account, the Agency's case officers (the ones who run operations) are stupid, venal, occasionally crooked and bureaucrats through and through, as concerned about their own futures in the Agency as they are with the success of any operation.

In a three-way fight in Angola, Stockwell says they supported the wrong side, spent millions of dollars on armaments the Africans didn't know how to use or maintain, and let millions more slip through the cracks.

Its hired mercenaries drew world attention with psychopathic killings and CIA officials consistently lied to Congress about the entire operation.

Stockwell is not a zealot. He admits he liked working for the Agency and had a difficult time giving it up. But after observing its operations first-hand, he reaches the same conclusion as the 25 authors of "Uncloaking the CIA."

"Our survival as a free people has obviously not been dependent on the fumbling activities of the clandestine services of the CIA, but on the dynamism of our economic system and the competitive energies of our people." —ALEX TAYLOR