

Oral History: Reflections of DCI Colby and Helms on the CIA's "Time of Troubles"

From the CIA Oral History Archives

On 26 June 2007 the CIA released a 700-page collection of documents known as the "Family Jewels," compiled in 1973 under Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) James Schlesinger, who had asked Agency employees to report activities they thought might be inconsistent with the Agency's charter. Schlesinger's successor, William Colby, delivered the documents to Congress.

Given the release of the "Family Jewels" documents and continuing interest in this aspect of CIA history, the Studies in Intelligence Editorial Board elected to publish portions of transcripts of CIA Oral History Program interviews of William Colby and Richard Helms, Schlesinger's predecessor, on this period of the Agency's history.

Colby and Helms were interviewed on 15 March and 2 February 1988, respectively, as part of an effort by the Center for the Study of Intelligence to compile the perspectives of former Agency leaders on what has often been termed the CIA's "Time of Troubles" in the 1970s. The perspectives of these two officials, different in several respects, illustrate the dilemmas a secret intelligence agency faces in serving a democracy.

The transcripts were edited by Nicholas Dujmovic, director of the CIA Oral History Program—Editor

The Origins and Context of the "Family Jewels"

Interviewer (hereafter in italics) to both DCIs: There is some indication that younger Agency officers were troubled by some domestic practices in the years before 1973.

William Colby.



There were concerns during the period of the anti-war movement, 1968 to 1972, among some of the people as to whether we were going outside our charter. We would hear just little bits and pieces of it. I think they had doubts about the reassurances they were getting, that we were sticking to our charter. And, essentially, we did. They slipped over here and there, but most of the things were within the charter.

Richard Helms.



I think what these junior officers were alleged to have been concerned about was the whole issue of whether or not the Agency had a role in the domestic aspects of student unrest. On one occasion I got some of these younger officers into a conference room and pointed out that the Agency had been asked to look into this question by the president, that there was a legitimate role for the Agency in attempting to find out what foreign elements or foreign powers might have been influencing student unrest on our campuses.

William Colby

[DCI] Helms had a pretty clear sense of that and kept it very much on track. See, there is nothing wrong with Track II 1 under the rules back then—if the president tells you to do it, he had a perfect right to tell you to do it. [Regarding] the domestic stuff, there were a couple of things that went over.

Schlesinger had just taken over [as DCI] when we started the [internal] investigation. He got upset hearing about the McCord letters. 2 “What the hell, something is going on here? Did you know about these things?” And I said, “No, they’ve been in the General Counsel’s office.” He was sore as hell; he said, “I thought we were supposed to get everything from Watergate together. Goddamn it, let’s find out where these time bombs are.” So that is what launched the investigation. Just that day they announced that I was going to be succeeding, so we signed the thing jointly that asked for the report on questionable activities.

The Schlesinger memo of May 1973, asking for anything that might be construed to be outside the legislative charter of the Agency—did you write that up?

Yes.

How was the memo received, as you recall?

Oh, down in the directorates they were upset that this could drag out a lot of things. The point was that, here you got a new director and he didn’t know about one of the important elements of the Watergate thing; we’ve got to find this stuff out and keep it to ourselves. Find it out and then after we found it out, correct it. By then I was in charge, so I wrote the series of directives, “Thou shalt not this, Thou shalt not that.” I have long taken the position that when you get into a controversial subject, write your instructions down very clearly, make it clear on the record what your policy is and what your position is. I did that when I started the Phoenix program in Vietnam—“This is not a program of assassination.” Fine, put it down in clear text. People will argue, “Why do you have to say that?” “Because people say it is.” You know, make it damn clear.

That same thing applied to the questionable activity. I remember my impression after looking at the whole set of items was that they were pretty small potatoes. They really were. The wiretaps were on employees or ex-employees, I think in almost all cases. The surveillances were mostly of employees or ex-employees. There were a couple of journalists who had leaked [information]; there was a lot of pressure, “Where did those leaks come from?” It was really not a very wise business putting a tail on Jack Anderson, for instance. But even then there was a legal basis for it. The director is charged with the protection of intelligence sources and methods. Now I could give you a lawyer’s argument that that requires him to go out and find out where a leak comes from; because it says so in the law. You can also give another interpretation that it means he can do what he can within existing rules and policy, and it would not justify his surveilling an American citizen. But there is an ambiguity to it. I go back to the old concept of the spy service—if you get a leak you go find it—in the good old days. The change in American mores is what caused all this change, because of the fundamental contradiction that did exist between the old spy service idea and the separation of powers.

After the “Family Jewels” had been collected in 1973, you shared the material with Senators Symington and Stennis, and took it to [Representative F. Edward] Hebert.

Schlesinger and I both agreed that we should let our committees know about this exercise. Since I had been named, he said, “Why don’t you go down and do it?” So, I went down to Hebert and he politely listened to me a little bit, then he asked me to brief Lucian Nedzi, who he had appointed as his watchdog for the Agency. 3 So, I went in. Nedzi went over it in great detail, asked further questions about lots of things and all the rest of it. He said, “Well, why don’t you release this and get the catharsis out of the way?” I said, “Oh, no. No way. Sensationalized, trumpeted, exaggerated, it would be a disaster.” And I talked him out of it. He said, “Well, nothing like that anymore?” “Absolutely not, no sir.”

That's when I put out the directives. Stennis asked me to brief Symington. And Symington was a bit of the old school, really wasn't all that anxious to know about it, I don't think. But, I went over it with him. At the end, "OK, thanks."

White House Blindsided by the "Family Jewels"

The curious thing, I never really thought about it, why didn't we brief the White House? Say, Kissinger? I think I didn't think of it because Schlesinger was still in charge, and he didn't think of it, and I don't know why he didn't think of it. I asked him about it one time and he said something to the effect that, "Oh hell, with that bunch of characters down there." It was almost as though he had made a decision not to brief them. But, I never had a conversation with him about it. It just never arose; never answered the question, never even posed the question. In retrospect, it is curious that you don't think of such an obvious thing. If you are going to brief the two chairmen, the least you ought to do is to brief somebody in the White House that you trust.

Seymour Hersh and the New York Times Exposés

There was some concern in the Agency that Seymour Hersh as early as late 1972 was working on some stories relative to the Agency and domestic involvement.

Let's see, the articles came out in December '74. Well, I know a year before I heard that he was on to the Glomar. 4 And I went down and actually stopped that by just flatly appealing to him. I went down and said, "Look, not only don't write about this, don't even talk about it—don't do anything. It is much too important." I put all the sincerity I could into it. I didn't tell him what I was talking about. He did, he dropped it. Therefore, I owed him one. I thought I owed him a lot by sitting on that one, because he had worked on it and could have gone on, as he did later.

Later, Hersh ran into bits and pieces of that assembly of information we conducted in 1973. He couldn't have made that [*New York Times*] report if we hadn't done the review in '73.

Did you ever wonder where he got the bits and pieces?

I long ago gave up trying to figure out where journalists get their information. I mean they develop lots and lots of sources. Very rarely do they have a source who gives them the whole thing. They are very clever about the way they call somebody to get the remotest kind of a hint that there might be something; then they ask this one, they ask that one, and they ask the other. You know, inside of a few hours on the telephone, they have most of the story in this town.

Did you feel that Hersh had very much information regarding abuses when he met with you in December of '74?

Oh, yes. He had them all in exaggerated terms when he walked in, yes. He said "you guys have been in wiretaps, you have been in mail openings, you have been in surveillances, you have been breaking into people's houses." He had it all.

Did he mention assassination, by chance?

No. He didn't have assassinations—domestic [operations], you see, that was the thrust of it. He said this thing is bigger than My Lai—he's the guy that broke My Lai. "This is a much bigger story"—that was his phrase. I said, "Sy, you've got it all wrong. What you have gone into is a few little things here and there over the 25 years that we did that were a little bit over the line. They were few and far between. There was no massive, no big [domestic] intelligence operations." And I frankly feel that that was the eventual story even though you had a lot of hullabaloo—when you read the Rockefeller Report, and the Church Report on the domestic side, you really have kind of odds and ends here and there.

So I told him, "Come on in, I'll talk to you. You got it all wrong." I was hoping to bring him down. He was going to write something, I knew it. I was hoping to bring him down a bit and didn't. He took it as a confirmation, you see. That's the other thing that is frequently said, if I had said nothing, he wouldn't have had a confirmation. But since I said, "There are some little things that happened," that was confirmation. He took it as confirmation. even though I was saying it didn't happen.

Wasn't there also a question about assassinations and was it you who said, "Not in this country"?

Yes. Daniel Schorr came to me and he dropped that little bombshell on my desk. President Ford, in a background discussion, had been asked, "Why are you defending this?" And he said, "Well, there are a lot of things in there you can't handle." "Such as?" And he said, "Assassinations." They were all under background rules. The *Times* couldn't use it. But as the newsmakers go, they talked. So, Schorr had the view that there's a story here if I can just get something to hook it on to.

He came to me and said, "I understand from the president that there's been assassinations going on in this country." I said [to myself], "Oh, shit." I really clammed up at that point because I knew I was in deep trouble. I said, "Well," and I reverted to what I have done frequently [which was to] answer exactly what the man said. I said, "Well, no, not in this country." But, I didn't say anything beyond that.

Another fellow, another newsman had come to me one time about the Glomar. He said, "I understand you are raising a Russian submarine in the Atlantic." And I said, "That is absolutely false." And I was right. You know, answer exactly the question; don't get caught in a lie because it won't work. Or, if you can't answer the question, then for heaven's sake get off it, get on to some other subject, some way. You have to turn it off before you see it going in the wrong direction.

Did you feel there was much leaking from Agency personnel to the Congress or media prior to and during the congressional investigations?

I could no longer tell the White House that the CIA never leaked [information] because I had enough evidence that things coming out—the Chile thing and some others—that seemed to me that we were having leaks. Part of it was retirees and part of it was smart newsmen. You know, asking the right question. The guy doesn't think he is saying anything wrong, is giving a little tiny piece of the jigsaw for the newsmen to put together. It's exactly the way intelligence operates. So, I don't think there were any sort of flagrantly disloyal people.

In the fall of 1974, before the Hersh articles, Senators Mansfield and Mathias were seeking to create a "Select Committee" to study governmental operations with respect to intelligence activities. Would there have been investigations even without Hersh?

Yes, I think there would have been some congressional motion, there had to be. 5 That was the contradiction that had to be resolved somehow. And I think that both Mathias and Mansfield were trying to do it in a responsible manner, to get this thing moving in the right direction, sensibly, responsibly. It was obvious, you know, that the climate of the post Vietnam, post Watergate times were going to bring some modifications. But, you might have had more a sensible way of doing it rather than the hysterical way we went after it, which did hurt.

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The Congressional Investigations: The Church and Pike Committees

What do you see as the most important factors for bringing about the congressional investigations in the mid 1970s?

I think a combination of the Vietnam War, and Watergate, and then the [Seymour] Hersh articles [in the *New York Times* on alleged CIA abuses]. Those are the three stepping-stones that caused the investigations. The first idea was for the Rockefeller Commission to investigate the allegation of domestic action. That really didn't work very well to contain the degree of concern. I thought, well, here's a chance to get a good resounding stamp of approval on the Agency as a whole. It was a very reputable bunch of people. If you could be straight with them, convince them, you could get a good report out of them. I think it might have worked except for the president's mention of assassinations. That blew the roof off.

It was also clear that we were in that period of revolt in the Congress where that group elected in '74 were some pretty strong-minded younger people out to throw over the old, cozy system.

Some critics say the congressional committees overseeing the Agency before 1975 were "blind and toothless watchdogs," that members of Congress were unaware or unconcerned about Agency excesses.

I think that is unfair. The Church Committee criticized that Congress did not do its job supervising the Agency. And that is true if you look at it in isolation. Sure, the Congress is supposed to have an active supervision over the activities of government. On the other hand, very clearly the intelligence business had always been thought of as something special—it still is. It was the sovereign's business. That is the way it runs in most countries. In France you don't have the great assembly review what the intelligence services do, if anything happens, everybody shuts up right away—it's a tradition. And we essentially adopted consciously that model for how to run our intelligence service during the early decades of it.

In those days, the understanding was that these committees, Armed Services and Appropriations, had a responsibility to vouch to their colleagues in the Congress the fact that the Agency did need X millions of dollars. And they would vouch for it. And how did they do it? They did it the way you always did appropriations in the American government until recently, which was that you talked to the guy in charge and got a sense that he seemed to be decent and level with you; and then well, if he said he needed a hundred million, fine, give him a hundred million or, if that's too much, cut it down to seventy-five, something like that. You didn't nit-pick every little detail; that was not the way it was done in the old days. [We would

see] only the chairman and maybe the ranking minority member. They said, "You come out here on Sunday afternoon at three o'clock, so nobody will see you." They met in a closed room, the chairman's office or something, and that was the hearing—just a nice conversation.

Now that was changing as a result of Vietnam and Watergate. Trust didn't exist. It did exist in previous years. So, the Congress then was groping around for ways to exhibit its distrust.

Some writers say that you believed salvation for the Agency lay in cooperation with the investigations, while other intelligence professionals thought that intelligence secrets were forever.

Sure, there is a basic difference of opinion about my role here. Various of them said that I should have stonewalled the whole thing because intelligence is too important, resigned and all the rest of it. I didn't think that would do any good at all. In the context of the politics of the time, we had just had Watergate, you really weren't going to get away with stonewalling them. It just wasn't going to work. On the other hand, if you could go to a committee which starts out with a prosecuting mission and give them the whole view of American intelligence, which is a very good story, then these become rather small against that larger picture. And in order to do that, you've got to tell them quite a lot, but you don't tell them names. And that was a basic point that we came to with the committees as soon as the chairmen were appointed.

As soon as they were named, I went down and talked to them. I said, "Look, you are going to investigate us; I understand that. Not much I can do about it; you are going to do it. I'd like to give you a full picture so that you'll see whatever may have happened in proper proportion and context. Now, I'm not going to argue with you about your constitutional right to know everything in the Agency because we'll never end that argument. You'll take the right that you have constitutional authority to learn everything. I'm just going to convince you that there are some things that you don't want to know; you don't need to know, and consequently, that you should not know. Particularly, you don't need to know the names of people who work for us around the world—foreigners, Americans, all the rest. To convince you that you don't need to know them, I'll tell you something: I don't know them. I've made a deliberate point of not learning names of agents. Why? Because I had no reason to, I didn't have to know them to do my job. I have to know that there is an agent there, about their reliability; but I don't have to know the name. You don't need to know their names. Now, let's make a deal. We'll be responsive to your questions as much as we can, but I'm going to ask you to let me leave the names off."

And we made the point. And it pretty much stuck. We came to issue on a couple of names, but not very much. One time I went to court to protect the name of one of our guys the committee was going to release. They said this guy is known around too broadly, we're going to put the name down. I said, "The hell you will. Put that name down and he's subject to violent retribution, and I'm not going to have him exposed to that." So, I went down to district court and met the lawyers. Filed an injunction and the committee gave up. They folded; we protected the name.

It cost me telling them what was going on, sure; but I protected the names. I thought that was a reasonable trade-off. Now, other people say, "No. Shouldn't have told them anything." And certainly we scared a hell of a lot of people around the world with what we told them; and it was just what I told Nedzi, it was sensationalized, it was exaggerated.

Were these discussions with Church?

Church and that jackass, Pike.

You wanted to place what was happening in perspective?

Yes. I thought we could make a good story out of it. American intelligence is a pretty good story. If you read the Church report, there is a little sanctimony in it, but it's not bad. I wasn't really afraid that they'd disband the Agency, but I thought there was a very good chance that they would bar all covert action. That was an obvious potential. In the end, they said, "Shouldn't do it that much, but got to be able to do it."

You didn't think the Agency would be dismembered, dissolved?

There were days. But if you asked, thoughtfully, I would have to say that I didn't believe they could possibly do it. I mean, that they would be so stupid. And particularly after I told them what the Agency really was all about. I took the right guys down to brief them every now and again. I happened to have as my personal assistant a fellow who had been in Stanleyville and told about being there—the Simbas coming in the house. Everything was so still when he was telling us there. They got the message that there are some very special people [in the Agency]. It was deliberate. I was trying to get it out that these are serious things, serious people.

Some suggest that your cooperation during the investigations saved the Agency from serious harm; do you agree with them?

I still think I took the right choice. Now, I don't know whether that saved the Agency a lot of trouble as a result. I can hardly say it came out scot-free. It created an awful lot of trouble abroad—people saying how can we deal with you, you guys put all your stuff in the newspapers all the time. This was a real problem. So, I wouldn't say it saved it from any problems. It did get hurt. No question about it. It would have gotten hurt more if I had taken the totally negative [approach]. Then I think the thing would have just sort of disintegrated, all sorts of chaotic hullabalooos, then the names would have come out.

Do you feel the hearings were beneficial for the Agency?

No. You have to say they weren't because they were sensationalized, exaggerated, and did a lot of harm. I think the revision of the congressional relationship is beneficial for the Agency. The hearings were the worst possible way to do it. Maybe it was the only way to do it, but it is a bad way to do it. But the revision of the congressional relationship, I think, is good for the Agency and gives it much more support.

One Agency officer commented in 1976, "The Congressional investigations were like being pillaged by a foreign power only we had been occupied by the Congress with our files rifled, our officials humiliated and our Agency exposed."

He must have been dealing with some of the Pike Committee people. There were elements of that, but if you ran into too egregious a thing, you could step in and stop it.

Your offer to bring the dart gun to the hearing and so on, were you...

That wasn't an offer. We had a demand out of the Church Committee that it be brought up and a statement that if we didn't, they'd subpoena it.

Do you think you were treated fairly by the Church Committee?

Yes. The Church Committee was responsible. Had sharp questions from Mondale, Gary Hart, others. Some of them were quite supportive, Goldwater was like that. They were very responsible. [Senator Frank] Church is the guy who asked, "Is CIA a rogue elephant?" as a question; he didn't say it as a statement, and he is the guy who signed the final report which said that CIA was not out of control. He raised the question and then he answered it in the final report: CIA is not out of control; it has been too much under the control of presidents, and Congress has not done its job. That was the basic point.

The Pike Committee was hopeless. They were hopeless. Curiously, too, because Pike had identified three good questions: How much does intelligence cost? How good is it? What are the risks? They are very good questions. But then he hired a staff that was just sloppy, and he didn't pay attention to them. It sort of just ran all over the place.

Are there lessons to be learned from the Church and Pike investigations?

Sure, deal with them straight and don't try to run around them the way this jackass Ollie North did. Don't try to stonewall, try to handle it in a fashion that gives you a majority, not unanimous, but majority support.

What are your reflections regarding support from the White House during the congressional investigations?

I don't have any real complaints. People in the White House wished it wouldn't happen. Henry [Kissinger] would fulminate, you know. Brent [Scowcroft] was always very level, straight. President Ford was supportive when you got it up to him. I tried not to bother him. You see, the president was easy because he came from Congress. He understood what we were dealing with and the problems.

I knew I would get fired sooner or later, which didn't bother me. [I wanted to] just get the Agency through most of the heat. I knew that Henry [Kissinger] basically didn't agree with my tactic; he didn't make any secret of it, used to tease me about it. There were a couple of things I did without telling him about it sufficiently in advance, kind of hit him like a bombshell. I thought I sort of had the job of handling it myself. There was no way I could get them to handle it for me; I had an obligation to keep them informed but I had the responsibility of handling it. And I think that's right.

Did you ever have the feeling that you wished President Ford would take a firm stand regarding the security of CIA files and thus force the issue into the courts?

No, if we went to court, we'd lose it. That's my judgment. The only thing that you could hang it on was the executive privilege and even that is fairly dubious, it's a legal question. Because certainly you can't hang it on classification, so what [are] you going to hang it on? Intelligence is special? Where does it say that?

The Hearings and the Jewels: Mail Opening, Drugs, Assassination, Journalists

I said [the mail opening] was wrong. It shouldn't have been done. Actually, I don't think there is any doubt, it shouldn't have been done. I can understand why it was done; I can understand

the thinking at the time—it was started in the 1950's and it was handled so secretly. It was, after all, fairly legitimate when you think of it—reading the mail coming from the Soviet Union to the United States, looking for hints. Never produced anything that I know of. And, like everything bureaucratic, it just went on and on and on. It went on long after it should have stopped.

What did Schlesinger think?

Well, my memorandum [to him] said that I didn't see that we had got anything out of it; my review of it was that it should be stopped. I wrote him a memorandum in which I said that I reviewed it and found conflicts with postal law here. In addition, it just doesn't seem to be producing anything; therefore, I recommend it be terminated. That led to a series of discussions which Jim [Angleton] defended. But I still couldn't find any result from it. And I think that is probably what swayed Schlesinger, how it doesn't seem to be producing much.

How about drug experimentation? What were your reactions at that time on that issue?

I was understanding of the fact that you had a group of people in the Agency who were curious about the properties of some of these drugs and were legitimately fearful that they would be used against us. They had an idea of learning something about the properties. You can understand a scientist wanting to know how things work. Now, there are ways to do legitimate testing. You don't want CIA to be on record as doing it, so you need some kind of a front to do it for you. But, there are rules about testing on human beings. The medical profession has them. I think you assume you would follow those rules. Apparently, they didn't. This gets back to the old mystique idea—intelligence is different, we do things differently—which is nonsense.

You know, that's the thing that really scares you about intelligence agencies—where they go wrong is when they do violate people's rights under the "higher good." The KGB should not be our rationale.

Were you surprised about the assassination issue?

No, not terribly. I don't think I was morally shocked at it. If you really think about assassination, that's what I was forced to do, it seems to me it just doesn't add up. You think you can solve something by eliminating a guy—it's playing God. You have no idea who is going to succeed him, you have no idea what the repercussions will be, or, the worst, you getting caught doing it. The repercussions are potentially enormous.

For intelligence operations, it seems to me, that you have several simple questions to ask before you start one. One, how important is it? What are the risks? What is the impact if it goes sour? And on the last issue, it seems to me, you have to turn it down. Now that is being pragmatic, not moral. I think there are moral considerations, too; but being pragmatic, I just think that assassination doesn't work. Politically, it's dynamite. We may do dumb things, we chased all the Japanese-Americans off the west coast because we were scared. Countries do dumb things when they get scared.

What if the president orders it?

Well, that gets into this whole goddamn plausible denial thing, which I think is gone. I think plausible denial died when Dwight Eisenhower accepted responsibility for the U-2. He had no choice; he had to accept responsibility for it. Jack Kennedy, the same thing with the Bay of Pigs. We had the elaborate structure that this was just a bunch of ragtag Cubans, baloney. Anything that big, he is responsible for it. So, the whole plausible denial is just totally

impossible. And now with a Presidential Finding, no way.

What do you think about employing journalists?

Oh, that is a terribly false issue. I mean, I've used journalists as agents, and case officers have, and our rule was what they wrote for the journal was their business. I didn't tell them what to write or not to write for an American journal. We understood that. They were useful agents and then this crazy business got loose—you can't use journalists, you can't use academics, you can't use missionaries, you can't use something else, you can't use this, you can't use that. There's nobody left. So, that's a totally false issue. Everybody says, "Oh, it's all right, yes, go ahead and do your intelligence operations; but don't use me."

Angleton, Golitsyn, Nosenko, and Counterintelligence

The author [Edward Jay] Epstein suggests that the "Family Jewels" story was leaked by you as part of a maneuver to relieve you of an extremely vexing problem, that is James Angleton, and so on.

I don't know why [Epstein] said this. You know he's the one also that was on the edge of calling me a big mole in the CIA. Bullshit. I've been called every name in the world by somebody, so it doesn't bother me.

How about your relations with Mr. Angleton?

I had first known of him when I was in Italy. He had superb Italian contacts. He had been there in the latter part of the war and met a lot of people. He is a very opinionated guy, which is all right except the idea was that his reports should go straight to God. I remember really getting upset when I heard that he was back in Washington one time, stood on a street corner and a car drove by with Allen Dulles and the secretary of state, picked him up and they had a talk in the car. I said, "My God! Is this a serious intelligence agency?" Having this guy with his strong opinions directly at the policy level without any analysis, any comparison with the other factors going on. It just violates my sense of what intelligence is all about.

I spent some time gradually working him into a more normal pattern so that his reports would go in in an ordinary way and go into the ordinary analytical process. While they were valuable, they weren't just rolled gold. I sort of had that sense that the Angleton approach was to run these highly personalized things. Then, remember, I was appointed for a while to take over the Soviet Division. I began the briefing and it was pretty clear that the Soviet Division in the Agency had been all tied up the last several years in this whole series of Nosenko and Golitsyn and all that crap. Every time they tried to move an inch, the CI people said, "No, it's a fake." I think that's why Helms was going to send me there to try to straighten the goddamn thing out. Let Angleton do his thing, but get something going there that made sense.

Then, of course, I went over to Vietnam, but that left a bad taste in my mouth. Seemed to me that we were hurting ourselves. I never thought that the object of CIA was to protect itself against the KGB. The object of the CIA is to get into the Kremlin; that's what our function is. Sure, you protect yourself, but you goddamn well better have the offensive mission. So, I had doubts about that.

Then I ran into the goddamn mail thing and Jim's insistence on holding it. Then I ran into the Israeli business when I became DDO—here the Israeli account was over here in a corner

someplace and had nothing to do with the rest of the Middle East. The officers in those stations were prohibited from communicating with each other. I said, "This can't be serious! You've got a common problem in the Middle East and you've got two separate teams working on it that never talk to each other!" I mean it's just nutty. I understand some of the reasons for it and all this, but I felt I had to change this.

Then I found that he had a whole lot of people, a very large staff—I've forgotten how big it was—and I was under pressure to cut at that point. I had been trying to find out what the hell these people did. I couldn't find that they were doing anything that I could understand. Seemed to me this was a good place to cut. So then when I was DDO, I broke off the Israeli thing, gave it to the NE Division; then I made some cuts. Of course, we cut off the mail opening and so forth. It was obvious that I had no confidence in Jim actually running it. So, I tried to sort of edge Jim toward the door in a nice way, in as nice a way as possible by taking these things away, hoping he would get the point. I had a couple of conversations with him, but I didn't force it. I didn't sort of say, "Out." I should have. I now realize that I should have; it would have been much cleaner and noisier. I should have done it right when I came in, but I was, you know, concerned about him. He had done a lot for his country and I did not want to shame him. I wanted to edge him away. I had two or three conversations over the year with him, long conversations about moving, doing something else—all very subtle. He knew exactly what I was talking about and didn't want any part of it. So, he dug his heels in.

Then, finally, when the Hersh thing blew I figured, "Oh, God, we're going to get blamed for this but I am not going to go into this with Jim on my hands. I've got to be able to handle this without Jim's problems." So, I said, "Jim, go. You are finished. I will give you a job of writing the history of the CI Staff or something so you can be around, keep involved and so forth; but I am going to put in a new chief and a new staff, new systems." And I did it.

What about Nosenko?

I'm not an expert on the Nosenko case, but I spoke to [former DDO Thomas] Karamessines about it, and I know that both Karamessines and Helms signed off on the fact that they accepted Nosenko's story as basically true. Both of them are good, careful guys and they are not going to sign something that's false. So, period, that did it. The Golitsyn thing is all over the place. I ran into the fact that some people were shoved out to outer darkness because they had somehow been in Berlin at the wrong time or something with no evidence—again, I am a lawyer—no evidence that they were in any way involved, but you had careers ruined. I said, "Bullshit, we are not going to do that."

How do you feel counterintelligence was affected by the hearings?

Oh, I don't think it was very much affected by the hearings. Counterintelligence buffs will tell you that I destroyed counterintelligence. I contest that because I don't think it was doing anything before I moved, and I think it was as least as good after I moved it as before I moved it. I made the point that I wanted them to do the protective side through the normal divisions as much as they could. But I wanted them to do the offensive of getting guys into the enemy camp. That I still wanted them to do. That was actually a priority—to get some guys into the other side. That was what we needed. Because I became director, and then I left it to the DDO to run counterintelligence. I didn't want it to come out of the director's office anymore the way it had. It had essentially gone around channels. I said, "No, let the DDO handle it."

Reflections as DCI

In your book, you noted that one of your errors as director was a failure to press for greater access to the Oval Office. Would it have made much difference?

I don't think it would have been a hell of a lot different. I mean, Stan Turner came in, Carter promised to see him twice a week or something, drops back to once a week, drops back to once every two or three weeks. You know, it is the normal thing. Henry [Kissinger], of course, was not about to let me get around him. And I say that with respect. I don't think he should have. If he is the National Security Advisor, he should be informed of anything on top, the president. Otherwise, he can't do his job right.

You know, each president is very different. Eisenhower used the military staff system to help complete his staff work for him. Jack Kennedy would get 30 people in the room [and have] everybody argue the case. President Johnson had his Tuesday lunch, which sometimes met Friday morning, but nonetheless, it's the eight or 10 guys close to him. Nixon, he used the machinery to surface the options in written form, and he would go away and study it, really study it, read the 60 pages or whatever, annotate it and so forth. A very studious kind of guy. And Ford would use the regular machinery more: the NSC would have a meeting, and you'd have a discussion of the meeting, just the NSC, be sort of a more formal relationship. And Carter... Each one different.

Did you feel it was much more difficult to be DCI after Watergate?

Oh, I suppose so because there was more astir. The Bay of Pigs was trouble. The U-2 was trouble. Directors are supposed to pay for trouble. That's what they are there for, to handle things that go wrong. You know, you are not going to be an intelligence officer if you just take the safe way. You've got to take chances and that means some of them will go sour on you.

Did you hope to stay on as DCI after the investigation ended?

I sort of realized that people down in the White House didn't like the way I did some of the things so probably.... I was always very conscious of the phrase on the commission, "You serve at the pleasure of the president." Whenever he decided, I'd go. When President Nixon left, I sent in a letter of resignation to Ford. He's the new president; he has the right to appoint his own guy. They sent it back in two days. No, you don't have any lock on that job.

Richard Helms

So this was a perfectly legitimate role for the Agency to play.

Later on, this became blown out of all proportion. Not because of young people in the Agency who had any misgivings about it, but because when the hearings were held about these things, and principally in the Church Committee, the fact that the operation was known as MHCHAOS was one of the things that triggered a lot of focus on this. Actually, that was quite an innocent code name. Anybody inside the Agency knew that digraphs were used for various general categories of operations and the digraph in this particular area was MH and then there was a list of perfectly ordinary words then went along with it and CHAOS happened to be the one that came out of the registry at that time, and that's what it was called. It had nothing to do with the operation itself.

Now when it was established that on one occasion, in an effort to put a man into the student movement and give him some real legitimacy in there, that he was put into a demonstration here in the United States, that he did see some things, he did report to the Agency about it, and the Agency in turn passed this on to the FBI. That may have been a misjudgment; we shouldn't have let that fellow report, but it was necessary to get him in there because we wanted to send him [abroad] to report on student unrest overseas. He needed credentials and he needed to be able to say he'd done this.

Also, in an effort to work with the FBI on this whole issue, the FBI sent the Agency a lot of reports so we'd know about the names of these various individuals and so forth. Well, that was bitterly criticized later on—that the Agency never should have had reports on domestic individuals and so forth. But quite frankly, I thought the thing was way overblown; I didn't think the Agency had really overstepped the bounds. If it had a little bit, okay, but it wasn't egregious. This was just a congressional fire storm over nothing.

As for mail opening and a couple of other operations, these young people didn't know anything about them, so there was no basis for their criticizing something they didn't know about.

The Congressional Investigations: The Church and Pike Committees

What do you think are the most important factors for bringing about the congressional investigations in 1975?

Certainly the *Ramparts* business and what flowed there from had a role in this, but I think that more important than that was all the dust that was created by Watergate and by the Watergate investigation. Even though the Agency was cleared of any involvement in Watergate finally by the Watergate Committee, that whole aura and investigation brought about this opportunity to conduct an investigation, and Senator Church was very anxious to do this.

Church wanted to run for president, and he felt this was a great launching platform to bring his name before the public and get a lot of media attention, which it certainly did. And there was no reason not to hold such an investigation if they felt it desirable at the time to have been done in a responsible fashion. But it struck me that Senator Church's political ambitions ran far ahead of his interest in really doing a thoughtful and serious job. I was in Tehran [as US ambassador] all this time and came back spasmodically to testify. But even from that distance it was not difficult to see that this was a hearing run to get the headlines rather than to really find out whether the Agency was doing its job or not doing its job. The conclusions it came to about the estimating process was unfair to the Agency, because the allegation that the Agency in those days was giving in to political pressures is simply not true. There were times when estimates were changed, after all they were the director's estimates, and he had the right to change them.

Now one of the great changes that came out of the Church Committee hearings and in subsequent years was the beginning of sending classified papers, analyses, reports and estimates up to Congress. When I was director, *no* secret papers went to Congress—to *anybody*—unless they were taken up there by the director for some reason. The only testifying was done by the director, and it was done by other people when the director wasn't normally there, but it was very rare that anybody else went up to testify. In those days when somebody in the Congress wanted somebody from the Agency, the director went. And it was after I left that this

business of sending documents to the Congress and briefing the congressmen by people all through the Agency began.

Some critics, speaking of congressional committees overseeing the Agency before 1975, have called them "blind and toothless watchdogs," saying that members of Congress were unaware or unconcerned about Agency excesses. Do you feel congressional oversight of the Agency was effective and helpful before 1975?

Well, that is a hard question to answer and a rather complex one. When Senator Russell was the chairman in the Senate and Congressmen Rivers and Boggs had oversight of the House and then Clarence Cannon and later George Mahon had Appropriations in the House, there was a good interchange between the members of Congress and the Agency. And there were no leaks. Members of Congress were extremely careful about their secrecy responsibility. In fact, Senator Russell's Committee had just one staffer who was cleared. I think the House Appropriations Committee had one, possibly two staffers who were cleared. In other words, this was a very close-hold operation in those days, and these senators and congressmen really went bail for the Agency and did a good job of it.

With the change in American culture, which came about as a result of the '60s and spilled over into the '70s, and the whole seniority system in the Senate and House in its traditional form broke down, at this point we got the Church Committee hearings and the Pike Committee hearings. It was this era in the Senate that a lot of senators had the impression that the oversight responsibility was not being executed, which in some respects it was not. So this issue of toothlessness and so forth may be a valid charge, but this was not true of the House. We always gave full information on the budget, line-by-line, item-by-item, to the House Appropriations Committee. It's a total canard [to assert] that this wasn't going on. From day one they got a report with everything in it.

And did it happen that you wanted to tell them more than they wanted to hear?

Sometimes. Senators and congressmen are not wild to know about some of the types of things that go on. Sometimes they would just say, "Look, forget it and don't bother to tell us." At other times, "All right now we've heard about it, let's go on to something else."

Seymour Hersh and Colby

Were the writings of Seymour Hersh a significant factor in the congressional investigations?

Very significant factor. If you look for a single issue that would have caused the focus on the Agency that led to the Church Committee hearings, it was the Hersh story in the *New York Times* that was on the front page. That was, I believe, in December of 1974. I don't think that the Watergate Hearings and the *Ramparts* business, in and of themselves, would have coalesced an interest in the examination of the Agency until this Hersh story came along. And, obviously, Hersh's source was Colby. That has been attested to by various people, including Colby himself, I guess. Colby thought that by leveling with Hersh he was going to protect himself. All he succeeded in doing was getting on the front page of the *New York Times* with headlines.

I was then in Tehran. I remember getting a back-channel message from Kissinger; I had worked for four years with Kissinger when he was the national security advisor in the White House, so we were well known to each other. I remember his saying, "This is an issue that's not going to

go away,” meaning that this is going to cause congressional focus and the newspapers are going to be after it and all the rest of it. Of course, he was right about that. Colby used terrible judgment on that by thinking that he could sweet talk this fellow [Hersh] out of printing this stuff.

Then later on there was an episode in connection with Daniel Schorr about which I’m not particularly proud but it caused a fair to-do at the time. I came out of one of the hearings with the Rockefeller Commission, and there he was, and he asked me a question about assassinations and I called him a rude name. After I had a little press conference, he followed me down the hall and he said, “What did you get so mad at me for?” And I said, “Dan, I got mad at you because that’s a crock. Where do you pick up this stuff?” He said, “Let me tell you where I heard that. President Ford had a luncheon with the *New York Times* editors and during that luncheon he talked about these so-called Crown Jewels or whatever they were that he heard about from Colby, and among them were these assassination plots.”

Well, here was the president of the United States talking off-the-record, theoretically, to the editors of a big New York newspaper and then one of those fellows leaks the thing to Schorr who was working for CBS, and so Schorr feels free to use it. Terrible judgment on Ford’s part, I thought. But terrible judgment on Colby’s part to go around collecting these things the way he did by circularizing [sic] everybody in the Agency and then packaging the whole thing together and sending it down to the White House. So when you add all that, on top of this of turning the papers over to Congress, you can see why I disagree with Bill Colby. I’m sure that you’re going to talk to him and let him defend himself. But I would appreciate it if, when you talk to him, that you don’t handle this thing in such a fashion that it gets into the newspapers. I’m not interested in having any public squabble about this. I think it’s bad for the Agency. The Agency has enough problems.

The Report of the Rockefeller Commission 7

I didn’t think it was a particularly good report. I was particularly resentful of the recommendation in there that the director of central intelligence ought to be a man with either considerable means or powerful political backing. I distort the wording a bit, but that was the general thrust of it, the thought being that a fellow who had made a career of intelligence, as I had, didn’t have the strength to stand up to a president who wanted certain things done, that I would be afraid for my job or not able to stand up to the pressure, and I resented that.

It seemed to me that I had stood up very well to Nixon when he was trying to get us to cover up with the Watergate, and I don’t know of any time when I yielded to that kind of political pressure on any front, so I resented the implications of the report. As for the rest of it, on the only really difficult thing they had to deal with which was the whole assassination issue; they punted and let that go to the Church Committee.

The Hearings and the Jewels: Mail Opening, Drugs, Assassination, Journalists

What’s your view of what the hearings revealed about mail openings?

The issue of mail opening has certainly been a controversial one and one of the things that interested me as much as anything was to watch various postmasters general go up before the

Church Committee, take the oath and then lie about what they knew about these things. I don't want to make too heavy a point on that, I don't want to get you involved in something that might lead to legal procedures later on, but the directors of the Agency always cleared this with the postmaster general. Orally, obviously, you don't write pieces of paper about something like that.

How about the issue of drug experimentation that was raised by the committees?

Well, that has been a controversial issue from day one. There was the feeling, from Allen Dulles's time on, that these drugs were available, that the Russians had access to them, maybe they were using them, so we should therefore know what they could do and what they couldn't do, both for protection and in case it was felt at some time that it was desirable to make use of them. So that's where the drug testing program originated. I know there's been a great hoo-hah and lawsuits and all kinds of jiggery-pokery about whether this was done legally or illegally, morally or immorally, and there's absolutely no percentage in my trying to sort this out and say which was which or which I thought was which. But it was established that that was a legitimate function of the Agency to try and do this, and we went ahead and did it.

One of the things that I think a thoughtful person might ask is: why is a country spending so much of its time complaining about a minor operation of this kind which has a useful function to it? Why is it that as a country we always have to wait until disaster strikes and then we want to spend billions of dollars trying to solve the problem? AIDS is a good example; cancer is a good example. We're always late in the game, trying to run to catch up. So I have no apologies for that whole affair, and I think that some of the lawsuits have been absolutely egregious, I mean ridiculous. I can't possibly explain why certain psychiatrists did the things that they did, but at least they were supposed to be reputable people at the time that they were given financing.

How about the issue of employing journalists, which came up in the Church Committee? Were you surprised by the outpouring of opposition?

I wasn't surprised at all. The press and the Congress have a synergistic arrangement. They were always protecting each other. It takes a lot to get an investigation of a congressman or a senator.

Now, as far as journalists are concerned, I was a newspaperman before I went with the Agency. I knew very well what the rules and regulations were of the journalistic fraternity, what their traditions were. So when I had anything to do with these things, I controlled what journalists were used and what were not used. To use a journalist you had to have my signature on it. For a long time I was the chief of operations in the Deputy Directorate for Plans, that's what [the operations directorate] was called in those days, so I was the number two there for a long, long time; seven years I think, and then I was deputy director. So I had a hold on all of these things all the way through, and I just okayed or approved ones that I thought made sense, where we couldn't get this material any other way, [through] people I felt we could trust not to blow the operation.

Obviously, the newspaper fraternity is very sensitive about this because they're afraid that their access in foreign countries would be closed down if they become involved in intelligence or anybody thinks they're spies. But this doesn't give me any heartburn because in this twentieth century of ours the Soviets use newspapermen all the time. So do other countries.

Newspapermen in this country think that they're a special breed because they are protected by

a First Amendment, in a way that they're protected in no other country in the world. They've come to think that they're rather special and that they have to be taken care of in a very special way, and they get away with it most of the time. But I have no apologies for using newspapermen. After all, we're all in the United States, we're all Americans; we all should be working for our country. If these newspapermen think their calling is higher than the calling of anybody else, that's their opinion, not necessarily the public's.

How about employing academics, which also came up in the hearings?

I was all in favor of that, too, if any of them would be useful. In World War II, in the OSS, we had priests, academics by the score, lawyers, anybody that you could find, doing espionage for the United States, and nobody thought twice about it. Why? Because the Nazis were nasty. Nowadays people take a slightly different view. They don't think that these other fellows were all that nasty. Why? Because they haven't dropped any bombs on our head, I suppose. I see no reason why Americans shouldn't serve their country in one capacity or another, if they're personally willing to do it.

How about the issue of assassinations?

The Agency never assassinated anybody, ever. I was there from the day the doors opened until I left in '73, and I know the Agency never killed anybody, *anybody*. You can take my word for it. If you can find anything in the record of anybody the Agency killed, bring it in here and show it to me. This whole business about Castro was caused largely by the fact that the task force that was working on Cuba had some ideas floated as to ways to get rid of Castro, to make him sick or to do something about him. I don't want to go into a long disquisition about this assassination business. I've said everything I have to say before the Church Committee and there's absolutely no percentage at this late date in my going over this whole area again because it gets complicated by nuances and who said what and who didn't say what. I just really don't want to go into it any further. I've told you we didn't kill anybody, and it seems to me that's the important thing. We didn't even try to kill anybody.

What were the most difficult demands on you during the congressional investigations of 1975?

A seventeen-and-a-half-hour trip one-way from Tehran to Washington; by that time I had some experience with this because I was called back in connection with the Watergate hearings as well. In one 36-month period I made 13 round-trips to the United States. I would arrive in time to get some kind of a night's sleep and have a day to prepare myself for whatever the investigation was going to be before the Church Committee. That was hard work to get brought up-to-date. And it was particularly hard on me because they were focusing on what I thought were extremely minor issues, which I didn't remember very well. Maybe I had signed the papers, maybe I did go to this place and that place, but certainly I didn't remember it then. One of the things that was, I thought, fatuous in the extreme was all this issue about that poison that came up. There was some that was kept back after the poisons were destroyed. It was shrimp or some kind of a poison deriving from fish.

Shellfish toxin.

Shellfish toxin, that's it. And I didn't remember anything about shellfish. I didn't know this fellow hadn't destroyed it all. I remember issuing the orders that we were going to change our approach in these matters. But to make such a big issue out of that was absolutely ridiculous. Maybe the fellow's desire to save this stuff for use in some extreme situation was pretty sensible. But for this committee to go ape about the thing I thought was ridiculous. And there

were a lot of other picky things that they wanted to quiz me about. The larger things certainly I could talk about, but I thought that whole hearing was charged with the interest in headlines and in making the Agency look foolish and emphasizing every little thing that they thought the public would be interested in, even though it wasn't terribly important in the wider scale of affairs, and trying to make it look as though the Agency wasn't under control.

On those covert actions, every single one was cleared with the Executive Committee, which was set up to deal with these matters, called the Special Group or the 404 Committee; it had various names in various other administrations. Everybody had very clean hands with respect to this. This idea of Church's—that the Agency was a "rogue elephant"—I'd never heard anything so ridiculous in my life. And, of course, that just went zooming over the country. Everybody thought that was a great term. If the Congress isn't careful, they're going to so micro-manage the Agency that it's going to be put in a straight jacket with by various laws. And then it isn't going to be nearly as useful to the American people as it should be.

Do you have any reflection on the senators on the Church Committee?

The senator who was the most aggravating was Church himself. Mondale didn't play much of a role; he just was there for the cameramen. Tower and Mathias, I think, did their best as Republicans but also as sensible men to try and keep this hearing on the rails, to try to make it useful and bring about examination of information, if whether this was a good idea or bad idea, whether things should be done differently and so forth. So I think they were a good influence.

There was another fellow on there who used to be a foreign service officer, and he was one of those who was absolutely bound and determined that the Shah must go. Church encouraged people of this kind and it isn't a question that they weren't bright or it isn't a question that they weren't very well educated, it had nothing to do with that. It's just that they were interested in other things than improving the intelligence process.

Was the Pike Committee much different from the Church Committee?

I only testified before the Pike Committee once and that wasn't a very long testimony. I had known Pike before; when I finished he said, "I've known you and I believe what you say and so forth but, you know, this hearing's got to be seen through the usual pyrotechnics." But Pike was more responsible than Church, I mean that, you didn't have to agree with Pike to know that at least he was doing a more businesslike job. That was my impression.

At one point you said that during the congressional investigations so much paper and so much information were released that it's almost impossible to tell what has been compromised—is that still your feeling?

That's still my feeling. Even more so.

How did the congressional investigations affect your morale and feelings about the Agency?

Well, I found them unpleasant, obviously. And I found them unfair. But certainly I live in this world and I'm familiar with Washington practices, and this is what happens sometimes if the pendulum of public opinion swings in this country from one side to another. And so I have no feeling of heartburn that the hearings were held. I was sad about Church because I thought it was silly.

The recommendations they came out with later—putting into legislation the thing that Admiral Turner apparently wanted, a statement of exactly what the Agency's functions and

responsibilities are and so forth—were ridiculous, particularly in the field of secret intelligence and covert action. If you want to do something like that then do away with the organization. I mean, if you feel you've got this whole legalistic, moralistic incubus over your head, and then I think you ought to stop this entirely. It's easy to do, just disband it and don't do that kind of thing. But to put it in legal terms and write it down on paper, and tell the world this is what we're going to do and this is what we're not going to do and so forth, it belies the whole idea of having a secret intelligence organization. And I think we ought to face up to this. Why are we so gutless about it?

I think the American people, if they had to vote on it, they would vote on it. Americans are peculiar in this particular respect. As one very wise American said to me one day, "Look, this is simple. The American people want you to go out and do these things, they just don't want to be told about them, and they don't want to have them on their conscience." Period. I think that's true. That's part of our Puritan ethic.

Colby's Openness

What are your impressions of Mr. Colby's cooperation with the Church and Pike Committees?

Well, I have been very careful in the years since to say nothing publicly about Colby. But I think Colby did this just wrong, and I believe that to this day. My feeling about Bill Colby is that he should have gone to the president and said, "I don't think we ought to do this, sending these documents about secret operations and so forth up on Capitol Hill. Will you support me?" And then if they insist on it, you'll have to go to the Supreme Court, and I think that's what should have happened.

Instead of that, Colby went the last mile in cooperating with the Church and Pike Committees. He felt he was constitutionally obligated to do this, and in his book he says this, I believe. I don't know what gave him the idea that he was a constitutional lawyer but, anyway, this is what he did. A lot of people on the inside know my feelings, which, I say, I avoided saying publicly because I think it's unseemly for prior directors to be squabbling with each other in public about who did what to whom.

A lot of people think that I'm mad at Colby because he sent those papers down to the Justice Department to try and get me convicted of perjury. I'm not mad at him about that. I'm mad at him about the way he handled the Congress and about sending all these papers down there. And "being mad at" is a colloquialism. I think he was wrong. As far as that perjury thing is concerned, if his lawyers and the people he appointed felt this way, fine, send the papers down to the Justice Department. I don't think he used very good judgment because I think that in doing something like that about his predecessor he opens himself up to getting the same thing done to him.

But leaving that personal element out of it, it tends to set up a precedent. I mean, he who lives in glass houses shouldn't be throwing stones. But that was a pain in the neck for me, and it was very difficult for me to handle, and it certainly didn't do my reputation any good. But he felt he had to do it.

Had you heard the term "Constitutional Intelligence Agency" while you were director?

No.

That's a term used later on by Colby.

I know. This was his effort to protect himself. I don't think he was the one to make that judgment. I was told by Henry Kissinger that, on one occasion, there was a meeting in the Cabinet Room with President Ford and Kissinger and various other worthies; maybe it was a National Security Council meeting. And they asked Colby about certain documents that were being requested by the Hill and said that he shouldn't send them down there. They had a long talk about whether they should or they shouldn't and finally Colby said, "Well, it's really kind of an academic question because I've already loaned the documents to the committee." And I think that both Ford and Kissinger were very irritated about this. I don't know if it had anything to do with Colby's being let go by President Ford or not, but it may well have.

CIA and Congress

You said in an interview in 1978 that the Agency is part of the president's bag of tools. Is the Agency also part of Congress's bag of tools?

That, I think, is a question for the Supreme Court. I'm surprised that it hasn't been forced up there. That basically was my quarrel with Bill Colby's handling of the Church and Pike Committees in 1975. I never thought he should have sent all those documents up to those committees. I thought that he should have sought the support of the president to stonewall and force that issue into the Supreme Court to find out whether we were obliged to send all those secret documents about secret operations, overseas relationships with foreign security and intelligence services, all of those things—whether or not we were required to do that. I think it should have been forced into the Supreme Court, and instead of Bill Colby's saying that he was a lawyer and he knew what the Constitution required, I think we should have found out what the people who really are supposed to interpret the Constitution thought about all this. I still think that to this day. In fact, I've become more convinced of it as time goes by.

Some observers think the congressional hearings in 1975 were a watershed in CIA history; do you think that's correct?

Yes, I think they undoubtedly were. I wouldn't have picked the word watershed; that's the kind of newspaper language that I hope is not appealing to academics because it isn't descriptive of anything. A watershed for the CIA, what does that mean? But if you are referring to the fact that from the Church Committee hearing on, the Congress got far more involved in CIA affairs, got far more briefings from the CIA, got far more documents from the CIA, began to try and manage intelligence relations and so forth, then it was a watershed.

What do you think are the lessons to be learned from the Church and Pike Investigations?

That they shouldn't be conducted that way again. If you're going to have intelligence oversight it ought to be done on a reasonably current basis and such an investigation shouldn't be necessary again.

Do you think the Agency today is more effective because of the hearings?

No, I think it's less effective.

Do you think it very important to tell congressional committees about something before they read it in the newspapers?

I believe that firmly. They don't like surprises. Presidents don't like surprises; senators and congressmen don't like surprises.

And how about directors?

Directors don't like them either.

Do you think the Church and Pike Committees appreciated the DCI responsibility for the protection of sources and methods?

No. I think that [because] that was put into the law, it had to be observed. As director, I attempted to comply with it and then when I did I was criticized for having done so.

A retired Agency officer said in 1976, "The congressional investigations were like being pillaged by a foreign power, only we have been occupied by the Congress with our files rifled, our officials humiliated and our agents exposed." Think that's too strong?

It's a good statement.

It was Jim Angleton.

Good statement. Jim Angleton was a believer in secret intelligence, to be run in the tradition of the British and other good European services. You have to do this in secrecy and with the confidence of your superiors and with a whole network of trust and mutual support. And it cannot be done properly without that, he's quite right. And you can find all kinds of people who are going to argue with everything I have said. Certain senators and congressmen would gladly argue with it, newspapermen will argue with that, fellows out at the Agency to protect themselves would argue about it. What I've tried to do is give it to you with the bark on, and I believe that anybody who would give me 15 minutes might not end up agreeing with me but they would certainly know that side of the case. I think it's time some people stop playing hopscotch or fun and games with the Intelligence Community.

Do you believe it's much more difficult to be DCI after Watergate in comparison with the decades before that?

Much more difficult because it's much more complicated. You've got many more constituencies to worry about. I don't think the intelligence side of the job is any more difficult, I think in some respects, it's easier because you've got a lot of gadgets these days that help you with intelligence collection, particularly regarding the Soviet Union. Where it's more difficult is handling the Congress, the White House, the press, the public. Particularly the Congress.

Footnotes

1. The covert action ordered by President Nixon to bring down the Allende government of Chile
2. In Colby's memoir, he states "the Security Office informed me of the fact that the Agency had received some letters from James McCord [the former chief of security] who had been arrested as a Watergate burglar, in which letters he made veiled accusations that an attempt was being made in the White House to pin the blame for Watergate on the Agency." William Colby with Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster,

1978), 339. Colby writes, however, that this revelation from security about the McCord letters was a result of the directive to collect what became the “Family Jewels,” not the cause of it as he says in his Oral History. In his memoir, Colby recalled that Schlesinger and he drafted the directive after the revelation that Howard Hunt—another former CIA man arrested and convicted for the Watergate break-in—had also helped burglarize the office of Daniel Ellsberg’s former psychiatrist. Colby, 337.

3. Nedzi was chairman of the House Armed Services Intelligence Subcommittee at the time.

4. CIA’s effort to salvage a sunken Soviet submarine.

5. Senator Church in 1973 had already conducted an investigation of the Chile covert action.

6. Revelations in 1967 that CIA was funding the National Student Association and other American non-governmental organizations.

7. President Ford on 4 January 1975 announced that Vice President Nelson Rockefeller would head a blue-ribbon commission to investigate CIA’s domestic activities. Ford had hoped to quell growing controversy about CIA and forestall a congressional investigation, but the creation of the Church and Pike Committees followed within weeks.

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