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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: WILLIAM COLBY

a somewhat candid conversation with the former director of the cia

William Colby is cast in the grand mold: Princetonian, soldier, lawyer, spy. He served as a commando paratrooper in France and Norway during World War Two and with the Office of Strategic Services, the precursor of the Central Intelligence Agency. For those extremely dangerous missions—dropping behind enemy lines and blowing up railroad tracks—Colby won the Bronze Star, the Croix de guerre, the Silver Star and Saint Olaf's Medal. Thinking he was going to pursue a legal career, he returned to school after the war and practiced law for three years. Then along came the fledgling CIA and Colby was recruited. His first overseas assignment, in 1951, was as political attaché to the Stockholm Embassy, a cover for intelligence work in Scandinavia. In 1953, he was transferred to Rome, where Clare Booth Luce was Ambassador to Italy. One mission there was to intervene in Italian politics in an attempt to keep the Communists from taking over. This much-criticized operation involved pouring vast sums of money (officially, several million dollars) into the Italian political arena.

Colby arrived for his first Vietnam tour in 1959 to take a position as deputy chief of station at Saigon. In 1960, he was moved up to chief of station and in 1962 became head of CIA's Far East

Division. After five years in that job, he was recruited as deputy head of CORDS, the over-all structure under which the infamous Phoenix program was carried out. Since CORDS was run by the State Department, Colby took a "leave without pay" from CIA. When he returned to Washington in 1971, due to the serious (and ultimately fatal) illness of his daughter, he rejoined CIA and, in 1972, was given the job of executive director-comptroller—a seemingly dull job that, in fact, gave Colby a rare overview of the agency and its inner workings.

Under James Schlesinger's short regime as CIA director, Colby was made deputy director of operations. When Attorney General Richard Kleindienst had to resign as a result of Watergate, Schlesinger became Secretary of Defense. President Nixon then gave Colby the nod to head the world's most widely publicized intelligence service. It was not destined to be easy at the top.

At the time of the Senate hearings to confirm his appointment, Colby was relentlessly grilled about *The Family Jewels*—a secret 693-page report ordered by Schlesinger, directed by Colby and compiled by CIA's own Inspector General's Office. It dealt with what Colby calls "some mistakes"—specifically CIA abuses ranging from assassination plans

to dosing people with mind-control drugs, to domestic spying. During the hearings, posters went up around Washington showing Colby as the ace of spades and accusing him of assassinating 20,000 people under the Phoenix program.

His tenure as director was continuously plagued with bad publicity. At one press meeting, he told a group of editors that CIA did not use American newsmen as spies. Later, he checked, found that the agency had used some newsmen and called back to report this to the press. The story was immediately reported under banner headlines, and thus began the furor over CIA use of journalists that continues to this day. During his final year in that office, Colby sometimes spent as much time testifying about CIA's activities as he did running the agency. And when *The New York Times* revealed some of the details of *The Family Jewels* in a December 1974 story, the lid blew off. Colby knew that his career was over. It was just a matter of time—and of taking the heat for Watergate, Chile, domestic spying and just about everything else that could be dragged into the House and Senate hearings. On November 2, 1975, President Gerald Ford fired Colby in the traditional way:



"I think it is quite possible [that a nuclear weapon will be exploded in an aggressive manner]. A single shot, two shots, are quite possible in the next



"I don't have a problem with the moral justification that if a man is a tyrant, then somebody under him has the right to shoot him. But that doesn't mean a separate country has a right to do it"



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"It's important that people like myself speak out, yet not conceal the fact that there are spies and that there need to be; that in the past 20 years CIA has made some mistakes."

He offered him another job, which Colby turned down.

To find out what a major intelligence officer would be willing—or be allowed—to say about America's most mysterious and notorious branch of service, we sent *Articles Editor* Laurence Gonzales, who for years has written on intelligence-related matters for *PLAYBOY*, to talk with him. Gonzales' report:

"I first determined to interview Colby about two years ago, when I appeared on a television show and learned from the moderator that he had had Colby as a guest. During the course of their talks, Colby had said that CIA had never assassinated anybody. I wanted to look in his eyes and have him repeat that. When we finally sat down over a tape recorder, I learned what a master of language he was and how well his years of answering hostile questions had served him. Questioning Colby was like talking to a man who has something hidden in his pocket. You must guess what it is. You have no clues and your question must be exactly right—close doesn't count. If it is a piece of gold and you ask if it is money, you will learn nothing. And if you happen on the right answer, the man is bound by an oath not to tell you that you have guessed correctly.

"CIA's reality is different from our reality. Widely publicized all over the world was the fact that CIA built a spy ship called the *Glomar Explorer* to raise a sunken Russian *Golf Class* submarine. Yet Colby, under his secrecy agreement, is not allowed to talk about what is common knowledge to the rest of the world. Officially, to him, the story does not exist. It is very 1984.

"During the interview, Colby often would pause after hearing a question and think for a long time—sometimes 90 seconds or more. And when he finally answered, it would be almost as if he had been trying to remember the exact wording of an official statement on the subject, as if he did not want to use his own mind but wanted to reiterate what the Government had already said. Understandably, he wants to protect many legitimate secrets. But some of his responses made me wonder about where he draws the line in doing so, though he insisted time and again that he does not lie.

"He has a staggering grasp of world political events—as would be expected—and has at his finger tips the details of the most obscure machinations around the globe. It struck me that this contrasts sharply with his lapses in memory on certain subjects.

"The interview was conducted in his home and office over a period of some weeks, resulting in almost 20 hours of taped material. Even the casual reader will notice the lack of meaningful information regarding certain subjects, such as Watergate, to use one glaring example. We put a good deal of material

on tape about Watergate and it was resoundingly dull. Colby seemed to have absolutely no recollection of certain aspects of the case and absolutely nothing to say about others. For example, James McCord was the man who left the piece of tape on the door—which led to the discovery of the burglars in the act. But McCord was an excellent CIA security officer, bringing up the question of how he could do something that stupid—or whether, perhaps, McCord's act was intentional. Colby, in responding to this, merely shrugged and allowed that McCord was probably an all-right security officer. Period. In general, there seem to be whole areas that Colby has made a personal policy decision not to think about. He told me that he purposely didn't read certain controversial CIA-related books, so that he wouldn't have to talk about them. On the face of it, this seems to contrast with the ample evidence of research in *'Honorable Men,'* Colby's recent book published by Simon & Schuster. The careful reader will also

"CIA is the best intelligence service in the world. The Soviets did some brilliant work years ago, but I don't think they're doing that well now."

notice certain inconsistencies or even inaccuracies in some of Colby's statements. Although many were challenged, I have no way of knowing what Colby's sources are or whether future researchers can prove him right or wrong.

"Generally, preparing for an interview involves simple research in libraries. When dealing with one of the world's foremost spies, however, material is not so easy to come by, and some rather specialized sources had to be consulted. Although most of them did not care to be identified, the assistance of Asa Baber, a frequent *PLAYBOY* contributor and former Marine officer, was essential to the preparation of this interview.

"Colby and I began at his home just outside Washington. His home life suggests another side of this man that does not match the usual image of the hard, cold, gray-man spy. It is a relaxed—if well thought out—atmosphere. Inside, the lighting is subdued. Beautiful Oriental artifacts are everywhere, some so delicate one is afraid they might break if looked at too intensely. Colby's wife appears to be his opposite: lively, grinning, fun-loving and eager to make conversation. As we sat down, she brought out an array of cakes and served them

with coffee. Occasionally, she would return with more hot coffee, smiling brightly. To begin, I asked "a question about something that had always intrigued me."

PLAYBOY: What was it like to be the head of CIA and really know what's going on?
COLBY: Wonderful! The biggest change in my life, frankly, was the day I walked out of CIA Headquarters at Langley and no longer read "The Morning News." I work very hard now to try to keep up with what's happening in the rest of the world and I know I'm not in the same ball park in terms of what I knew then.

PLAYBOY: What is "The Morning News"?
COLBY: An attempt to encapsulate the major events of the previous day. It's really very good. I made it into a newspaper, because I found that a very useful way to present information, with headlines and all the rest.

PLAYBOY: You're now retired, but people may wonder: Has he really retired? Once CIA, always CIA, as they say.

COLBY: I have two connections at CIA, my pension and my secrecy agreement. I hope I keep both.

PLAYBOY: Do you still consult with CIA?
COLBY: I canceled my clearance the day I left office. I have not seen one classified bit of information since I left. Oh, both former director George Bush and current director Admiral Stansfield Turner have asked me to speak at their training courses. I've seen them for little chats; they've picked my brain. And every now and again I call up over there and pass along somebody who's interested in having his name dropped in for possible employment.

PLAYBOY: What is CIA, as you would define it?

COLBY: CIA is part of the United States Government whose responsibility is to know what's going on abroad, collecting information openly, using technology, electronics, photography, as well as traditional clandestine methods, to obtain information that is kept secret from us by other countries, when that information is of importance to the safety and welfare of our people. That's the main function of CIA. In addition, intelligence—knowing things—can avoid wars. If you have intelligence, you know the threats. But I go even further: If you know the reasons for the other side's hostilities, you can then begin to resolve those things with negotiation instead of struggle.

PLAYBOY: How good is CIA?

COLBY: It's the best intelligence service in the world.

PLAYBOY: What are the other top-ranking intelligence services, in your opinion?

COLBY: Well, I don't really like to discuss foreign intelligence services very much, because I don't think that—I don't want to talk about them. But, obviously,

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I learned some of my lessons from the British. The Israeli is obviously a good intelligence service. The Soviets did some brilliant work years ago when they took advantage of their reputation as the leading anti-Fascists against Hitler, Mussolini and so forth and recruited a number of high officials in democratic countries such as Kim Philby, such as some of the Americans in the atomic period and so forth. But I don't think they're doing that well now, because they don't represent anything positive anymore. The Soviets during most of the Fifties conducted a major campaign to the effect that they represented the peace-loving forces. And they had peace conferences and they had a great propaganda mechanism. And yet, when we had an antiwar movement, it didn't become a Communist movement. The Communists didn't run that movement, didn't profit by it, because the people who were in the antiwar movement here, the Americans, had no sympathy for the Soviets. They were against their own Government, yes. But they didn't translate that into support for the Soviet situation and I don't think the Soviets recruited anybody worth a darn out of that.

PLAYBOY: If you are our protector, who is going to protect us from you?

COLBY: The separate constitutional structure, the separation of powers. That's what's going to protect you from me. And the press.

PLAYBOY: Has CIA been hurt by the press?

COLBY: Oh, it's been hurt. It's been hurt by the sensationalism. I think the only word you can use is hysteria. Intelligence today is a far cry from the old spy. It has changed our knowledge of the world almost totally. Things that 15, 20 years ago we wouldn't have dreamed of knowing we can now measure. I think it's important that people like myself speak out, yet not conceal the fact that there are spies and that there need to be; that in the past 20 years CIA has made some mistakes—sure.

PLAYBOY: By mistakes you apparently mean such abuses as attempting to assassinate Fidel Castro.

COLBY: I think assassination is as Talleyrand once said to Napoleon: "Sire, it is not only wrong, it is worse than wrong. It is stupid." Now, I don't have any problem with the old moral justification that if a man is a total tyrant, then somebody under him has the right to shoot him. But that doesn't mean a separate country has a right to do it. If I am being oppressed by someone—my family has been destroyed, I've been sent to jail and all the rest—then I have a right to respond. That's what the Declaration of Independence says. It is our right, our duty to overthrow a tyrant. That's old church doctrine and

old liberal doctrine and all the rest. But that is different from a state's assassinating somebody in another country.

Now, I do make one exception. In time of war, if our young men are shooting their young men, and vice versa, I don't think we old men should be immune. Therefore, I would have cheerfully helped assassinate Adolf Hitler in 1944. No doubt about that.

PLAYBOY: If we were being oppressed by Jimmy Carter, should we shoot him?

COLBY: Yeah, if you really were being oppressed. If you don't have other vehicles—and you have lots of other vehicles in this country, known as elections and courts and all that sort of thing.

PLAYBOY: Do you think, then, that the people of Chile should rise up and shoot their oppressive leaders?

COLBY: I just couldn't say. But I think that you are on the point. You're on the description. As I say, the Declaration of Independence states that philosophy very clearly and I'll go with it.

PLAYBOY: How about Uganda? Do the Ugandan people have an obligation to kill Idi Amin?

"I doubt Amin will die a natural death. That's a prediction. I'm not saying we're going to do anything."

COLBY: It would be a moral act if they did.

PLAYBOY: Do we have many CIA people in Uganda?

COLBY: I doubt it, but I don't know. And I really wouldn't want to say one way or the other.

PLAYBOY: If CIA has agents in Uganda, are they encouraging this act?

COLBY: No, that's different. Encouraging them to kill him? No, I don't think that. But helping them in what they want to do? There it would be moral if the safety and welfare of the people of the United States could somehow be related to it.

PLAYBOY: What do you think will happen to Amin?

COLBY: Well, I doubt he will die a natural death. That's a prediction. I'm not saying that we're going to *do* anything.

PLAYBOY: Didn't you start your military-intelligence career as a guerrilla in World War Two?

COLBY: In Norway, in France. Yeah.

PLAYBOY: How do you distinguish among good or bad guerrillas, since you obviously consider yourself one of the former? Ché Guevara was a guerrilla. Ulrike Meinhof was one. Carlos is one.

COLBY: I don't think there's any difference. I don't think a guerrilla is either good or bad. In other words, we get back to the moral judgment about ends and means. In Norway, we were hoping to have a train crash into the river. But I put a fellow up the track with a radio, because if we had a train full of Norwegian women and children, I sure as hell would not blow that bridge. I've stuck my neck out, taken a lot of chances where I'm really a little surprised that I'm alive today. But I'm not one of the "my country, right or wrong" types. Our country can be wrong. I think we've made mistakes. For instance, I respect the antiwar people of the Sixties and early Seventies.

PLAYBOY: If you felt your country were wrong, would you have resisted if you were young and eligible for the draft?

COLBY: That's hard to say. I really have a hard time answering that. If my country is doing something I think is morally wrong—which is what some of the antiwar people felt, I give them that respect—then I think you have to say, "Well, no. There's a moral limit here. This is something I really can't associate with." I can envisage that as a possibility. Say, if we tried to seize Panama—the country, not just the canal: That would be such a violation of my thoughts about where our country ought to go that I would have a tough time deciding. I felt my country made a terrible mistake in overthrowing Diem [in South Vietnam in 1963]. But I stayed within the structure and tried to recover from that shock. If President Kennedy had given the order to have him shot, then I think I would have. . . .

PLAYBOY: What would you have done?

COLBY: I have no idea at this point.

PLAYBOY: You obviously have very strong feelings about the Diem overthrow and we will come back to that. But one more question on this subject of disagreeing with your country: Had you been in college during the Sixties, on which side of the student movements do you think you would have been?

COLBY: That's an interesting question. I don't think I would have been in the antiwar movement. I was in Princeton when the British had the pacifist Oxford movement in '36 and '37. I thought that pretty farfetched, pretty absurd. So did the pacifists, two or three years later. I think if I had been in college during the late Sixties, I would have tried to draw some kind of middle position between those who were opposed to the war as immoral and those who were opposed to the opposers—the hard-hat kind of people.

PLAYBOY: Do you think the comparison between the Thirties movement in Great Britain and the Sixties movement in America is a fair one?

COLBY: I'm just saying that I'm not a pacifist. I don't believe that unilateral

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pacifism works. There are some things one has to fight for.

PLAYBOY: So the war resisters of the Sixties were wrong?

COLBY: Yes. I think the Government was wrong in the way it did it, but I think the antiwar movement was wrong in feeling that we should not assist in South Vietnam.

PLAYBOY: You fought in World War Two. Do you consider yourself a brave man?

COLBY: I get frightened when things get dangerous. If you're not frightened, you don't really appreciate what the problem is. I get the heat in the top of my mouth once in a while when things are a little dicy. But I don't think you should single yourself out for laudatory adjectives.

PLAYBOY: Still, when you were a commando paratrooper, you were dropped behind enemy lines, at one point in the wrong place. How did you react to such a dangerous situation?

COLBY: I was not very happy about it. No use sitting around analyzing it. At that point, you have made the analysis: You're in the wrong place. It's time to go.

PLAYBOY: Did you kill anyone?

COLBY: Sure, during World War Two.

PLAYBOY: In what situation?

COLBY: In France, an attack with a bunch of French Resistance people. We heard a German plane had been knocked down and we went out to shoot it up and got in a fight. I think we had one wounded and they had a couple killed.

PLAYBOY: Did you see the person you killed?

COLBY: No. I aimed at him, but I didn't see him after that.

PLAYBOY: Did you have an emotional reaction to killing the first time?

COLBY: I didn't like it. I really think we ought to be able to solve our problems in this world in a better way than that.

PLAYBOY: But did it disturb you emotionally?

COLBY: No, I don't think so.

PLAYBOY: What we've been driving at is that some critics have called you cold-blooded. We just asked you how it felt to kill and you said you had no reaction other than an intellectual one.

COLBY: I tried to keep it on that level. I tried to do my duty.

PLAYBOY: When you became a spy, did you consciously try to make your appearance bland?

COLBY: Nondescript.

PLAYBOY: And did that represent a change from what you were like before?

COLBY: No, I don't think so. I was never a flamboyant leader. During World War Two, I got into a little trouble with the MPs in London because a friend of mine and I decided we would make our uniforms a little more colorful and we bought a couple of British green berets.

We were picked up in London for being out of uniform. I think that's probably the first of the American Green Berets, in 1944.

PLAYBOY: What can you tell us of the real CIA, as opposed to the image in popular folklore? For instance, have you seen any movies that deal with spies accurately?

COLBY: There were a couple made after World War Two about the British that I thought were pretty good. I can't give you the titles. Some written accounts of the Cuban Missile Crisis give a pretty good flavor of how intelligence contributes to decision making. Theodore Sorenson's book and the one by—what's his name? With the bow tie? Arthur Schlesinger.

PLAYBOY: Did you see *Three Days of the Condor*?

COLBY: I saw it on an airplane. It's baloney. It's just plain baloney. The baloney part is the theory that there's some interior plot or group in CIA that determines its policies and eliminates those who disagree.

PLAYBOY: What about the TV series *Washington: Behind Closed Doors*?

COLBY: I saw about two of the episodes and I thought they were outrageous. First, the concept that the director of CIA is some independent power in Washington, spending all of his time keeping up with and manipulating American political decisions. Second, the outrage of saying—and it was a veiled reference to Helms—that Helms had blackmailed the President—Nixon—into making him Ambassador [to Iran] by threatening to reveal something about the Watergate affair. Well, of course, the fact is that Helms is the fellow who said no to Watergate, said no to the cover-up, said he wouldn't be involved in it—and it's just outrageous to have that image of the director of CIA and of Helms put on the tube in every home in America. It's just false, false history. It's not even fiction.

PLAYBOY: Many people do not think Helms was as heroic as you say. Some think he perjured himself for Nixon's sake and thus had a hold over Nixon.

COLBY: I don't think Helms perjured himself. And that had nothing to do with Watergate. That was the Chilean thing.

PLAYBOY: We were referring to the Senate hearings in which he apparently lied about CIA involvement.

COLBY: Frankly, I don't think what he said met the legal standards of perjury. With respect to having power, the fact was, he was fired. The fact is, I was fired. So there's no question about whether or not the President has power over the head of CIA.

PLAYBOY: What is your view of the Chilean matter? Helms *did* lie to the Senate, did he not?

COLBY: The main issue was whether or

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not CIA or the United States gave aid to the opponents of Allende in the 1970 election in Chile. Helms's answer was no. Now, a decision was made that we would do some little, minor propaganda activity against Allende, against the prospect of Communist victory there. During the hearing, the question was, Did we give aid to the opponents? There were two opponents of Allende. And I think it's a reasonable construction; when you say, "Did you give aid to the opponents?" you're talking about the opposing candidates. The Supreme Court has set a very high standard for perjury, and the Court heard a case a couple of years ago and basically said that if there is a reasonable construction and you don't tell everything, that's not the problem. The problem is whether you answer the exact language. It's up to the prosecution to ask the right questions to force you to give them flatly false answers. I think there's enough ambiguity there that Helms wouldn't have been convicted by a fair jury.

PLAYBOY: Mr. Colby, he was clearly misleading the committee, was he not?

COLBY: He was trying to protect the secret. Nixon had ordered him to tell nobody that we had been involved in any way in that whole operation in Chile. He was trying to protect the secret his President had told him to keep. And so he did. But I say he did not commit perjury. Not that he wasn't, you know, less than totally responsive.

PLAYBOY: That certainly puts a fine point on it. But let's go on. One of the most sensational recent charges against CIA was made by Edward Jay Epstein in his recent book, *Legend*. In it, he says the Soviets recruited Lee Harvey Oswald to tell them about the U-2 spy plane. Oswald was a radar operator at Atsugi Air Base in Japan, a base used by the U-2. Afterward, he was sent back to the U. S. The Soviets had nothing to do with the assassination of President Kennedy, according to Epstein, but when Oswald shot him, they had to cover his connection with Russia. To accomplish this, Yuri Nosenko posed as a defector to assure CIA, among other things, that Oswald had not been recruited by the K.G.B. In addition, another Soviet agent was sent to corroborate Nosenko, thereby allowing the FBI to assure the Warren Commission that Oswald was a lone, crazed assassin.

COLBY: Whew! [Laughs] First, I don't think there is any credible evidence that Oswald was a Soviet agent while he was in Japan. Oswald was a Marine essentially on guard duty at an air base. A lot of aircraft took off and landed there all the time, including, I guess, the U-2. I can't confirm that the U-2 used the base, but I've heard that it did. But to jump from that to the fact that he was

telling the Soviets something unique is too strong.

PLAYBOY: According to Epstein and others, CIA opened a letter from Oswald in Moscow to his brother, in which Oswald said he had seen Francis Gary Powers. Is that so?

COLBY: It triggers in me somewhere that that has been denied. I'm not sure, but I can't flatly deny it now. But it tickles my brain that somehow we denied it.

PLAYBOY: But wasn't Nosenko trying to cover for a Soviet double agent—known as a mole—who was working his way into CIA?

COLBY: Well, that's the interpretation. There are two teams who have a view about Nosenko. One says that he was a fake. The other says that he was legitimate. It was the formal finding of the senior officers of the agency that he was a legitimate defector. That was the final decision. Not every individual in CIA accepted that.

PLAYBOY: And the alleged mole in CIA?

COLBY: I do not know of any mole in CIA. None has surfaced in the past 30 years. I don't say it is impossible, but I don't believe it has happened.

PLAYBOY: Epstein says it's impossible for us to establish moles inside Russia.

COLBY: That is wrong. I won't tell you what's wrong, but the basic "it's impossible" is wrong.

PLAYBOY: *New York* magazine published an article about the Epstein thesis. Did you read that?

COLBY: Yes. [Pause] The best line in that article, incidentally, is—

[Here, Colby points out a paragraph in the magazine in which an ex-staff member who had worked with former head of CIA counterintelligence James Angleton—whom Colby fired—was asked who the alleged CIA mole might be. The answer: "You might find out who Colby was seeing in Rome in the early Fifties."]

PLAYBOY: How do you interpret that?

COLBY: Well, I didn't understand what it meant when I first read it, frankly. But somebody said to me, "That means that you might have been the mole. And that you might have been in touch with the Russians back then." But, of course, I just deny. I mean, that's nonsense.

PLAYBOY: Is that a Helms-type denial, in which you don't tell everything?

COLBY: [Laughs] I officially, flatly, super-denied it, and I notice it's rather carefully written in the article. But I'm not going to sue anybody. Don't worry about it. I can just deny it.

PLAYBOY: Whatever the Rome incident was, Epstein says that you did have contact with a Frenchman in Vietnam who was a Soviet agent. Further, that when Angleton later brought that to your attention, you blew your stack.

COLBY: I don't remember that at all. I don't really know what that refers to. I don't remember talking to Angleton about it.

PLAYBOY: Why did you fire Angleton and reorganize his counterintelligence department?

COLBY: Well, Angleton's and my differences were professional differences. He believed in a high degree of compartmentation, all counterintelligence centralized in a single staff—a very large single staff. I believe it much more important to get all of the agency conscious of its responsibilities in counterintelligence. I found it very difficult to get any results out of the former system. I felt that the job of CIA is not to fight the K.G.B. but to find out the secret information in another country that is important. Angleton was too secretive in his way of doing business. And I finally came to the decision that either he was going to run that part of the agency or I was. And I was charged by the President and the Congress with running it. I didn't fire him. I offered him a different job. He had had the job for about 20 years and I thought it was time for some new blood.

PLAYBOY: What about the specific charge—the Epstein thesis again—that Angleton and his people were challenging your Soviet sources, so you had to get rid of him?

COLBY: It wasn't my sources. It was the agency's general effort. I believe Angleton felt that some of the sources we had were doubles—and some undoubtedly were, and I don't object to that. But I think his people were hypercritical. Most of our approach is in a defensive, rather than an offensive mode. And this hypersuspicion and hypersecrecy resulted in a disincentive to developing the kind of positive sources we needed. I was not a believer that a Soviet double agent could badly lead the United States astray. That was the theory of the counterintelligence people: that the Soviets could give us some totally false information and cause us to have a perfect disaster.

PLAYBOY: The answer to the specific charge is still not clear, so let's put it this way: In Epstein's words, "The former CIA officers who were involved in the hunt [for the mole] tell me that the "new" CIA has now made a policy decision to believe moles do not exist. All speculation on this subject has been officially designated 'sick think.'" Now, clearly, Epstein is drawing on the Angleton camp, but do you consider that an accurate interpretation?

COLBY: It didn't happen under my watch. Quite the contrary: I say it's possible that there may be moles, but I do not believe there have been.

PLAYBOY: Could you then summarize

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your view of the Nosenko story for us? CIA's Soviet Russian Division prepared an internal report that said Nosenko was a fake.

COLBY: There was a report written, I gather. I never read it. But the responsible people who reviewed it came to the conclusion that the report did not establish what it set out to establish, that Nosenko was a fake. The senior levels of the agency, which reviewed the matter at that time, came to the opposite conclusion. I've checked this recently with one of the senior officers involved and he said absolutely, we went through every little bit of the thing and we came to the conclusion that Nosenko was what he said he was.

PLAYBOY: So Epstein was wrong.

COLBY: Yeah; oh, yeah.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about your credibility. There are many critics of CIA who wouldn't believe you if you gave them the time of day, isn't that true?

COLBY: Oh, yes, sure. Somebody asked me one time, "How can I believe you when you say these things?" My answer is, don't. Your job is to review the alternate statements, come to your own conclusions. Don't just accept what I say.

PLAYBOY: Does being regarded with so much suspicion bother you personally?

COLBY: No. That's part of the job of representing an organization. I think it's quite appropriate.

PLAYBOY: When you say review the alternate statements, we assume that includes the various committee reports on investigations into CIA. But many journalists contradict your statements in those reports. How do you respond to that?

COLBY: I don't think the journalists contradict me. There are some extremists who certainly do contradict me, yes. But if you'll read carefully even what the journalists say, you'll find basically they're agreeing with what I say.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying that journalists who don't agree with you are extremists?

COLBY: No, I'm not saying that at all.

PLAYBOY: Still, the official reports aren't exactly accepted as the final words on CIA abuse.

COLBY: The Rockefeller report is subject to the accusation that it was a little more discreet than it might have been. But the Senate [Church] report I really don't think is. I think that comes out pretty straight. The Pike report I thought was outrageous. It just picked up our own old, internal post-mortems and published them as its findings. That's pretty easy stuff.

PLAYBOY: Many reporters have written about the practice of CIA's using journalists. Should our spies be able to use journalistic cover?

COLBY: Not now, no. Sure, I would like

it, but I recognize as a political fact that that is not going to happen.

PLAYBOY: Could other governments use our journalists, then?

COLBY: Other countries are using journalists to any degree they can. We know that. That's obvious. And, therefore, I do not think that we should bar ourselves from being able to get at the press of other countries.

PLAYBOY: That doesn't answer the question.

COLBY: There are journalists here who have been used by foreign governments, I believe, either consciously or unconsciously.

PLAYBOY: Which ones?

COLBY: I'm not going to name them. But I know a number of countries that have used their nationals as journalists reporting as intelligence agents.

PLAYBOY: Yes, but are they recruiting Americans?

COLBY: I'm trying to see whether I can remember any cases of American journalists and I can't, offhand.

"Somebody asked me one time, 'How can I believe you when you say these things?' My answer is, don't. Come to your own conclusions."

PLAYBOY: Are there times when you intentionally forget things it would be inconvenient to remember?

COLBY: Oh, I think a psychiatrist will say that you unconsciously forget things you don't want to remember. But I don't use that gimmick of saying I don't remember. Now, sometimes your question may put a very fuzzy tingle in the back of my mind and I may not be sure. At that point, I won't say no, but I won't say yes, either. I will probably say I don't really remember, even though there may be a little sort of funny tingle—there may be *something* there, but I don't know what it is.

PLAYBOY: We were discussing Americans who might have been recruited by enemy governments. What about former CIA officer Philip Agee, author of *Inside the Company*, who published a list of the names and locations of active CIA personnel? [Agee was the subject of the August 1975 *Playboy Interview*.]

COLBY: I think Philip Agee can be considered our first defector from CIA. In his book, he thanks the Communist Party of Cuba for its assistance in his research. He decided to resign from

CIA. He wrote us a very warm, grateful letter of resignation. Agee then went off on his own and eventually produced that book. I don't have a problem with its being critical of CIA. That part would have been cleared. The part that would not have been cleared was the list of names of everybody he could remember who had worked with CIA, thereby exposing them to all sorts of potential problems. I find that totally reprehensible. And I would cite his visits to Cuba, the assistance he's had from the Cubans, the fact that he is sufficiently in touch with hostile intelligence groups to be *persona non grata* to the British. I gather now the French and the Dutch have put him out of their countries. Apparently, he has continued connections with some hostile intelligence services that are unsatisfactory to those countries. Those countries didn't do it because we asked them to, that I assure you.

PLAYBOY: Agee wrote a book against the agency's interests. Are there propagandists who write books or make movies and documentary films at the *behest* of the agency?

COLBY: I don't know whether it's all that broad. When you have a cultural contest between the Soviets and the Americans, if the Soviets are putting out their word, then I think we ought to be able to put out ours.

PLAYBOY: That's a pretty evasive answer.

COLBY: If the other side can use ideas that are camouflaged as being local rather than Soviet supported or stimulated, then we ought to be able to use ideas camouflaged as local ideas.

PLAYBOY: So, *have we*—or has CIA?

COLBY: I think CIA did help produce books abroad, yes. In a few cases, it helped produce a book in America for distribution abroad—had it published here. In some cases, it provided material to people who then wrote their own books.

PLAYBOY: This is all very vague. Let's get down to specifics. Praeger and Fodor—two well-known publishing houses—have been mentioned as having been used by CIA.

COLBY: I'm not sure I could say. This is one of those things where I really don't like to name names. Because I really don't think CIA ought to go around making secret arrangements with people and later give out the names.

PLAYBOY: You once mentioned in a committee hearing that CIA used Reuters, the British equivalent of A.P. or U.P.I. Later, you retracted that. Tell us about Reuters.

COLBY: Oh, there's nothing. Unfortunately, that was a pure throw-off phrase, "like Reuters." It wasn't a reference to

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anything in particular. It was just something everybody would identify as a foreign news service. I should have said Tass.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying CIA has never worked with Reuters?

COLBY: Now, you get into these kinds of questions and I have to be very careful. I'm not quite sure of the answer to that particular question. Whether a CIA story ever appeared in Reuters, I really couldn't say. But Reuters was not controlled, run, managed by CIA. That's certainly true.

PLAYBOY: Somewhere—anywhere—has CIA been involved in the production of a movie?

COLBY: Yes. I think so, yes.

PLAYBOY: How about specifics? Do you remember?

COLBY: Yeah, but I don't know enough about it that I want to name it. I mean, I might be off base on the specific arrangement. I always resisted movie projects; they're terribly expensive. There's no use making a movie unless you know how you're going to distribute it. And the usual enthusiasm will get the movie made and then you end up looking around to see how to distribute it—and you can't. So you end up with lots of cans of film in the back room. CIA didn't support *Three Days of the Condor*, that's for sure.

PLAYBOY: What about John Wayne's *The Green Berets*?

COLBY: [Laughs] No. Not the James Bond movies, either.

PLAYBOY: Are there any editors on any newspapers or magazines or in any publishing houses here in the U. S. who are on contract to CIA?

COLBY: I would say the answer is no, according to Turner's directive.

PLAYBOY: When did that stop?

COLBY: I haven't the faintest idea.

PLAYBOY: In any event, you can see what we're getting at. CIA can say it is no longer going to use American journalists and then go ahead and use whoever is excluded by the strictest sense of the definition, thereby producing the same result as if there were no restrictions at all.

COLBY: Oh, yes. It's a terrible problem. It's a difficult problem. Obviously, if something is in one category, you don't do it. If it's in another, you do do it. If it says don't use journalists, then you don't use journalists. If it says don't use authors, you don't use authors. But authors aren't journalists. It's a different business. I mean, use the words for what they say.

PLAYBOY: And when you were director—

COLBY: When I was there, I testified several times that I didn't have anybody

in America. There's no reason for it here. And I mean that literally. There's no reason for CIA; even 20 years ago, there was no particular reason.

PLAYBOY: What about other attempts to mold American opinion?

COLBY: Well, take, for instance, the National Students Association relationship we had. We went to the N.S.A., saying the Soviets were supporting a very large-scale international student effort and we had to match that. And if you American students here can get active in this international field—go to the meetings, stand up and say what you think about America—why, we'll help you in that respect. That is what the CIA funds were used for in support of N.S.A. With one exception, I believe. I think we helped guarantee the mortgage on their headquarters.

PLAYBOY: Under CIA's program to help that organization, didn't it send Gloria Steinem to a foreign political conference at one point?

COLBY: I think she is not very happy about this story these days, because she's been accused—and I think wrongly—of being linked with CIA. She was quoted as having said she was supported by CIA in going to one of those conferences but that CIA had not told her what to say and do; that CIA was providing the means for them to get there but wasn't manipulating or running them.

PLAYBOY: Yet the agency certainly wouldn't have chosen a young Abbie Hoffman to go to those conferences.

COLBY: I guess that if some particularly vocal pro-Soviet figure had been included in the group, we would have asked, "Do we really need to pay for this airline ticket?" But I don't think he had to be a good Eisenhower supporter, either.

PLAYBOY: So you're claiming CIA has not been involved in any domestic propaganda efforts?

COLBY: Essentially not. As I say, you have the fallout problem that has come from CIA efforts abroad. That when you do some covert propaganda work abroad, there's a chance that an American will pick it up and bring it home, or send it home. That's a fallout problem. I think Turner's rule says that if there's any substantial fallout here, you're not to do it. Fundamentally, CIA was interested in affecting foreign opinion. Fundamentally, CIA was not interested in affecting American opinion.

PLAYBOY: Let us ask you one more question about the use of journalists by CIA. The new directive prohibits it, but there's a disclaimer that reads: "Exceptions: No exceptions to the policies and prohibitions stated above may be made except with the specific approval of the

director of Central Intelligence." That doesn't sound like much of a restriction.

COLBY: Well, there's a very simple answer to that. I told the Congress all it has to do is tell the director that it wants to know of any exceptions. And CIA can't get away with not telling them what it has to tell them.

PLAYBOY: Why not?

COLBY: That is very clear. If the Congress wants to supervise, which it does now, then it is very easy for it to supervise. It has the job of writing the appropriation every year.

PLAYBOY: Traditionally, Congress has regarded CIA as a hot potato and has not supervised its activities. Can Congress really supervise it?

COLBY: I think Congressmen know it has to be done. And if the responsibility is firmly on them to do it, they'll do it. No matter what their attitude is, they're going to have to do it. They can't afford to be caught off base.

PLAYBOY: Still, the new directive would appear to have a large loophole. It doesn't, for example, cover free-lance writers.

COLBY: It covers anyone who is accredited.

PLAYBOY: So **PLAYBOY** could give this interviewer leave without pay and he would be clear to work with CIA, correct?

COLBY: If he were a free citizen abroad with no connection to **PLAYBOY**, yes, he could pose as a journalist under that role.

PLAYBOY: Yet you categorically deny that CIA has any media-manipulation programs.

COLBY: Absolutely yes, I'll deny that flatly. Again, in *America*. I hope we won't be barred from the use of Tass.

PLAYBOY: One journalist who charged CIA with massive domestic manipulation was Seymour Hersh of *The New York Times*. But you called him a good American and a good journalist in your recent book. What do you mean by that?

COLBY: He's certainly not disloyal to his country. I think he's loyal to his profession.

PLAYBOY: When is a reporter not a good American?

COLBY: When he sits by for the other side. I think Kim Philby wasn't a good Britisher.

PLAYBOY: Wait a minute; that's a ridiculous analogy. Philby was not a journalist.

COLBY: Yes, he was a journalist.

PLAYBOY: He used journalistic cover—there's a big difference.

COLBY: He was a journalist.

PLAYBOY: Professionally, Philby was a spy.

COLBY: Well, he was lots of things. . . .
PLAYBOY: You know as well as we do that Philby was not a journalist recruited by

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an intelligence agency. He was an intelligence agent posing as a journalist.

COLBY: You're right. You're right. I accept that. You know, that business about answering questions narrowly—it's a terrible problem and I really haven't figured out how to get around it. Because if you answer the questions broadly, you're proved wrong. And, therefore, my only solution has been to answer them narrowly.

PLAYBOY: Some members of the press have kept secrets at your request. Hersh, among others, kept the Glomar Explorer story secret when you asked him to. And didn't Jack Anderson keep some project secret at your request?

COLBY: I asked him to make a change and he did.

PLAYBOY: What was it?

COLBY: Oh, he had run across an operation he felt was over. He had written it up. If it had been over, I wouldn't have said a word to him, but it was still going on. He didn't know it. I called him and asked him if he could stop it. I said, "I think you think it's over, right?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "If it were over, I wouldn't be calling you." Well, then he was interested. I said, "Could you make one change in it?" He did, yes.

PLAYBOY: Yet Anderson gets on television and takes shots at the Government—and with particular glee at CIA.

COLBY: He's a newspaperman. He's supposed to be critical of the Government. It keeps the Government on its toes. It's all right with me. He has brought up a lot of things. So it's all right. He's doing the job that he's supposed to do under the Constitution. He makes me very uncomfortable. I disagree with him rather violently on some things. I think he's wrong on some things. But that's the way the system works. I like the system, even though I don't like all the people we have engaged in it.

PLAYBOY: There are still some newsmen who may go to jail for not revealing their sources. What do you think of that legal question?

COLBY: I think the Supreme Court is wrong. Doing the job of journalism in America requires the ability to protect your sources. I think there ought to be a shield law by which a reporter can refuse to testify about his sources.

[During a pause in one of the many conversations that make up this interview, Colby, without encouragement, brought up the subject of the infamous Phoenix program, part of the Government's "pacification" program that resulted in 20,000 enemy deaths, which some charged were assassinations.]

COLBY: Have we talked about the pacification program or not?

PLAYBOY: Phoenix?

COLBY: Yes.

PLAYBOY: You haven't yet. Do you want to?

COLBY: Oh, yes.

PLAYBOY: You've made your position fairly clear in testimony in the past.

COLBY: Well, I want to make sure that if you have any questions about Phoenix, my explanation is there.

PLAYBOY: We do have questions about Phoenix. You have answered them many times, and yet there remains a very simple one: There were 20,000 people killed—

COLBY: And 28,000 captured and 17,000 took the amnesty. And the 20,000 dead for the most part were killed in military combat and identified after they were dead. And that is *not* 20,000 assassinated.

PLAYBOY: How do you distinguish between 20,000 people dead and 20,000 people assassinated?

COLBY: The accusation is that they were assassinated, wrongly killed. They were killed in the course of military combat, in the course of a war. In other words, the Phoenix program was designed to and did move into a very bitter and bloody battle that was going on in Vietnam between the secret Communist apparatus and the government. Phoenix was designed to improve the government's side, if not the Communists' side, by making it both more decent and more effective. It did that through setting up rules to identify people properly rather than just calling them Communist in a McCarthyist way; defining what their jobs were; dividing the leaders from the followers and saying we weren't interested in learning who the followers were; training people in the proper methods of interrogation instead of improper ones; issuing a directive that prohibited any involvement with assassination—not merely that an American *not* assassinate but that if an American heard of any such activity on the Vietnamese side, he was to report it to me. I believe the purpose and effect of Phoenix was to reduce that to an absolute minimum. Prior to the time Phoenix was set up, i.e., in roughly 1967, there *was* that kind of activity. And that kind of activity was exactly why we set up Phoenix—to stop it. Now, to put billboards around town emblazoned with headlines stating my admission of 20,000 people being assassinated is just misusing the word, misstating the facts.

PLAYBOY: How do you think Phoenix got its reputation?

COLBY: It got the reputation from the antiwar people who brought up charges against the military from an earlier period and applied them to Phoenix. And from my testimony before a House committee in 1971. That wasn't anything ferreted out or unveiled. My testimony in 1971 described what Phoenix was about. I said that the results of Phoenix over the three years were 28,000 captured, 17,000 amnesty and 20,000 killed. But I could not say that no improper deaths had ever occurred. Well, my admission

that some of the deaths occurred was translated into 20,000 assassinated. And it's just false.

PLAYBOY: What is assassination?

COLBY: A conscious effort to kill somebody.

PLAYBOY: So, if an agency were to pick someone out by name and say, "We are going to go out and kill this one person," would that be assassination?

COLBY: That would be an assassination, yes. And I think that in some situations, you can pick someone by name and say we're going to go out and try to capture this person, and if we can't capture him, we're going to end up shooting him—at him.

PLAYBOY: Was there a CIA jargon word for killing?

COLBY: For killing? There was a CIA jargon: Also, the upper levels of the United States Government used it: executive action.

PLAYBOY: Let's continue on the subject of Vietnam, since you were the CIA station chief in Saigon for a time during the war. Why were the enemy actions in Vietnam worse than our own?

COLBY: I think there was an indiscriminate quality to the Communist rocketing of the towns. We didn't have a right to just go and say, "Well, I think that town needs to be bombed." That's different from sitting outside Saigon, launching one of those 122 rockets and just letting it slide into the middle of town, no matter where.

In terms of behavior of troops, I think we tried to control it. Now, the conscious use of terror on the part of the Communists, the assassination of the village chiefs—did we have a comparable thing? Not after Phoenix, no. Mortaring of the refugee camps in order to drive people back into the countryside: Did we do that? No.

PLAYBOY: You say we didn't have the right to go in and just bomb some place we felt like bombing; we may not have had the *right*, but we did so, anyway.

COLBY: In the populated areas, it required the concurrence of the local authorities. And there is some criticism of whether or not that would be too easily granted. On the other hand, you did have the right, if you were in a helicopter and were shot at from the ground, to return the fire.

PLAYBOY: What about the free-fire zones?

COLBY: Free-fire zones were primarily jungle areas with essentially no inhabitants except the enemy forces and, in those areas, you did not need the province chief's approval.

PLAYBOY: We moved entire populations in order to create those free-fire zones, didn't we?

COLBY: Whole populations moved out of areas. I think you'd come out about even Stephen. Half of them moved out because they didn't want to be under

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the Communists and half of them moved out because they didn't want to be under the American bombs. So, in that sense, many areas were depopulated.

PLAYBOY: One of the most controversial and widely reported battles of the Vietnam war was at a place called Khe Sanh in 1968. Do you see an analogy between Khe Sanh and Dien Bien Phu 14 years earlier?

COLBY: I see a big difference. I think we won in Khe Sanh and the French lost in Dien Bien Phu. It was a pretty big difference. We never surrendered in Khe Sanh.

[Finding Colby's characterization of Khe Sanh at variance with other reports, we approached this question again at a subsequent session. It resulted in the following—the most heated discussion of the interview and the only time Colby became openly agitated and angry.]

PLAYBOY: You said we won at Khe Sanh. Allow us to summarize what appears to us to have happened there. By November 1967, the 26th Marines were a reinforced regiment. They were surrounded and outnumbered something like eight to one. They were barraged by the enemy continually. The Russian and Chinese howitzers and rockets and mortars sat up on CoRoc Ridge and pestered them day and night. Khe Sanh was only about two square miles inside the perimeter and weather conditions made air support very difficult. Route 9 was controlled by the North Vietnamese Army. Then, suddenly, the 304th N.V.A. and the 325C N.V.A. left the area. They evaporated. And in one month, Khe Sanh went from being our symbol of defense to an unoccupied piece of ground. We rolled up the airstrip and went away and then Tet began. Khe Sanh was at best a stalemate for a time, and then it was nothing. And then we lost the entire country. Now you say we won at Khe Sanh?

COLBY: Oh, dear!

PLAYBOY: Americans who were in Khe Sanh when we finally pulled out could see the North Vietnamese walking in to take the position.

COLBY: Wait a minute! The French forces surrendered at Dien Bien Phu. Formally surrendered to the enemy! The American forces never surrendered at Khe Sanh.

[At the next session, Colby launched into this subject again before the questioning could begin.]

COLBY: Khe Sanh. I think there's one other thing I would say about it. Our discussion reflects the problem of understanding that war. Dien Bien Phu was the classic military-versus-military force, which ended with the North Vietnamese victory and the French surrender. Khe Sanh was a military-versus-military force, which ended in kind of a draw. I guess

I would have to correct my statement that we won. I say we didn't lose, but it was kind of a draw on the ground. So I would withdraw that we won. I think you caught me well, and I'm sorry if I was a little testy there. I got a little lost in the . . . excuse me, I had a chance to think about it.

PLAYBOY: Thank you, sir. May we return to the question of assassinations? Former CIA officer Frank Snepp, in his book *Decent Interval*, says the following about Nguyen Van Tai, a Communist spy Snepp was sent to interrogate in 1972, just before the U. S. evacuated the area: "A senior CIA official suggested to South Vietnamese authorities that it would be useful if he 'disappeared.' . . . Tai was loaded onto an airplane and thrown out at 10,000 feet over the South China Sea."

COLBY: I never heard a word about that. I frankly have trouble as to whether it

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really happened. I think that the Senate and House intelligence committees should investigate a charge that serious.

PLAYBOY: You never heard of it?

COLBY: I haven't read the book, but I heard about the occasion with the Special Forces in '69, was it? There the Special Forces apparently did take a man out and throw him into the sea.

PLAYBOY: CIA was widely charged with assassinations, but the Senate committees came to the conclusion that the agency did not commit them. Yet assassinations have been attempted and the assassins were supported by CIA money; they were given weapons by CIA. Then, of course, the agency could say, "We didn't kill."

COLBY: Well, I think there's a distinction between your own idea of going out and conducting an assassination, which you can find in the case of Castro, and giving people the means to carry on their fight. Obviously, when we give military assistance or CIA weapons to groups, we're giving the weapons so they can use them. That's what weapons are for. The Diem thing was an assassination and the evidence is very clear that CIA had nothing to do with it. In fact, I think General Big Minh made that decision on his own. I know some of the

too. Can you say that the United States Government knew that a revolt was going to take place? Can you say that the United States Government was encouraging that coup? Sure. Not CIA. That decision to encourage the coup was made in the White House, there is no question about it. Should the United States Government have estimated the likelihood that Diem would be killed in the course of the coup? I think the assessment at the time was that the coup wasn't aimed at assassinating him. It merely wanted to take power from him.

PLAYBOY: But that's always the case.

COLBY: Yeah, I know it. I know it. And I say, therefore, the lack of facing that question is a subject of fair criticism. It's different from CIA's being involved in an assassination. It's a different thing. Certainly, in a revolt, the fighting takes place and people get killed. I mean, there's no question about that.

PLAYBOY: Henry Cabot Lodge was Ambassador to South Vietnam at the time you were chief of CIA's Far East Division. What did you think of him?

COLBY: He's a brilliant fellow, a brilliant political analyst. He was very wise. His political judgments—he was not a manager, not an administrator by a long shot, and I don't think he ever pretended to be. And I disagreed with him rather violently on the assessment of Diem. I didn't think he had sufficient time to appreciate the nature of the problem and Diem's role in it.

PLAYBOY: Our understanding is that Ambassadors are a joke to CIA.

COLBY: What kind of joke?

PLAYBOY: A bad joke: They don't run things.

COLBY: They do, they do. Lodge approved every step.

PLAYBOY: There are two versions of that.

COLBY: Lodge himself said many times that CIA was meticulous in following his instructions on the last days of the Diem thing. Lodge knew that people like me did not agree with the policy; but, at the same time, I told the station they were to do exactly what the Ambassador told them to do. That they were working for him.

PLAYBOY: Then what you seem to be saying is that Kennedy and Lodge are ultimately responsible for the Diem overthrow and execution.

COLBY: Fundamentally, yes. The President's responsible, obviously. There was no encouragement of the death of Diem. If you wanted to make a reasonable criticism, you could say if you go into a situation like that, you have to anticipate that that might happen. As for President Kennedy's having any intention to kill Diem, absolutely not. I know that he was shocked and horrified when it happened.

PLAYBOY: Because you're characterizing

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CIA so benevolently, doesn't it lead again to the question of whether or not a CIA director could ever tell the public the exact truth?

COLBY: My own view is that you can't lie. You don't have to tell the whole truth, because that would reveal a secret. But you can't tell a positive lie. I keep silent sometimes about something that would be a further step of information; but what I say is true.

PLAYBOY: When you go before a court of law, you agree to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Shouldn't the American public expect the same from its Government agencies, with the obvious exceptions that relate to military security?

COLBY: Well, I think the American people are conditioned well enough through modern advertising, through modern political rhetoric, through modern headlines, to be willing to look through a certain overstatement and understatement and work the truth out of it. I think they don't expect that the words appearing in either the advertising or news or columns of our papers be inscribed in stone.

PLAYBOY: But we're discussing our Government.

COLBY: I don't think they expect either more or less from their Government than they do from the others. And I don't think they get either more or less. I think they're about the same.

PLAYBOY: That seems to be a pretty shoddy picture of our Government.

COLBY: That's life.

PLAYBOY: So as far as this interview is concerned, shall we then advise the PLAYBOY reader to beware of misleading statements?

COLBY: I would say it's going to be very obvious to the PLAYBOY reader that I'm putting a favorable picture of American intelligence into your pages.

PLAYBOY: Then the reader is duly cautioned. Let's move on to the subject of CIA weaponry. There was the Black Pistol—the famous electric dart gun that was shown to the Senate committee and pictured on the front page of every major paper in the country. It was called a Nondiscernible Microbioinoculator—meaning you could shoot a tiny poisoned dart at someone without its being detectable.

COLBY: Yeah.

PLAYBOY: And we had the toxins—shellfish toxin and cobra venom—to put into the dart gun. Why did we make those gadgets if we were not going to use them?

COLBY: Well, we did use the toxin on one occasion for Gary Powers' flight. He had a silver dollar with a little pin in the side of it, impregnated with the toxin, and it would have killed him if he had scratched himself with it.

PLAYBOY: That doesn't say anything about the Black Pistol.

COLBY: Well, I think there were some uses of some kind of device like that against dogs.

PLAYBOY: Dogs?

COLBY: Dogs. It was to knock them out in order to get into a foreign installation abroad and plant a bug; to make the watchdogs go to sleep for an hour or so. They were shot with that device—I don't think that particular device but something like it. The dogs went to sleep. The people went in and did the job, came out and the dogs woke up later. And it was all done. Now, that wasn't assassinating them, it wasn't killing them.

[The question was asked again at a subsequent session.]

PLAYBOY: If CIA wasn't going to use the dart gun and the toxins associated with it, why did it make them?

COLBY: There's a thing called bureaucratic momentum. You set up a little group that's responsible for developing weapons, it'll develop lots of weapons. You set up a little group that's responsible for collecting information about foreign involvement in the antiwar movement, it'll keep on collecting.

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[We decided to try the question one more time at yet another interview session.]

PLAYBOY: Let us try to get this straight once and for all. Tell us again why CIA made those weapons if it says it wasn't going to use them.

COLBY: Because there was a section of CIA that was responsible for providing technical support to clandestine operations. And weapons, obviously, were potentially useful, an experiment with a weapon using a device that would put some poison in you but then melt, so there would be no visible indication of an actual wound. I think this was a dart but one that would melt.

PLAYBOY: For the purpose of killing?

COLBY: Yes, sure. It's a weapon.

PLAYBOY: So it was conceived with the idea of assassinating someone?

COLBY: To kill him, yes. Now, the thing was used, as I said, against dogs with a sleep inducer, not a killer. It's the same kind of weapon.

PLAYBOY: That seems hard to believe.

COLBY: Well, it was used. And it put the dogs to sleep, so that we could go in and put the bug in. Withdraw and

the dogs wake up. You don't have the dogs hooting at you.

PLAYBOY: All right. Whatever you say. Let's try another subject. On the subject of nuclear weapons—

COLBY: They're not my favorite subject, but go ahead. CIA has none, I know that for sure, I know that.

PLAYBOY: What sort of concern is there at the CIA that someone will just throw one together?

COLBY: Great concern, great concern. I don't think it's a concern about three fellows in a garage doing it. The real problem is proliferation to smaller nations.

PLAYBOY: Such as Libya?

COLBY: Such as India.

PLAYBOY: That's not a smaller nation; it has already tested a nuclear bomb. What about those we don't know about?

COLBY: I don't believe Libya is on the list. The problem is if you give the bomb to somebody who would be irresponsible and use it, you have a serious problem on your hands.

PLAYBOY: Such as whom?

COLBY: Any wild, half-mad dictator. I'm not going to name names.

PLAYBOY: You should name names. Why should it be an intelligence secret? Why shouldn't the people know which nations are capable of unleashing nuclear warfare?

COLBY: I think it would be a little irresponsible to say. If they haven't been made public, then that's a conscious decision not to make them public. And I think I'm required not to make them public.

PLAYBOY: Requirements aside, what do you think about our right to know?

COLBY: It's a very delicate business. If the Government knew of a certain country that had a weapon and we were working on that country to join in some nonproliferation agreement or even to get rid of the weapon, I can see a circumstance where we should not publicize the fact. You can hurt the negotiation process by making it public. You can ram the other fellow into a corner and he lashes out at you, like a cat will in a corner.

PLAYBOY: Do you think that in the next 10 or 15 years a nuclear weapon will be exploded in an aggressive manner?

COLBY: I think it is quite possible. Quite possible. A single shot, two shots, are quite possible in the next ten years.

PLAYBOY: Where do you think it might happen?

COLBY: Who knows?

PLAYBOY: We would assume you'd know: CIA has scenarios, educated estimates of where this might happen.

COLBY: These are estimates. There's no firm knowledge there. I'm giving you the outlines of how you would decide which country would be involved. There are several countries that, if they were overrun and faced complete destruction,

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would be quite prepared to possibly use them. But without naming names, because I think the name itself might create troubles.

PLAYBOY: What about other technological weaponry that may be being developed in secrecy and to which CIA is privy? Our sources at places such as M.I.T.'s Lincoln Labs have hinted at awesome new weapons systems. Isn't the public kept in the dark about that sort of work?

COLBY: No, I don't think it is, really. I think our knowledge of what our weapons systems are is pretty public.

PLAYBOY: Let's take a recent example. A Russian satellite containing 100 pounds of enriched uranium fell out of the sky in Canada. To begin with, the public hadn't even a clue that nations were putting nuclear materials into space, much less that they could fall back to earth.

COLBY: I really couldn't say whether the public knew about it or not.

PLAYBOY: You mean because something like the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* may have carried an item?

COLBY: If the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* covered it, then the question is whether or not the journalists took the technical information and made it into general knowledge.

PLAYBOY: No, the point is that the public had nothing to say about it.

COLBY: Congressmen have a lot to say about it.

PLAYBOY: You're missing the point: Why weren't we told when that thing went up that it was out of stable orbit and that it was going to come down?

COLBY: That I don't know. I mean, there you're talking about something in the current Administration—I just don't know.

PLAYBOY: Knowing what you know, though, about the way things work, what would the logic be?

COLBY: Well, I think they've said they were afraid to frighten everybody.

PLAYBOY: That's the point: Aren't we being kept from truths we *should* know? What are we, cattle?

COLBY: No, no, no. You're dealing with a volatile subject. You're being careful of it and you don't, sort of, Chicken-Little-the-sky-is-falling over every little thing that might happen. Because sooner or later, the public will turn you off and not listen to you at all. The old crying-wolf story.

PLAYBOY: Well, first of all, in the case of the Soviet satellite, the sky *was* falling. Secondly, we're not talking about crying wolf, we're discussing 100 pounds of enriched uranium, which could have come down in Washington or Chicago or New York. Only it happened to come down in the wilderness near Yellowknife, Canada.

COLBY: I'm not going to defend the Administration's handling of it. I don't know anything about it. I don't know why they did what they did, I don't know what their considerations were. I'm just repeating what I read in the open press. I have had no discussions with anybody in authority on this subject.

PLAYBOY: Do we have nuclear materials in space?

COLBY: I have no idea.

PLAYBOY: You were running things at CIA. You should know. This has been going on for years.

COLBY: No, I don't think it has. I think that . . . the point is, I don't know of any such thing. The director of Central Intelligence worries about what's going on in a foreign country, not what our weapons systems are. That's not his chore.

PLAYBOY: So he could be fairly ignorant of our own capability?

COLBY: Of some new weapons systems. It's not necessary that he know about that.

PLAYBOY: What about our own capability to use such things as lasers and so-called death rays in space?

COLBY: That is a lot of science fiction at this stage.

PLAYBOY: So, in other words, we do not have any such capability at the moment?

COLBY: You know, I really am not going

to talk one way or another about these kinds of far-forward weapons systems, intelligence systems. It would be irresponsible of me to do so, because I don't know what's there now and what I do know may well be covered under my secrecy agreement with the agency. Therefore, I really think I'd better leave this topic.

PLAYBOY: Under our treaties with the Russians, we can still conduct biological-warfare research. If we were doing that sort of work, we certainly would not make it public, would we?

COLBY: I beg your pardon, we *do* make most of it public. The public has a right to know most of this. Actually, it has the means to know most of it. If the public says it doesn't know anything, it means that the press hasn't done the job of translating for public interest the facts that are available, the materials known to the *cognoscenti*, the experts.

PLAYBOY: Isn't it a little illogical to blame the press if the public is ignorant of biological-warfare experiments?

COLBY: No, I'm not saying it in those terms. I'm saying that there's a lot of information available to experts. A great deal of it. If it doesn't become an issue, then the press normally doesn't cover it. It looks for the issues. If there's no particular issue, then it gets circulation among the experts, but it doesn't get circulation as a broad public issue. In that case, the public can say, "Oh, I

didn't know about that." This is a kind of feckless discussion between you and me. I mean, if you basically start from the position that there's a great conspiracy running the world, then you can bring in all the evidence that supports it. My experience, however, is that there isn't a great conspiracy running the world. We run over all those old hobgoblin stories and we're really not getting anywhere. On the question: Isn't there something horrendous going on behind the scenes? the answer is basically no.

PLAYBOY: All right. Let's talk for a moment about computer technology as it relates to privacy. A grand-jury witness in Iowa told one reporter of the existence of a device called the Silver Box or REMOB, meaning remote observation, that allows an intelligence agency to listen in on any phone conversation by means of computer codes input through touch-tone phones. We've also heard of another system that can activate the microphones on all telephones, so that conversations in rooms where phones are located can be overheard even when the phone is on the hook. Would you care to comment on that?

COLBY: Most telephones have microphones in them.

PLAYBOY: We know that, Mr. Colby.

COLBY: Well, I never heard of such a thing. Sure, technology can do anything. I guess, of that nature. But you can have

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laws and rules and you can enforce them. You cannot tap a phone without a judge's warrant.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying that such capability does not exist?

COLBY: I'm saying it could be, technically, but it isn't. Because we have the rules and requirements for a warrant.

PLAYBOY: So you're saying we can do it, but we don't do it?

COLBY: That's the way you handle all technology. A gun can shoot you. But you don't let it be used for that.

PLAYBOY: If a satellite can photograph something as small as the inscription on a golf ball, couldn't it be targeted against individuals, perhaps even into their homes?

COLBY: I will speak hypothetically on this question. Hypothetically, yes, these devices could be used for a bad purpose. The way you control them is by rules.

PLAYBOY: How good is our ability to know where enemy submarines are at all times?

COLBY: Pretty good. That's all I'll say about it. I'm not going to talk about that.

PLAYBOY: Is that classified?

COLBY: Yeah.

PLAYBOY: Do they know that we know?

COLBY: I'm not going to talk about that.

PLAYBOY: If they know that we know where they are at all times, and we know that they know, then why can't you talk about it?

COLBY: Because I can't talk about . . . how good we are. Maybe they don't know how good we are. I'm not going to risk the lives of a lot of our submariners by blabbing something that could put them in danger.

PLAYBOY: Some critics have said that through the use of satellite information and the ability thereby to predict crop yields in Russia and other countries, CIA can use and has used that information in commodities investment and perhaps in manipulating the market, either by itself or through some of the large grain companies by allowing them access to that information. Is there any truth to that?

COLBY: No. In terms of playing the fast game to make quick bucks, you couldn't do anything with the money, anyway. The Government employees who run it aren't going to get anything out of it. And we don't give favored treatment to individual companies. CIA has no sweetheart arrangements with individual companies to give them a leg up.

PLAYBOY: People who are asked to provide cover for CIA, using their companies, have an incentive, don't they? If a company, for example, is involved in commodities, an employee in that company will have specialized knowledge, privileged information that could yield that company greater profits.

COLBY: I think if they made a killing, we'd cut off the relationship. We're con-

scious of exactly that kind of problem. Now, there is a certain benefit if he's an expert on the politics of a local country; the company's going to benefit from it. It's inevitable to some extent. I don't think it allows them to make a killing, but it may help them do business generally in that area. And that's the reward they get for taking the risk of having a CIA guy use their name.

PLAYBOY: In speaking of cover arrangements, another problem comes to mind. And that is that if CIA wants to conduct domestic spying and wishes to deny it, it can work out a temporary arrangement with some other agency. In other words, CIA can lend an agent to the FBI and then say, "We don't do domestic spying."

COLBY: Not to the FBI; I don't think I remember any case of that. We've assigned them to a lot of different places. But if they go and work for that agency, they don't work for CIA anymore.

PLAYBOY: These labels begin to lose their meaning. A lot of people shuttle back and forth among various intelligence agencies.

COLBY: So do a lot of people go back and forth between IBM and Westinghouse, Chase Manhattan and Ford Motor Company and all the rest. But I don't find any great conspiracy in it.

PLAYBOY: Let's go on to something else. Do you have any heroes?

COLBY: Saint Francis is one.

PLAYBOY: Why Saint Francis?

COLBY: To be very, very honest with you, he was a humble man. If you've ever been to Assisi, I think you know what I mean. That place is permeated with his spirit. Saint Francis was a young, fairly flamboyant, rich, spoiled brat. He was wounded in one of the innumerable struggles then and he began to think about what he really should do. He went home and decided he wasn't going to be a rich spoiled brat anymore. He was going to live a simple life, to follow the law of love. And he did. He formed a whole congregation at a very difficult time for the Church.

PLAYBOY: Do you mind talking about religion?

COLBY: I'm a practicing Catholic. Certainly, I believe in God. I certainly believe that Jesus was God and that Jesus came to this earth to launch a new message, which I think is one of the most inspiring messages in the world. It's called love. And it's a pretty exciting message.

PLAYBOY: Would Saint Francis have joined CIA?

COLBY: No. Saint Francis was a pacifist. I'm not a pacifist, but I can still say that I admire some people who take a position farther out than mine in certain ideal directions.

PLAYBOY: What do you see as the greatest threat to America today?

COLBY: The over-all relationship with the

Third World. Three quarters of the world is in the Third World. The most obvious threat is the fact that there are 60,000,000 Mexicans today and there are going to be 120,000,000 of them by the end of the century. A goodly portion of those are hungry and live in a certain degree of misery. They are fairly easy to equip with advanced technology. They're becoming increasingly displeased at the gap between our affluence and their poverty.

There are 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 Mexicans who live in the United States today and of the extra 60,000,000 who will be around by the end of the century, there is no way we can keep a good 20,000,000 of them from living in this country. We can reinforce the Border Patrol and they don't have enough bullets to stop them all. Or we can get a positive relationship with those people and help them develop their own country. We have the most productive agricultural establishment in the world and this year we are doing what is to me the obscene step of cutting back production when millions of people haven't enough to eat.

PLAYBOY: In thinking back over the sessions we've had, have we gotten uncomfortably close to anything you can't talk about?

COLBY: I don't think so. We haven't gotten into the area of some things I know but we still want to keep secret. There are some operations, systems, that sort of thing. You haven't asked about those and don't want to ask, either.

PLAYBOY: What do you mean?

COLBY: Things I don't want you to ask and I'm not going to talk about. There are some things that obviously I know I wouldn't get near. And I'm not going to suggest what areas they are, either.

PLAYBOY: Why did you agree to give **PLAYBOY** this interview?

COLBY: Because I think it important that our people as a whole have an accurate view of what American intelligence is today, what it was in the past and how important it is to our future. I think it has been grossly sensationalized, and that a wrong impression of American intelligence is dangerous to the country. And here's a chance to get a word to **PLAYBOY** readers, which I hope will be persuasive, that CIA is different from what they're familiar with from TV and the more sensational press. I felt that the *Playboy Interviews* I've read—Walter Cronkite, Admiral Zumwalt and others—were very straight. I'm not asking for a sympathetic presentation, I'm merely asking for an honest presentation of what I'm trying to say about intelligence. I think **PLAYBOY** will give it to me. If it doesn't, I'll object after I see it. [Laughs] A fair picture, that's all I ask—with the warts. I don't mind the warts' showing. They're real.