

Mr. Max Frankel
Editor, Editorial Page
The New York Times
229 West 43 Street
New York, New York 10036

24 AUG 1978

Dear Mr. Frankel:

Thanks for your helpful and extensive reply to my letter to Abe Rosenthal. I appreciate the several ideas that you have put forward. They all have merit. Let me comment on but a few.

Quite frequently we do claim the privilege of retaining something in a secret classification although it has already appeared in the public domain. There is, however, a considerable difference between a government agency officially acknowledging the substance of a secret which has leaked and that same secret information appearing in a newspaper or a memoir. To begin with there is the fact of verification. Beyond that there is often a factor of reneging on an agreement for secrecy with an intelligence agent, a foreign intelligence service, or some other entity. In short, while it may seem obtuse at times for us not to release information which is in the public domain, there often is good cause.

While you have a good point that no one should be subjected to censorship for the rest of his life simply because he worked in an agency like the CIA for a short period of time, all we are really asking is that we have a right to review any publication based on information obtained during that period of employment. We certainly are not empowered to pass judgment on material derived from other experiences and even as to material derived from CIA experiences we assert only a limited right of review, the sole purpose of which is to screen out properly classified information.

I, too, think there is some promise in Bill Colby's thesis, and surely enough to warrant careful exploration. We are indeed both interested in the same result: the preservation of truly vital secrets, the downgrading of as many "run-of-the-mill secrets" as