

TITLE: Reflections of a DO Division Chief

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~~Secret~~*A farewell address*

## Reflections of a DO Division Chief

**Burton L. Gerber**

*The author made the following remarks to employees of the Directorate of Operations European Division in CIA Headquarter's auditorium on 30 March 1992.*

In 1958 I courted and then married one of the employees of the (b)(3)(c) European (EUR) Division. So, there is something special about (b)(3)(c) (b)(3)(c) And it always will be special for both Rosalie and me. She was an Agency officer before me. And her intelligence, grit, and determination always motivated me. (b)(3)(c)

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(b)(3)(c)  
(b)(3)(n)

(b)(1)  
(b)(3)(c)  
(b)(3)(n)

On our way to the auditorium we passed the statue of Nathan Hale, a brave young schoolteacher who died pursuing information for General Washington. I sometimes think that, however worthy Nathan Hale is of a statue, we ought to have a statue to another young man who was also a spy for the Continental Army, a young Quaker boy from Oyster Bay on Long Island. Unlike Hale, he succeeded in his mission and survived the Revolution. His code name was Samuel Culper, Jr. His true name was Robert Townsend. He is not well known in American history, except by a few Revolutionary War spy buffs. He received his assignments from General Washington. He got his secret-writing ink from the brother of our first Chief Justice, John Jay. His mes-

sages were developed by Alexander Hamilton. I believe that is a pretty fine tribute to the beginnings of American espionage, and something we should be proud of.

This week concludes for me almost eight years as a division chief, a job which I believe must be the best in CIA Headquarters. No one comes here reasonably aspiring to being a division chief. When I was a young officer, division chiefs were people who were born in those chairs and certainly not persons whom I addressed. I hardly even saw them.

In the intervening years, division chiefs have become approachable, and they should be. Their role is to know their employees, their reports, their resources, and their operations. I have tried to do this in these eight years. I believe that I have failed in some respects, but, on the whole, I can reflect on some successful and important achievements.

Among the failures, the Howard case is the biggest tragedy of my operational life—and of the Agency's, I believe. And the fact that terrorism still threatens Americans overseas, including our own officers, is another failure. We have to defeat it.

This has been a time of tremendous change in the world, change that no one could anticipate in its depth and scope. But fortunately intelligence did give indicators which helped explain the change as it happened, and we are helping policymakers in dealing with it. Frankly, we won the Cold War. The American people made tremendous economic sacrifices maintaining a defense structure unparalleled in the history of our republic. And many brave American men and women gave the ultimate sacrifice in Korea and Vietnam in fighting what was the great evil of the second half of the 20th century, world communism. We, as intelligence professionals, for 45 years have helped our diplomats and our military confront the problems caused by communism. This is something that speaks of great dedication and personal involvement for all those who have worn the CIA badge.

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Chief

The world is now much safer from the threat of nuclear holocaust, but it faces other dangers. And CIA personnel will again be in the forefront in the defense of our country.

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(b)(1)  
(b)(3)(c)  
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As this decade develops, European interests will be less congruent with our own. You already see that significant differences have developed between the US and Europe, led by Germany, on Yugoslavia. Economic rivalry grows. US claims to world leadership will be resented and later challenged in Europe.

We need to develop better expertise on Europe. Thirteen languages, plus English, are spoken in our division area. An understanding of European history and regional relationships is vital. Our targets and our liaison partners are sophisticated. They do not think in two- or three-year timetables.

I am not sure the Directorate of Operations (DO) has tried hard enough to understand Europe for itself.

(b)(1) [redacted]  
(b)(3)(n) [redacted] Developing expertise in Europe in areas as diverse as [redacted] requires senior-level commitments to this division. Your job is to outline those needs and push for them.

Our country's foreign policies and some of its defense policies are changing. Intelligence needs to be in the forefront of change. We should welcome it, and we must help shape it.

This change will affect people, positions, and requirements because it is already affecting national objectives. How we organize and how we go about our business need to be reviewed. We no longer have the Soviet Union as a central objective of this Agency, just as it no longer is the central focus of American foreign and defense policy. If we created CIA today,

we would not build it the way it is now. Now is the time to think of where we in the DO sit in the totality of the US intelligence world. We are part of a community. We need still closer ties to our Directorate of Intelligence (DI) colleagues, to our colleagues downtown, and to others who are most interested in our product.

Our product is important only if it is relevant. Our goal is not reports. Our goal is information which policymakers can use. Consequently, to keep our product relevant we have to satisfy requirements set by others. We do not set them ourselves. We reach out for guidance, and we welcome it.

To satisfy requirements in almost all cases we need to recruit sources. New agents, or new technical operations, are the lifeblood of our work. We cannot survive without this. I want to make two points about this. First, our recruitment of new sources must always be relevant to the requirements process. Recruitment must never become an end to itself. The second point is one of the absolutes of our intelligence business: we must protect our sources. Men and women put their trust in us. As individuals and as a service, we cannot afford to compromise that principle.

In speaking to career trainees and other prospective DO employees, I have emphasized that the single most important quality necessary for success in our service is honesty. Any other attributes are secondary. You must be an example yourself; you must foster honesty in others; you must move against deviation from our high standards. We represent the US Government, often in singular ways—a case officer out on the street, late at night, alone with an agent; a technical officer working on his own to install an operation; an analyst pulling together material that no one else commands. If this work is not done honestly and if faults are not reported fully, then we fail. And our failure can be dramatic. We enjoy extraordinary trust within this government and in this country. This trust must not be tarnished. Honesty in reporting and in financial dealings are not to be compromised.

You have to have standards. You have to think about professional and personal goals, and you have to be comfortable with the means you use to achieve those

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goals. Whatever you do, you have to face your leaders, your colleagues and your subordinates. You must have no fear and give no favor.

After honesty, probably the next most important quality is courage. Sometimes, in this dangerous world, that courage will be of a physical sort, facing down an enemy. The stars on our lobby wall reflect the fact that 54 of our employees, in showing great courage, "gave that last full measure of devotion."

Courage often means being tough in the intellectual process, developing beliefs and standing up for them. You have to stick to what you determine is the truth. You have to pursue unpopular ideas if you believe they are right. You can bring to your leaders questions and comments. I truly welcome it. I learn that way. Take the time to develop the kind of relationship with your leaders that allows you to be comfortable in raising fresh ideas with them. And if you are a leader, foster office relations which assure openness.

We are proud professionals. We represent abroad what I believe is the world's greatest democracy, in many places where democracy has been on trial or suppressed. By the nature of our business we often deal with issues and people who may offend our own principles. We must never let this compromise us. Democracy has to remain our guiding principle. Throughout the world it is not just a goal for some future day. The thirst for it is so evident in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Our nation has to help satisfy that thirst. It is too easy to say that a certain country or a certain people are not ready for democracy. Perhaps no people is ever ready for it. There are many problems and inefficiencies associated with democracy; but it is better than anything else.

Our founding fathers, in setting up our democracy, were suspicious of placing too much power in any one hand. Therefore, they created two levels of sovereignty, the national government and the state governments. Then, to spread power even further, at the national level the Constitution created the three independent branches of government. It is inconvenient and certainly inefficient, but it has created a system of government responsive in most cases to the needs of the American people. We work for the

Executive Branch. We are subordinate to it, and we report to it. Our first responsibility is to keep the Executive Branch informed and to respond to its needs.

For many years, our reporting responsibilities to the Congress were limited. Now, to many, they seem excessive. It is easy to complain about Congressional interest in our work, but we have to remember that the Congress was created by our founding fathers to be a check on the executive. Its power is so defined. We owe to the Congress candor in our reporting to it and cooperation in its activities as they apply to the intelligence field. We should not resent this. In fact, I believe we are strengthened by it. I remember that Judge Webster talked about his wanting to have risk-takers, not risk-seekers. We always speak about risk in our business, often referring to risk versus gain, or speculating about operational risks. Risk is the lack of an *a priori* assurance of success. It is clear we take risks every day in our operations and even in our assignments. The way I measure an officer and a manager is in his or her willingness to take risks.

As Browning wrote, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a Heaven for?" As you reach, you will have doubts. You will need information. You will need advice. Once you make the decision or choose a course of action, you have to put doubts behind you. You have to get on with the other aspects of your job. I do not have second thoughts about my decisions. I have made some wrong ones, but I have felt comfortable about the way I reached decisions.

(b)(1)

(b)(3)(n)

I had done my job—ops planning and case officer selection. Now it was their job.

And most important, you have to take responsibility for what you decided and what you did. You will earn praise or take blame. You cannot shift responsibility. Never try to. I first learned this as a 12-year-old boy, when I damaged a friend's father's car while we played at driving. I miscalculated when I started the car and released the clutch, springing the door on the side of the garage. My friend took the blame. I decided then I would never dodge responsibility again.

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Chief

Some of you have heard my phrase, borrowed from Churchill, "luck is the residue of design." Some of you have even said it sounds silly. But I have been quite comfortable with it, using it as a major aid to me in my job. What do I mean by it? Few of us have the kind of luck which means winning the \$1-million lottery or Ed McMahon's sweepstakes. What I mean is that we can create opportunities for ourselves and our service so that we are ready to grasp the chance to succeed. In my own career, I have had many such opportunities. I tried to become the best officer I could be. I learned languages well. I studied countries. I proved myself. And opportunities came to me. And they will to you.

Starting something new is difficult. Some tasks may seem too formidable for the individual or the unit. You might consider the Cartesian way of breaking a problem into its smallest parts, solving them, and then putting them together in the form of a solution. This formula has applicability in much of our daily work. Take, for example, operational tradecraft. I believe it lends itself very well to the Cartesian solution. Similarly, restructuring resources to face the tasks of the 1990s and of the 21st century lends itself to this technique.

We are first a field organization. Our role in Headquarters is to support field operations by giving them resources and assistance. It also means giving the field guidance and sometimes course correction. This must always be done in a manner which inspires trust and confidence. As a field officer, I sometimes wondered if anybody understood what I was going through. I am sure some of our field colleagues wonder that today.

Keep the thought of support to the field consciously in your mind at all times. One of a field officer's biggest frustrations, forcefully expressed to me when I travel, is the absence of Headquarters' responses. Young officers in particular are dismayed by this. We can do better. Do not dawdle over correspondence. Write.

When I came here to EUR three years ago, I had a definite goal of giving EUR officers opportunities to succeed. If you look around, you will see that many

of the senior assignments in this division have gone to EUR home-based officers. I wanted EUR officers to have the chance to prove what they can do. And they have.

But I want to emphasize that all of you are first DO officers. Home-basing is a convenience, not a law. Seek opportunities throughout the directorate. Expand your interests. You and the service will prosper.

In my final cable in SE Division a few years ago, I wrote "Think aggressively, act prudently." I believe that thought applies today, both in the changing circumstances of the world and in the operational environment we face in Europe. We need clear, aggressive, fresh ideas for attacking targets. Once we get down to work, we need to be doing it in the most secure manner with the highest level of operational tradecraft.

I know that I have been hard on issues of tradecraft (b)(1) and on some technical matters. I am the guy who (b)(3)(c) quired officers [redacted]

[redacted] And I believe I have been (b)(3)(n) proven right as to the need for that at that time. I have aimed for high security standards in our operations and in our technology. I stand ready to reassess security requirements, change some and push hard to maintain those which should not be altered.

The recent publication of the book, *Molehunt*, which, is about a tragic and unproductive time in our history, primarily in the 1960s, reminds us that in our work we have to stay vigilant and prudent but that we must not allow internal suspicion to poison the atmosphere of this great service. At that time, individuals were able, without sufficient control from the leadership of this Agency, to damage careers, operations and ultimately themselves. Now most everyone familiar with the situation condemns it. But you have to do more than that. You have to ensure that such an atmosphere does not dominate this service again.

Counterintelligence will remain fundamental to our work, but it may be different in the 1990s than that which we have known in earlier years. And I believe some of what we are calling counterintelligence today is really tradecraft and ops security. We have to give credit to other nations' abilities to protect themselves. That is what internal security services do.

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Chief

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And many internal security services are good. Our job is to succeed despite their efforts. Every one of our employees must know there is no benign operational environment.

From both a counterintelligence and operational standpoint, I urge you to think about the operations which dominate the moment, about the pressure to address something quickly before we have sufficiently figured out what we need to do. I remember some years ago when officers came to me with what I thought were bad operational plans. When I objected to them, they said that DCI Casey wanted it done, and fast. I replied maybe he does, but he does not want it done dumb.

Our leaders may order us to undertake operations and send us forth to run them. We are professionals, the permanent intelligence officers. Our leaders deserve and expect that we tell them what we can do intelligently and securely and what we cannot. We have to have the professional courage to resist bad instructions. "Can do" does not always make the best sense for our Agency or for our country.

When I was a high school sophomore, I was told to write a term paper. The concept frightened me because I had never done one. I even had trouble figuring out a topic so I could get started. My father suggested I choose something of interest to me, so I wrote a paper on the origin of baseball. There is a myth in this country that Abner Doubleday invented it on a spring day in 1839 in Cooperstown, New York. The reality is that Doubleday was not even in Cooperstown that spring. Baseball is, of course, descended from the English game "rounders" but, oh, how American it is.

Baseball has some applicability to our own business. It is played by normal-sized people. Anyone, if he or she is good enough, can be a baseball player. And it is both an individual sport and a team sport. Just as in our business, you face the pitcher—the opposition—alone. Although the odds of getting a hit might seem overwhelming, practice increases the chances of success. Once you get on base, your teammates can help bring you home. Our team is made up of support officers, technical officers,

communicators, secretaries, intelligence assistants, reports/requirements officers, and case officers. All are part of the team who help you score.

The environment is an intelligence issue. War and destruction can affect us; the possibly unstable nuclear reactors in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe can affect us; the struggle to develop agriculture in much of the Third World can affect us. We will have environmental subjects on our operational requirements list.

The environment is also a personal issue. It will affect your way of life and your quality of life, as well as that of your children and your children's children. You can color me green, just as Dick Stolz said several years ago. I hope that we also can color many of you green.

America is a society built upon immigrants from many countries. Our culture for many years has been predominantly influenced from Europe, but the growth of America's personal and business relationships with Asia and Latin America suggests that more and more we will look in those directions. If we were ever monocultural, that time is past. Americans are strengthened by this cultural richness, and CIA is, too.

You will hear increasingly more about diversity and multiculturalism and the important programs designed to promote them and opportunities for all employees in exploiting the talents of everyone. This is necessary and it is good. Most important, it is right.

The role of women employees in our Agency (b)(3)(c) deserves some mention. In 1957, there were (b)(1) my class (b)(3)(c) Only (b)(3)(c) was a woman, and she quit within a year or two (b)(3)(n) the course's completion. Now our CT classes (b)(3)(c) anywhere from 20 to 40 percent women. We are developing a cadre of outstanding female case officers. Females lead Stations, are deputy division chiefs, are (b)(3)(c) and receive medals and other awards. They serve as examples for us all. I still believe that there is no restriction as to what a woman can do in our organization other than what she herself, or we as a service, impose.

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I continue to question why a woman can be a mother and a Supreme Court Justice, a mother and a university president, a mother and a Nobel Prize winner, and not be able here to be a mother and a senior CIA DO leader. We have to look at the opportunities we give to women and the opportunities we give women to have families as well as careers.

The Black experience in America is distinctly different from that of Whites, Asian Americans or any other Americans. Because of that special difference, Blacks have not had the opportunity that many of us have had. While we have had Black employees for many years, we have often not recognized that we can stretch them in their assignments nor have we done so sufficiently. I am confident that Black employees will move up through the system and that we will recognize their contributions.

CIA is only part of your world. There should be other things in your life, things which also are important. One of these is your family. Whatever its size, whatever your family status, relations with your loved ones have to be important to you. No one on his or her deathbed ever said, "I wish I had worked more." Take time to value your family and your friends. Nurture those relationships.

This is a hard business, mentally demanding and often physically difficult. That is why I have asked our employees to stay healthy, exercise and have fun. Keep your mind clear. I found that building models kept my mind off anything but the intricacies of that.

Skiing down a mountain which is much too hard for me concentrates my attention and clears my mind of all worries and concerns.

Take time. Relax.

Think of your community; think of our cities and our schools; think of our homeless; think of your place in this country and this world. It is larger than this building.

Dream. Find some poetry in your life. You will be larger for it.

Our national anthem has always meant much to me. It stirs me. To the best of my knowledge, ours is the only anthem that ends with a question:

O say does that star-spangled banner still wave,  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the  
brave?

Make sure that you can always answer yes to that question, that our banner will wave over a free land of brave people.

Sophocles wrote, "One must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been." Thanks to you and your colleagues, it has been for me a truly splendid day.

*This article is classified ~~SECRET~~.*