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Letters to the editor

'I did not leak the family jewels'

While Edward Jay Epstein seems to have abandoned his earlier hypothesis that I might have been a Soviet "mole" within CIA [a "mole" is the word for an agent whose job is to burrow into and eventually undermine the other side's intelligence system — Ed.] in his *Commentary* article which *The Star* reprinted on Aug. 6, he makes other equally far-fetched assertions which call for clear rebuttal.

I did not leak the so-called "family jewels" to Seymour Hersh of *The New York Times*. Mr. Hersh came to me before his Dec. 22, 1974, *Times* article with a much exaggerated account of those past events. It was clear to me that he was going to publish that story, so I tried to bring him down to a more accurate perspective, and I gave him no material he did not already have.

Second, my comments to Hersh and my testimony about CIA during 1975 had absolutely no connection with my professional differences of opinion with James Angleton over how counterintelligence should be conducted in CIA. Mr. Epstein seems to have missed the account of my conversation with Mr. Angleton on Dec. 20, 1974, which appears on page 396 of my book, "Honorable Men," where I clearly said that both he and I knew that his movement from the post as CIA's chief of counterintelligence was not connected with Mr. Hersh's article.

Third, my change in the CIA counterintelligence structure strengthened rather than weakened that effort over the way it was conducted previously, from which I could find no tangible results.

WILLIAM E. COLBY

Fourth, I certainly did favor the recruitment of additional agents in so-called "hard-target" areas, including the Soviet Union, following a program initiated in the mid 1960s in CIA. I do not have access to the details of the Lipavsky case at this time, but I note from the public accounts of it that CIA apparently tried him out and abandoned him after a few weeks of its usual cautious testing. The Soviets apparently utilized these tentative contacts as the basis for a concocted attempt to smear the Jewish activist movement.

Perhaps Mr. Epstein's next (fifth) theory to explain my change in CIA's counterintelligence machinery and my 1975 testimony will look at the straightforward accounts of both contained in my book. The first was to make counterintelligence more efficient, helping and not hindering our positive intelligence mission. The second was an appreciation that a new day had dawned from the old days of total secrecy and unquestioned executive power over intelligence, and a belief that CIA in this new era must be accountable to the Congress and to the American people as well as to the president.

I stand by both of these beliefs.

William E. Colby
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(NOTE: For those who came in late, the Epstein piece alleged that Mr. Colby, as director of the CIA in 1975, came close to wrecking the agency by leaking to The New York Times *reports of the agency's domestic skulduggery, referred to as the "family jewels.")*