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*Harold P. Ford*

*WILLIAM E. COLBY*

*CIA History Staff*

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# WILLIAM E. COLBY

## AS DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

1973-1976

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*by Harold P. Ford*

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE:  
10 August 2011

EO 13526 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs  
EO 13526 3.3(b)(6)>25Yrs  
EO 13526 6.2(d)

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The years of William Colby's tenure as Director of Central Intelligence, 1973-76, formed a watershed in CIA's history. Dr. Harold P. Ford's study explains how in these years CIA, buffeted by Watergate, the outbreak of a short war in the Middle East, and the end of a long war in Vietnam, suddenly found itself accountable to Congress in ways never expected or experienced before. The wrenching Congressional investigations of CIA in 1975 and 1976, and the new permanent oversight committees that resulted from them, have produced—and continue to produce—dramatic and pervasive changes in CIA's work and culture. By revealing how William Colby dealt with the avalanche of troubles that descended upon the Agency during his watch, Hal Ford's study offers readers a new understanding of this DCI's performance as crisis manager in CIA's most difficult time of trial.

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After graduating from the University of Redlands, Harold P. Ford served as a naval officer in the Pacific in World War II and then took a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. In 1950 he joined CIA's Office of Policy Coordination, and while William Colby was chief of the Directorate of Plans' Far East Division in the 1960s, Ford as a senior staff officer of the Office of National Estimates joined him in Vietnam working groups, and as [redacted] reported directly to Colby. Ford retired from CIA in 1974 and in 1975 joined the staff of the Church committee, whose investigation of CIA is a major topic in this work. He was a staff member of the new Senate Select Committee on Intelligence from its inception in 1976 until 1980, when he returned to CIA to join the National Intelligence Council. After serving as the Council's vice chairman and acting chairman, Hal Ford again retired in September 1986 and was promptly recruited as an independent contractor for the CIA History Staff.

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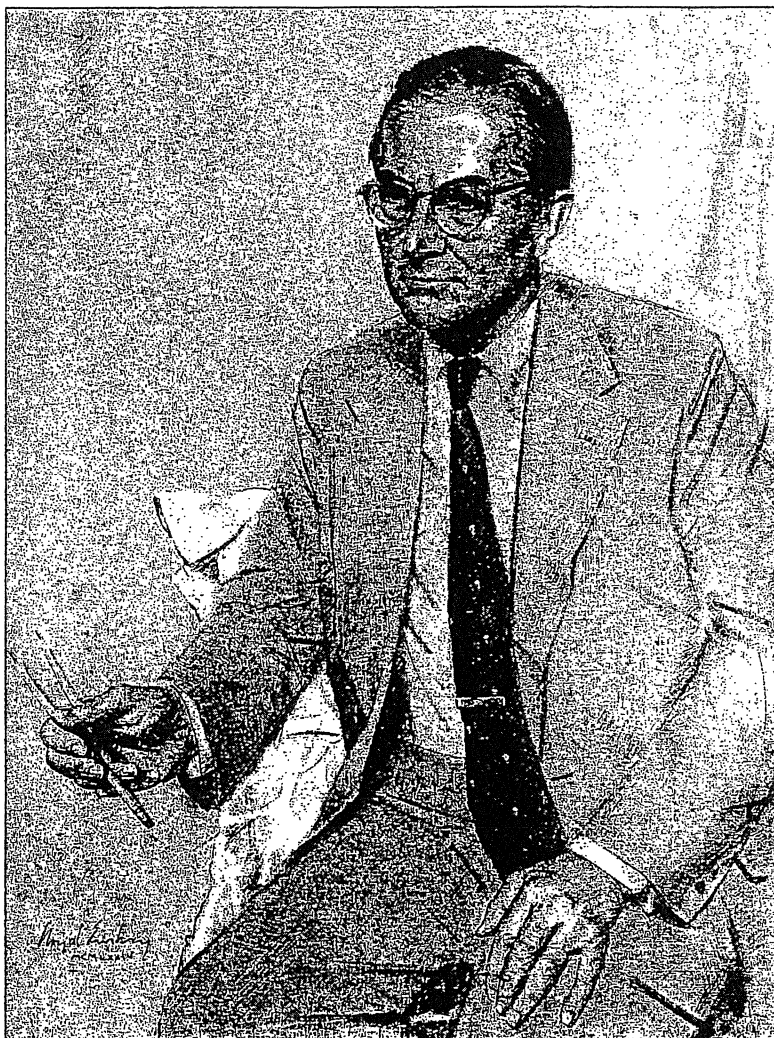
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1973-1976

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Portrait by Lloyd Embry, 1974

*William Egan Colby*

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*The DCI Historical Series*

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**AS DIRECTOR OF**  
**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**  
1973-1976

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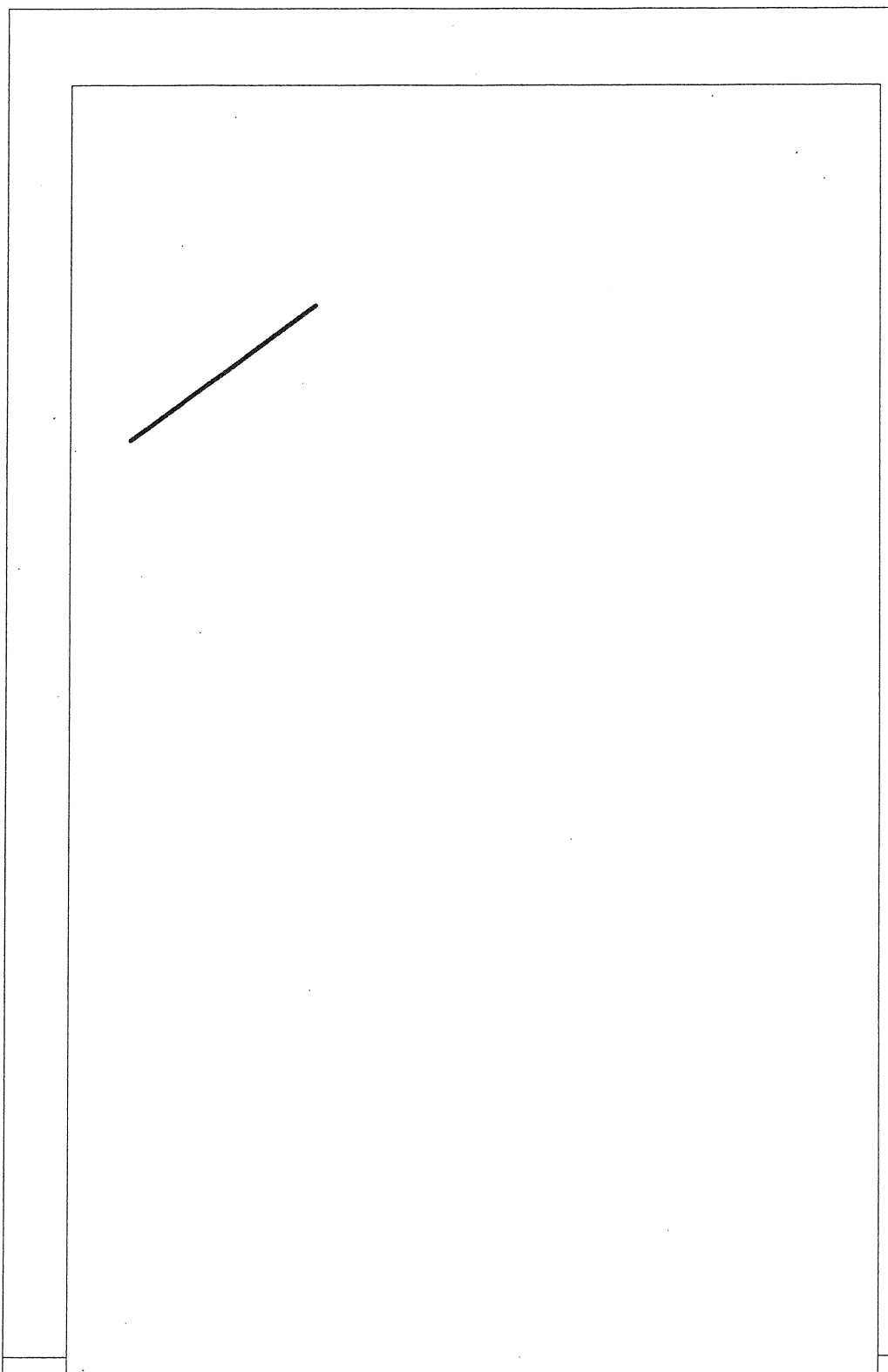
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**History Staff**  
**Center for the Study of Intelligence**  
**Central Intelligence Agency**  
**Washington, D.C.**

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1993

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## Editor's Preface

The years 1973-76, William Colby's tenure as Director of Central Intelligence, formed a watershed in CIA's history. Dr. Harold P. Ford's study explains how in these years CIA, buffeted by Watergate, the outbreak of a short war in the Middle East, and the end of a long war in Vietnam, suddenly found itself accountable to Congress in ways never expected or experienced before. The wrenching Congressional investigations of CIA in 1975 and 1976, and the new permanent oversight committees that resulted from them, have produced—and continue to produce—dramatic and pervasive changes in CIA's work and culture. Hal Ford's judicious study, by revealing how William Colby dealt with the avalanche of troubles that descended upon the Agency during his watch, will reward any reader who suspects that crisis management—both bureaucratically and nationally—remains a useful skill.

This study continues the DCI Historical Series, which began with [redacted] 1971 study of Walter Bedell Smith and [redacted] 1973 study of Allen Dulles. Although Richard Lehman, a former Chairman of the National Intelligence Council, began this study of William Colby, his research was preempted by a more urgent Agency project, and we are fortunate that Hal Ford could take on the work.

Hal Ford was educated at the University of Redlands, the University of Chicago (where he took his Ph.D. in 1950), and St. Antony's College, Oxford. He served as a naval officer in the Pacific in World War II and joined CIA's Office of Policy Coordination in 1950. For five years, 1963-68, while William Colby was chief of the Directorate of Plans' Far East Division, Hal Ford worked closely with him. From 1963 to 1965, as a senior staff officer of the Office of National Estimates, Ford joined Colby in a number of Vietnam interoffice working groups. Then, from 1965 to 1968, when Ford was [redacted] Colby was his immediate superior for most of this time. In 1974, after further service as a senior Directorate of Intelligence officer, Hal Ford retired from CIA. Following a year at Georgetown University, he joined the staff of the Church committee, whose investigation of CIA is a major topic in this work. He was a staff member of the new permanent Senate Select Committee on Intelligence from its inception in 1976 until 1980, when he returned to the CIA to join the National Intelligence Council (NIC), the successor to the Board of National Estimates. After serving as Vice Chairman and Acting Chairman of the NIC, he again retired in September 1986 and was promptly recruited as an independent contractor for the CIA History Staff.

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Hal Ford's experience with William Colby, CIA, and the Church committee, along with his scholarly training, were important qualifications for undertaking this study. More important, however, was his determination to follow the evidence wherever it led and to assess it objectively and judiciously. By its balanced appraisal of Colby's performance as DCI, Ford's eminently fair account of the overwhelming trials that Colby faced allows each reader to arrive at his or her own conclusions.

We owe thanks to a host of people who made this work possible. They include the members of the History Staff who helped edit and prepare the manuscript, the professionals in the [redacted] of the Office of Current Production and Analytic Support who turned the manuscript into a book, and the [redacted] members who crafted the well-made volume you now have in hand.

Finally, I should note that, although this is an official publication of the CIA History Staff, the views expressed—as in all of our works—are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the CIA.

J. Kenneth McDonald  
Chief, CIA History Staff

June 1993

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## Introduction

No person became Director of Central Intelligence in more strained and difficult circumstances than William Egan Colby. This unassuming professional intelligence officer, already tarnished in the public's view by his involvement in the PHOENIX program in Vietnam, came to the Directorship with little political support, either inside or outside Washington. By the time he succeeded James R. Schlesinger as DCI in September 1973, the CIA had come under attack from a suspicious Congress, a sensationalist press, and, not least, a hostile White House.<sup>1</sup>

President Richard M. Nixon and his National Security Advisor, Henry A. Kissinger, were highly dissatisfied on many scores with CIA and the effectiveness of US intelligence. Nixon also held a number of personal grievances against the Agency, in particular for former DCI Richard Helms's refusal to allow the CIA to participate in the Watergate coverup. For his part, Kissinger not only disdained CIA, but intended to run US intelligence himself.

By the time Colby became DCI, impeachment initiatives against the President had become a real possibility, and Nixon's leadership was faltering. Suspicions were growing in Congress and in the media that the CIA had been guilty of numerous illegalities. Internally, the Agency was reeling from the whirlwind term of James Schlesinger. Externally, several shocks at the very outset of Colby's DCI tenure—especially the overthrow and death of Chile's President Salvador Allende and the failure of US intelligence to call the sudden Egyptian-Syrian (Yom Kippur) attack on Israel—fed the White House's jaundiced view of the Agency, further complicated Colby's relationships with Congress and the public, and constrained his subsequent effectiveness as Director.

This study, divided into three parts, examines Colby's tenure as DCI. Part I treats his first 14 months as Director, from September 1973 to November 1974, a period in which Colby attempted to create a CIA more in tune with US Constitutional norms and so give it added stature and influence within American society. These admirable efforts met with much open hostility from the White House, portions of the Congress, and many of Colby's own colleagues within CIA.

<sup>1</sup>In May 1973, President Nixon nominated Colby to succeed Schlesinger as DCI. Schlesinger remained Director until 2 July, when he departed the Agency to become Secretary of Defense. For two months thereafter, until he was sworn in as DCI on 4 September, Colby shared DCI duties with the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters, who was legally Acting DCI.

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William E. Colby

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This study's second part examines what can justly be called "Black December/September 1974," the month in which three simultaneous crises combined to pull the roof down on Colby. These events were his dismissal of longtime counterintelligence chief James Angleton, *New York Times* journalist Seymour Hersh's allegations that CIA was guilty of massive wrongdoings, and Colby's decision to inform the Department of Justice that former DCI Richard Helms might be guilty of certain past illegalities. Together, these problems precipitated months of outside investigations of alleged CIA wrongdoing, set back Colby's efforts to enhance public and Congressional appreciation of CIA and directly contributed to his downfall as DCI.

This study's third and final part deals with the remainder of Colby's tenure as DCI (December 1974 to January 1976), a period in which he was sorely beset by a Presidential investigative commission, headed by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller; a Senate investigation, led by Frank Church (D-ID); and a House of Representatives inquiry, chaired by Otis Pike (D-NY). All of these occurred while numerous other demands were being made on US intelligence, and while President Gerald R. Ford, publicly dissatisfied with Colby, worked to find someone to replace him as DCI.

This study does not examine every aspect of William Colby's stewardship as DCI, but purposely confines itself to highlighting the principal issues with which Colby wrestled, assessing his success in dealing with them, and drawing certain judgments and lessons from his record as Director of Central Intelligence.

In assessing that record, we will see that many forces frustrated his admirable intentions. In part, the times were to blame: the troubled years from 1973 to 1976 offered a poor hand to anyone willing to take on the position as DCI. As it turned out, Colby was somewhat miscast, lacked significant political clout, and was to some degree a victim of circumstances. Moreover, he damaged his own case by a lack of finesse in handling certain difficult personnel problems, an overly hopeful approach to the media and Congress's investigations, and a failure to alert the White House to major CIA embarrassments before they hit the headlines.

We will nonetheless also see that any assessment of William Colby's stewardship as DCI must stress its many positive achievements. Certain of his managerial initiatives strengthened the Agency and the Intelligence Community. He recognized the changing needs in American society and policymaking, and sought to broaden US intelligence to meet those needs. Above all, he was determined that CIA must operate within the American system of law and accountability. Although he departed under a shadow of some disparagement from the White House and certain of his CIA colleagues, Colby won heightened respect from many quarters for his commitment to reform.

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# *Part I*

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Good Intentions, 1973-1974

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~~Secret~~*Chapter 1***Colby the Man**

**Fallaci:** What could shake your icy imperturbability? You never do show your emotions, do you?

**Colby:** I am not emotional. I admit it. Just a few things bother me. For instance, what happened when I was nominated and some people put posters around Washington—posters illustrated with a very poor picture of me, by the way. They called me a murderer. And my children had to live with that. But it didn't really bother me. Not much. Oh, don't watch me like that. You're looking for something underneath which isn't there. It's all here on the surface, believe me. There is nothing behind or underneath. There are not two or three layers. I told you: I'm religious, I'm conservative . . . .

Colby interview with Oriana Fallaci, 1976<sup>1</sup>

William Colby was 53 when he became DCI. Born 4 January 1920 in St. Paul, Minnesota, he was the son of a career Army officer, Elbridge Colby. Of New England Protestant stock, the elder Colby had converted to Roman Catholicism, earned B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees at Columbia University, and served as an instructor in English at Columbia and the University of Minnesota. He fought in World War I, then joined the regular Army in 1920. Retiring in 1948 as a full colonel, he established and headed the journalism department at George Washington University. His wife, William Colby's mother, was Margaret Mary Egan, whom Elbridge Colby had met at the University of Minnesota.

Colby's parents influenced him greatly. Throughout his Army career his father had been an independent thinker, a writer, and a champion of civil rights. These convictions "haunted his career for years," Colby later observed, noting how the Army had treated his father poorly for his outspoken defense of a wronged black soldier in Georgia. From his mother, William Colby gained a strong Catholicism and an early attachment to the

<sup>1</sup>William Colby, interview by Oriana Fallaci, *The Washington Star*, 7 March 1976 (hereafter cited as Colby interview by Fallaci, 7 March 1976).

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William E. Colby

causes of the Democratic Party's liberal wing. His father's Army career meant that the family was constantly on the move, from Minnesota to Georgia to Vermont, as well as from the Panama Canal Zone to Tientsin, China. This lifestyle fostered in Colby a curiosity about world affairs and an eagerness to be off to new places and experiences. But this semigypsy life also had the effect, as he later stated, of "making me feel an outsider everywhere, with roots really nowhere." The longest period of settled life in Colby's youth was his three years at high school in Burlington, Vermont, where his father was assigned as an ROTC professor at the University of Vermont. Even there young Colby felt he was the new boy in town, a Catholic in Protestant Establishment circles. He later observed that this "was a feeling I brought with me when I was admitted to Princeton in 1936."<sup>2</sup>

Originally desiring an Army career, but rejected by West Point because of nearsightedness, William Colby was soon caught up in the intellectual stimulation and challenge of Princeton—where he earned his way by waiting on tables. He remained essentially an outsider, however, content quietly to go his own way. Only as a cadet captain in the ROTC did Colby feel he achieved any campus prominence.

At Princeton, Colby became particularly interested in world affairs. He declared himself a liberal, an antifascist, and an interventionist. He wrote his senior thesis on French policy toward the Spanish Civil War, criticizing Paris sharply for its failure to support Madrid's Republican government against Franco. He later explained that this did not put him on the side of the Communists, who also supported the Republic:

I was perfectly convinced—which of course many supporters of the Republican cause were not—that it was possible to be antifascist without becoming pro-Communist. Indeed, if anything, I was as anti-Communist as I was antifascist, and for the same reason—a conviction that freedom is a transcendent value.<sup>3</sup>

Colby spent the summer following his junior year in France, where he developed a deep affection for the French people; he was there when World War II broke out in September 1939. Returning to the United States, he graduated from Princeton in 1940, just as France fell to German conquest. In August 1941, after a year at Columbia University Law School, he entered active duty in the Army as a reserve second lieutenant, some four months before Pearl Harbor. Following various Army assignments in the United States, including parachute training at Fort Benning, Georgia, Colby joined the newly formed Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and in December 1943 shipped out for the United Kingdom. Various causes, he later explained, impelled him to join this activist organization: boredom in his Army assignments; a wish not be left out of the action; an inclination to

<sup>2</sup>William Colby (and Peter Forbath), *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Colby, *Honorable Men*, p. 31.

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Colby the Man

military unorthodoxy; an interest in the political aspects of war; and a habit of going his own way, of seeking his own band of "kindred souls," where the payoff was based on spirit and capabilities, not social status.<sup>4</sup>

Once in Europe with the OSS, Colby parachuted into a resistance group area in the Department of Yonne (some 100 miles south and east of Paris), two months after D-day.<sup>5</sup> There he helped plan the airdrops of weapons and ammunition to various *maquis* networks, helped pick the most likely drop zones, and ended up receiving a black Cadillac that had belonged to Vichy Prime Minister, Pierre Laval. In March of 1945, after a period back in England, Colby commanded an OSS group of 100 Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans who parachuted onto a frozen lake in central Norway, just north of Trondheim. He led this team on a successful sabotage mission, skiing some 100 miles across country in six days to blow up a German-controlled bridge. Later, they destroyed railroad tracks and engaged in a firefight with German troops. In May of 1945, shortly after V-E Day, after taking the surrender of a German garrison in Norway, Colby and his OSS group participated in the National Day parade in Trondheim before Crown Prince Olaf.

Having won the Bronze Star and the Croix de Guerre for his service in France, as well as the Silver Star and St. Olaf's Medal for that in Norway, Major Colby returned to the United States. When World War II ended, Colby was training for another OSS assignment in East Asia. Five years later, in 1950, he returned to an OSS-type life, this time as a civilian member of a postwar covert action paramilitary wing of the US Government, blandly titled the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC).

In the meantime in September 1945, Colby had married Barbara Heizen, a former Barnard College student he had met and dated before joining the Army in 1941. Finishing Columbia Law School in 1947, he became a junior associate in the law firm of his ex-OSS chief, William J. Donovan.<sup>6</sup> Though now a young attorney in a Republican law firm, Colby rang doorbells for Harry Truman in 1948, supported an anti-Tammany wing of New York's Democratic Party, and joined the American Civil Liberties Union. In 1949, finding Wall Street unappealing, he moved to Washington, DC, where he became an attorney with the National Labor Relations Board. This was where events found him in June 1950, when the North Koreans invaded South Korea and, as Colby recalled, "suddenly the entire situation was changed."<sup>7</sup> Having been approached by [redacted], a former OSS boss of his and now an officer in Frank Wisner's OPC, Colby joined that organization in November 1950 as a GS-12.

<sup>4</sup>Colby, *Honorable Men*, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup>The leader of this particular *maquis* group turned out later to have been a German agent all along. As for military unorthodoxy, the leader of Colby's parachute team was a French lieutenant; the second in command was Major Colby (Colby, *Honorable Men*, pp. 41 and 48).

<sup>6</sup>In one case in which Colby participated, the opposing counsel was Frank Wisner, an ex-OSS officer and, by coincidence, soon to be the first chief of OPC and Colby's first boss in CIA.

<sup>7</sup>Colby, *Honorable Men*, p. 76.

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Colby recalls that in 1950 joining the CIA was a glamorous, esteemed, and patriotic thing to do. He later wrote that in those days the Agency attracted bright, politically liberal men and women from the finest Ivy League campuses. These were vigorous young people with adventuresome spirits who believed fervently that the Communist threat had to be met aggressively, innovatively, and courageously, while at the same time rejecting Senator Joseph McCarthy's demagoguery. As Colby later phrased it, "In fact, it can quite accurately be said that the CIA at that time was perceived as the high-quality, liberal vehicle in the fight against both Communism and McCarthyism."<sup>8</sup> Twenty-three

years later, however, by the time Colby became DCI, the climate had radically changed, and the now-vast CIA organization he headed had become an object of widespread suspicion. Colby's degree of success in improving this situation would depend importantly on his character, his goals, and his skills.



*Major Colby in Norway, 1945*

### **Colby's Makeup**

To many, Colby's makeup has remained elusive, and descriptions of him differ widely.<sup>9</sup> Some believe him to be a decent, courageous, broad-minded officer, a man of total integrity. Others, citing his major role in the PHOENIX program in Vietnam, regard him as a murderer, or believe that in other circumstances he might have been "a perfect Stalinist."<sup>10</sup> Some have characterized Colby's willingness to come clean with Congress as virtually treasonous, and others regard this as commendable, or at least the most realistic course Colby could have taken under the circumstances. Some considered him incapable of compromise; others found him more flexible. Some found him distant; others mentioned his willingness to

<sup>8</sup>Colby, *Honorable Men*, p. 77.

<sup>9</sup>See representative characterizations of Colby at appendix B.

<sup>10</sup>Colby interview by Fallaci, 7 March 1976.

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Colby the Man

listen to any employee who had a grievance to discuss, a willingness to take time "to stroke any stray cat that wandered into his office."<sup>11</sup> Some considered him a cold fish, whereas others found him inwardly a fairly warm person, someone who was merely outwardly reserved.

There nonetheless has been general agreement concerning certain aspects of Colby's makeup. One is that he was essentially a loner. Even though Richard Helms respected him as a clandestine operations officer and assisted him in his career, Colby never became a member of CIA's inner club of mandarins—such as Helms himself, Tracy Barnes, John Bross, Kermit Roosevelt, James Angleton, Bronson Tweedy, and Lawrence Houston. Nor did Colby ever receive the esteem and warmth within the Agency that Helms enjoyed.

Fundamentally out of sympathy with the kind of traditional intelligence service Helms epitomized, Colby was never quite accepted into these officers' inner circle. He was a doer, impatient with the caution and painstaking procedures of intelligence collection. Much of his CIA duty had concerned East Asia, rather than Soviet affairs, the heart of clandestine operations. Moreover, for years he had been heavily involved in covert activities rather than in espionage, which CIA's establishment considered to be the queen of the service.

Another aspect of Colby's makeup on which most agree (as reflected in the observations in appendix B) is that he tended to be all business and fairly colorless: or, as one author described his fictional counterpart, an innocent looking little man with spectacles, someone who resembled a Xerox copy of a man—and, when angered, "a Xerox of a Xerox."<sup>12</sup> Most observers, however, have acknowledged Colby's imaginativeness, prodigious energy, and brains. They have also acknowledged his administrative skills, while noting that he sometimes undercut those skills by a penchant for micromanagement. Many have also given him credit for having had good intentions, but question his high expectations and some of the ways he chose to advance those aims.

Three additional characteristics of Colby's makeup stand out to many observers: stubbornness, inscrutability, and, at heart, affinity for the role of soldier-priest. One insightful view of Colby can be found in a poll that Directorate of Operations (DO) officer David A. Phillips took in 1977 among some 11 senior CIA alumni who had worked closely with one or more of five DCIs. Phillips found that when asked which DCI one would want as an effective companion in a perilous situation on a desert island, four each (counting Phillips's own vote) chose Colby, Richard Helms, and John McCone—with no votes for VAdm. William Raborn or Allen Dulles. Given a pleasant, nonprecarious situation, however, where one would want an easy, stimulating companion on a desert island, six chose Dulles, five Helms, and one John McCone—with no votes for Vice Admiral Raborn or Colby.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>David A. Phillips, *The Night Watch: 25 Years of Peculiar Service* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), pp. 244-245.

<sup>12</sup>Aaron Latham, *Orchids for Mother* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), p. 17. Latham's novel has characters closely modeled on William Colby and James J. Angleton.

<sup>13</sup>Phillips, *The Night Watch*, p. 280.

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William E. Colby

**Colby's Goals**

Colby's earlier experiences before he joined CIA in 1950 left certain lasting imprints on him that directly influenced his later conduct as Director of Central Intelligence. These experiences, he states, tempered his initial liberalism, deepened his Catholicism, and instilled in him a lawyer's approach to and respect for legality. After joining, he became convinced that technology was revolutionizing the intelligence business, rendering obsolete many traditional modes of CIA's thought and practice. By 1973 he was also convinced that CIA's culture was too inbred, elitist, and separate from the outside world. Meanwhile, he had become convinced that the situation in Vietnam could only be remedied over the long term through a wise combination of village-centered political and paramilitary activity and that the situation there consisted basically of a race between America's growing revulsion for the war and South Vietnam's ability to defend itself. Even though he was satisfied that the PHOENIX program he had headed in Vietnam had been, as he phrased it, "Well within moral limits,"<sup>14</sup> by the time he became DCI, he had concluded that changing circumstances in the United States—in CIA activities, the public mood, and the fate of the country—necessitated new and more open behavior on the part of the President's Director of Central Intelligence.

Central to Colby's approach once he became Director was a profound certainty that there must be a "new" CIA that would be much more forthcoming in its relationships with the Congress and the American public.<sup>15</sup> He believed strongly that such a course was necessary: first, because US intelligence had to be more accountable to the American constitutional

<sup>14</sup>A major question for historians in assessing Colby, but one outside the compass of this particular study of his tenure as DCI, will remain that of his conduct and defense of the PHOENIX program, a joint US-South Vietnamese effort that sought to destroy the Viet Cong's political apparatus in the South. Suffice it to say, his PHOENIX experience remained a detriment to Colby throughout his subsequent US Government career and—as discussed in later chapters of this study—tended to undercut positive emphases he attempted as DCI to give US intelligence. See also Colby, *Honorable Men*, p. 276.

<sup>15</sup>The paragraphs that follow, highlighting the views Colby held, are based principally on the following: US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Hearing, *Nomination of William E. Colby to be Director of Central Intelligence*, 93d Cong., 1st sess., 2, 20, and 25 July 1973 (hereafter cited as *Colby, DCI Nomination Hearing*, 1973); William Colby, address to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, 3 May 74, as cited in the *Congressional Record*, 14 May 1974, E2966-E2967; William Colby, transcript of address to the Commonwealth Club of California, San Francisco, 7 May 1975; William Colby, transcript of interview, "Meet the Press," NBC network, WRC television, Washington, DC, 29 June 1975; William Colby, transcript of interview by Paul Duke, WETA television, Washington, DC, 13 December 1975; William Colby, transcript of interview by Daniel Schorr, CBS network, WTOP television, Washington, DC, 21 January 1976; all four filed in CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 1, CIA Archives and Records Center; William Colby, "Modern Intelligence: Myth and Reality," *New York Times Magazine*, 3 August 1975; Colby, *Honorable Men*; Colby interview by Fallaci, 7 March 1976; William Colby, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 2 March 1987 and 8 September 1988 (all the interviews by Ford in this study are in CIA History Staff job 90B00336R, box 4, folder 54, CIA Archives and Records Center).

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structure and system; and second, because such a course, by better educating the Congress, the media, and the public about US intelligence, would call forth much stronger public support.

Colby held that the large view of the situation is what counts. For him, the political aspects of war and international competition were supreme. He believed that intelligence, bravery, and commitment are not enough and, if not accompanied by wisdom, then can lead to futile and fatal wastage. US intelligence, he concluded, must accordingly be broadened to avoid tunnel vision and parochial habit. The Intelligence Community must tap the wisdom of the finest experts, in and out of government. Intelligence must recognize that it has become a complex business for a complex world, an intellectual process demanding the fullest and most careful analysis.

Colby therefore believed that the Intelligence Community must adapt more effectively to the revolution that had occurred in intelligence collection, the gathering of information by high-tech means. And, to match advances in collection, he believed improvements must be made in intelligence management, as well as in the quality of intelligence estimates, analysis, and warning. In his view, the computer had now displaced the trench coat; operations officers must work much more closely with CIA's analysts and technicians. Here Colby faced considerable opposition, because years of bureaucratic experience had created two proud, competing cultures. Former DCI James Schlesinger had also tried to break down this compartmentalization, even though his view of the problem was less idealistic than was Colby's. As Schlesinger later put it:

You see, you had two breeds of cat here. You had those people who had considerable experience who were not always very articulate. . . . And then you had all of these other chaps who were in the DDI who had come out of Amherst . . . and had gotten this "enlightened" view of the world. . . . The clandestine people regarded the intelligence analysts as kind of remote academics whom you never told anything and who weren't worth very much. . . . And then the intelligence analysts regarded the operators as distinctly lower in intelligence and contaminated by questionable activities that would never pass muster at Amherst or Vassar.<sup>16</sup>

Colby also foresaw a significant increase in the number and the nature of the policymaking consumers of intelligence. In his view, intelligence had to be broadened and made more sophisticated in order to serve new recipients in Congress, the Departments of Commerce and Treasury, military commanders in the field, friendly countries' liaison services, the media, academia, and the public at large.

<sup>16</sup>James R. Schlesinger, interview by J. Kenneth McDonald, tape recording, Washington, DC, 2 March 1982 and 1 November 1982 (hereafter cited as Schlesinger interview by McDonald, 2 March 1982 and 1 November 1982) (~~Secret~~). Transcripts of interviews other than those by H. P. Ford are on file in the CIA History Staff.

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Colby perceived, moreover, that a number of unjustified and debilitating myths had arisen about US intelligence, and hence a credibility gap had opened up concerning CIA, between what intelligence really was and how most Americans perceived it. Colby wanted to reverse the growing tendency to portray US intelligence as unconstitutional and improper. If those myths came to be believed, said Colby, "We can make our own mistaken Aztec sacrifice—American intelligence—in the belief that only thus can the democratic sun of our free society rise."<sup>17</sup> To forestall this, he believed, intelligence must clearly operate within the traditions of US society. To Colby, Congress's rising interest in intelligence oversight was legitimate; that interest must hence be met by greater frankness concerning intelligence operations and budgets. American intelligence could no longer be divorced from the regular visible agencies of government. US intelligence had to be responsible and accountable to the American people and their elected representatives, yet, at the same time provide essential services. Colby testified at his confirmation hearings that it was essential that the US intelligence service be run within "the American society and the American constitutional structure, and I can see that there may be a requirement to expose to the American people a great deal more than might be convenient from the narrow intelligence point of view."<sup>18</sup>

#### Colby's Attempts To Further His Goals

Even before being sworn in as DCI, Colby attempted to set his theories in motion. In May and June of 1973, he tasked the Agency's Management Committee and the Office of Training (OTR) to come up with recommendations for fuller disclosure of intelligence to the public. Upon being named DCI-designate, his July appearances before the Senate Armed Services Committee were the first time any DCI confirmation hearings had been held in open session, though this was not so much due to Colby's initiative as to the result of new pressures within the Senate for clarifying the role the CIA had played in Southeast Asia and Watergate. Colby was not upset with such new openness. In fact, a week before he formally became DCI, Colby permitted the media to enter and film portions of CIA Headquarters at Langley, Virginia—the first time such a visit had ever been allowed. On that occasion he found, however, as he would often find subsequently, little reciprocal good will: journalist Bill Downs told his TV audience, "Driving through the nation's most secure gate, the \$50 million supersecret CIA Headquarters looks surprisingly like a well-kept prison. . . . The agency auditorium, sometimes used for cloak-and-dagger

<sup>17</sup>William Colby, as quoted in "Modern Intelligence: Myth and Reality," *The New York Times Magazine*, 3 August 1975.

<sup>18</sup>Colby, *DCI Nomination Hearing*, 2 July 1973.

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briefings, looks like the top of an ice cream cone." Downs did acknowledge that the American taxpayers' CIA property was "in good condition."<sup>19</sup>

Colby also set out to expand the CIA's practices of releasing unclassified information to scholars and the general public. Such releases—almost all of them from the Agency's Directorate of Intelligence (DI)—included  translations and summaries of selected foreign-language publications; reference-type handbooks (listings of chiefs of state, biographic directories, and the like); economic data handbooks; maps and atlases; and the CIA contributions to the reports of the Joint Economic Committee of Congress—the only type of released information entailing collation and significant analysis.

In addition, Colby made himself and other CIA officers much more available for public appearances. This expanded contact with the public included briefings at CIA Headquarters of visiting college and high school students, briefings of visiting businessmen and private think tank personnel, outside speakers invited to address OTR classes and CIA-wide audiences, substantive contacts with outside academic experts, and CIA employee participation in outside conferences and other academic events.

From the outset, these efforts to open up CIA were seen as foolish and destructive by some of his CIA colleagues, especially those in the Directorate of Operations (DO), traditionally the seat of compartmentalization and secrecy. Certain senior DO officers looked on Colby's openness as irreconcilable with the DCI's traditional responsibility for protecting intelligence sources and methods. From among these many DO doubters, William Nelson and George Carver especially cautioned Colby in the early months of his DCI tenure. Nelson, Deputy Director for Operations and long a close colleague of Colby's, wrote him:

I believe it is almost impossible for the DCI to discuss operational matters including cover arrangements without inviting headlines and stories which seriously degrade the fabric of our security and, no matter what the original intent, lead inevitably to a further exposure of intelligence sources and methods by persons inside and outside the Agency who take their cue from the man directly charged with this responsibility.<sup>20</sup>

George Carver, Special Assistant for Vietnam Affairs when Colby became DCI, later recalled that there had been a long and continuing running battle between Colby and the Management Group over disclosures to Congress. The Group's view, which Carver shared, was that many of the critics Colby was trying to educate didn't understand the issues and weren't CIA's friends anyway; therefore, his efforts would prove self-defeating.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Bill Downs, WMAL radiobroadcast, Washington, DC, 27 August 1973.

<sup>20</sup>William Nelson, Deputy Director for Operations, Memorandum for William Colby, DCI, "Statements to the Press," 4 March 1974, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 1, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret Eyes Only~~).

<sup>21</sup>George Carver, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 2 December 1987 (hereafter cited as Carver interview, 2 December 1987) (~~Confidential~~).

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From the beginning, Colby was caught between opposite demands that would mark much of his tenure as Director: the pressing need, as he saw it, to change some of CIA's traditional practices versus the difficult task of selling new practices to the doubters within the CIA. In trying to square this circle, Colby underestimated the problems his greater openness would create, not only within the CIA, but outside as well—where, as Carver and others had predicted, Colby's disclosures were in many cases treated sensationally rather than as indicators that a new DCI was set upon reforming US intelligence.

For two years or so, Colby did not succeed in materially expanding the release of intelligence data, despite his attachment to greater openness. Before then his results had been fairly slight. Indeed, a later study of Agency efforts to influence public attitudes concluded in April 1975 that the impact of these efforts had been "at best marginal" and that "the total current CIA program to inform the American public can only be regarded as exceedingly modest."<sup>22</sup> By and large, significant Agency openness did not occur until the full force of the Congressional investigations hit Colby later in 1975.

The results Colby gained from his openness proved mixed. As subsequent chapters spell out, his more forthcoming practice won him respect in many circles and—over the longer term—some heightened Congressional support of CIA. But much continuing general uneasiness about the Agency was to continue, as was much abiding criticism of Colby from within CIA.

<sup>22</sup>Office of Training study, "CIA Activities Contributing to Public Understanding of Intelligence and the CIA," April 1975, attachment to John F. Blake, Deputy Director of Administration, Memorandum for Secretary, CIA Management Committee, "CIA Public Relations—Management Committee Action—96/A," 21 May 1975, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 1, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~).

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~~Secret~~*Chapter 2***The Troubled Setting**

What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?

Richard M. Nixon, 1970<sup>1</sup>

After his May 1973 nomination as Director of Central Intelligence, Colby faced an inhospitable setting. Numerous constraints severely restricted his area of maneuver and his prospects for success. In ascending order of confining influence, these included a long initial period of ambiguous DCI authority, resistance to Colby's proposed reforms, public and Congressional suspicions of CIA and Colby, and, most important, a sorely beset President who held CIA in disdain and who intended to have US intelligence run from the White House.

Between the time President Nixon nominated Colby on 9 May 1973 and the time he finally became DCI on 4 September 1973, Colby's authority was uncertain. For nine weeks after Colby was nominated, Director James Schlesinger remained at CIA before leaving to become Secretary of Defense on 2 July. During that interim period, from May to July, Colby continued as the Agency's Deputy Director for Operations and Schlesinger's right-hand man.<sup>2</sup> After Schlesinger departed, nine more weeks passed before Colby was confirmed by the Senate. During this interim, authority at Langley was shared between the DCI-designate and the Acting DCI, DDCI Vernon Walters. Even though Colby considered their personal relationship an easy one, with neither of them caring "who was working for whom," this situation hampered Colby's ability to quickly set his desired new initiatives in motion.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Statement to then Secretary of State William Rogers, after CIA had provided no warning that Cambodia's Gen. Lon Nol was about to overthrow Prince Sihanouk Norodom (Richard Nixon, *RN, The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* [New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978], p. 447).

<sup>2</sup>During those weeks Schlesinger vested special responsibilities in Colby, who began to catalogue questionable past CIA activities (the "family jewels"), to cancel several dubious CIA operations, and to institute a new system to replace the long-established Office of National Estimates (see chapter 4).

<sup>3</sup>William Colby, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 3 February 1987 (hereafter cited as Colby interview by Ford, 3 February 1987) (~~Secret~~).

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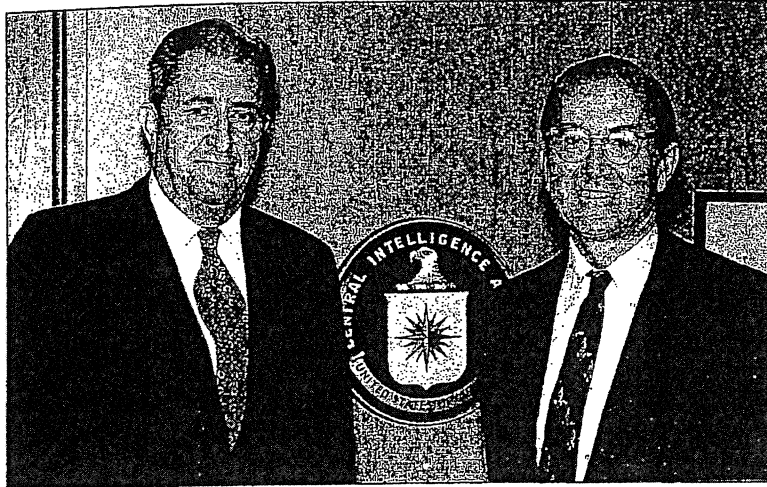
From the outset, the DCI-designate was also caught between conflicting demands that would mark much of his tenure as Director. Although he recognized the pressing need to change some of CIA's traditional practices, he confronted the difficult task of selling this new, more open course to doubters in and out of CIA who considered this course irreconcilable with the DCI's traditional responsibilities for protecting intelligence sources and methods.

Colby's chances of success were also constrained by his becoming DCI at a time when, after years of relative quiescence on the part of Congress, considerable sentiment had begun to grow for much fuller oversight of CIA, rising out of Congressional

concern that an unchecked CIA had conducted various illegal activities. At the time, suspicions focused principally on whether CIA had participated in the White House's 1970 Huston Plan for mounting intelligence operations against American citizens within the United States, whether CIA had conducted a "secret war" in Laos, whether it had been involved in Watergate, and whether it had contributed to the overthrow and death of Chilean President Salvador Allende.

During the months in which Colby was gearing up to become Director, several longtime senior Congressional friends of CIA began to call for special investigations of the Agency. These mandarins included Senator John Stennis (D-MS), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Intelligence; Senator John McClellan (D-AR), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense's Subcommittee on Intelligence Operations; and Representative Lucien Nedzi (D-MI), chairman of the House Armed Services Special Subcommittee on Intelligence. Then, at his confirmation hearings, Colby ran into a barrage of hostile questions, not only about alleged CIA illegalities in general, but also about his own role as the former director of the much-criticized PHOENIX

*James R. Schlesinger*~~Secret~~  
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~~Secret~~*The Troubled Setting**Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters and Colby*

program in Vietnam. During those hearings, he was charged with having been evasive, unresponsive, and dishonest years ago in Vietnam in briefing visiting Members of Congress about the PHOENIX program and his relationship to it.<sup>4</sup>

Colby's mixed welcome in his confirmation hearings presaged the somewhat distant relationship he was to have with Congress, especially in contrast with that which former DCI Richard Helms enjoyed. Helms had achieved considerable success in nursing close contacts with key members of Congress. By contrast, Colby's more reserved personality and his previous leadership of the PHOENIX program tended to restrict his influence with a Congress already concerned about burgeoning allegations of CIA misconduct.

The greatest difficulty that Colby faced as he became DCI, however, was the hostility Nixon and Kissinger bore toward CIA—a mixture of animus and legitimate concern over its capabilities, especially its ability to provide adequate warning of impending crises. This hostility, combined

<sup>4</sup>Colby, *DCI Nomination Hearing*. During these hearings, Colby was sharply questioned by committee members Symington, Nunn, and Hughes, and by guest Senators Kennedy and Proxmire. The most serious charges, however, were voiced by guest Congressman Robert Drinan. At the committee's hearing on 20 July 1973, Drinan berated Colby for having misled him and his visiting colleagues in Vietnam, in June 1969, when they had questioned Colby about the PHOENIX program. Senator Stuart Symington also privately told CIA's Legislative Counsel, John Maury, that Representative Drinan felt that Colby had given him "false and misleading statements about PHOENIX." (John Maury, Legislative Counsel, Memorandum for the Record, "Discussion with Senator Symington, Acting Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee, re Mr. Colby's Confirmation Hearing," 18 July 1973; CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, CIA Archives and Records Center ~~Internal Use Only~~).

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with Henry Kissinger's imperious style, sharply limited the influence Colby could have on foreign policy counsels at the apex of intelligence purpose and greatly constrained his effectiveness as DCI.

President Nixon's nomination of Colby as DCI took place not only as part of a Presidential shuffling of senior government figures in May 1973 that moved Schlesinger to Defense, but within a broader setting of sharply growing Watergate pressures on Mr. Nixon. That gathering political storm had reached such proportions that, on 30 April 1973, less than two weeks before he nominated Colby, the President had dismissed three of his closest colleagues: H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, and Attorney General Richard Kleindienst. By the end of October, less than two months after Colby had become DCI, Vice President Spiro Agnew departed in disgrace, and President Nixon—in what came to be termed his "Halloween Massacre"—suddenly dismissed Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, Attorney General Elliot Richardson, and Richardson's deputy, William Ruckelshaus.

Watergate had earlier had a chilling effect on CIA-White House relationships when DCI Helms had withstood Presidential pressures to abet the coverup of this scandal. For the most part, Colby was simply an heir to that legacy; nonetheless, its disruptive effects during his term as DCI were considerable. Not only were Congress, the media, and the public suspicious that CIA had been heavily involved in Watergate, but the President was still angry at CIA for *not* having been so. As George Carver graphically described this situation, years later, Nixon had been "pissed off" at Helms and DDCI Vernon Walters for not having played ball on Watergate and for not helping the White House bail itself out.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to his abiding anger at the Agency for not having played Watergate patsy for the White House in 1972, Nixon blamed CIA for his defeat in the 1960 presidential election. In his view, CIA had withheld certain sensitive intelligence from Democratic candidate John F. Kennedy that would have undercut Kennedy's incorrect but politically potent charges that Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon had permitted a "missile gap" to open up between the strategic weapons capabilities of the USSR and the United States. According to former DCI Helms, speaking years later, Nixon "really believed, and I think he believes to this day, that the 'missile gap' question was the responsibility of the Agency and that it did him in."<sup>6</sup> In George Carver's view, Nixon had a lot of residual heartburn from his view that CIA was a nest of liberals who had "screwed him out of the 1960 election."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>George Carver, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 12 February 1987 (hereafter cited as Carver interview by Ford, 12 February 1987) (~~Secret~~).

<sup>6</sup>Richard Helms, interview by R. Jack Smith, tape recording, Washington, DC, 21 April 1982 (hereafter cited as Helms interview by Smith, 21 April 1982) (~~Secret~~).

<sup>7</sup>Carver interview by Ford, 12 February 1987.

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Indeed, Nixon felt strongly that CIA contained too many "softies." As Nixon told chief aide H. R. Haldeman, months before nominating Colby as DCI:

The first problem is that the CIA is . . . primarily Ivy League and the Georgetown set rather than the type of people we get in the service and the FBI. I want a study made immediately as to how many people in CIA could be removed by Presidential action. . . . Of course the reduction in force should be accomplished solely on the ground of its being necessary for budget reasons, but you will both know the real reason and I want some action to deal with the problem.<sup>8</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger were dissatisfied not only with CIA's personnel but with its practices. In their view CIA was overstaffed, too expensive, underexperienced, and not sufficiently alert to the worldwide Communist threat. In particular, they had had sharp differences with CIA in 1969 over whether the Soviets were intent upon MIRVing their giant SS-9 ICBMs, and hence whether the US Minuteman ICBM system would soon be threatened. Nixon had taken a keen personal interest in the MIRV-ABM question and believed that US intelligence estimates were seriously underestimating the USSR's progress there.<sup>9</sup> Directorate of Science and Technology (DS&T) historian Donald E. Welzenbach holds that Kissinger hoped "to prove that the Minuteman shield was threatened by the Soviets." Kissinger needed this "credible threat," Welzenbach contends, in order to justify development of the ABM system which he wanted to use as a bargaining chip in the forthcoming SALT negotiations.<sup>10</sup> The CIA had stubbornly held that the SS-9s were not being MIRVed. The fact that the Agency's view proved accurate did little to abate White House hostility toward CIA.

The National Intelligence Estimates were, per se, a major sore point with Nixon and Kissinger. In their view, these products were wishy-washy, ambiguous, lacking in alternative judgments and possible outcomes, and based on an oversimplified model of the Soviet Government as a single unified actor. Moreover, according to the White House, CIA's analysts and estimators seemed unaware of the purposes of the administration's foreign policies and of the many other sources of information available to the

<sup>8</sup>Presidential note to Haldeman, 18 May 1972, as cited in Bruce Oudes, ed., *Richard Nixon's Secret Files* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 448.

<sup>9</sup>See Top Secret documentation in National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, Alexandria, Virginia (hereafter cited as Nixon Materials), box 275, NSC files/Agency files.

<sup>10</sup>Donald Welzenbach, *History of the Directorate of Science and Technology, 1970-1983*, September 1987, II-9. (Portions of this study are Top Secret/Compartmented, on file in the Office of the DDS&T.) See also H. P. Ford's notes on this study, in CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 2, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~). During the course of the MIRV quarrel in 1969, a Cabinet member (Defense Secretary Melvin Laird) had for the first time openly sought to force a DCI (Richard Helms) to change an intelligence estimate's judgments that an administration found uncongenial.

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Presidency. In short, Nixon and Kissinger believed that intelligence estimates were not sufficiently relevant to policy issues and were of very little use to top policymakers.<sup>11</sup>

Nixon was also angry at the CIA for intelligence estimates it had provided the White House on the Vietnam war that had directly challenged Nixon's and Kissinger's views. For example, CIA flatly contradicted administration claims that the 1970 incursion into Cambodia would greatly depress Communist capabilities in South Vietnam and that US bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail was severely hampering North Vietnamese logistic support of the Viet Cong. More important, some of the Agency's judgments concerning the war had proved seriously wrong. In particular, CIA had grossly underestimated the degree to which the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville was being used as a funnel for Communist supply of arms to the Viet Cong. The Nixon archives indicate that the White House investigated this particular intelligence failure in some detail and that senior officials there had recommended appropriate personnel changes at CIA.<sup>12</sup>

Kissinger's NSC assistant for intelligence, Andrew W. Marshall, passed on many of the White House's criticisms to Colby the day after he became DCI. According to Marshall, US intelligence was not showing any specific competence for producing products of the sort that might be of value to top-level decisionmakers in addressing major policy problems. Furthermore, since many—if not most—intelligence officers in State and the CIA did not share the world view of top US military leaders, these differences in fundamental assumptions, Marshall explained, might be one of "the most important barriers preventing US intelligence from adequately supporting top-level decisionmaking."<sup>13</sup>

Colby had other problems as well. In an earlier—and unsuccessful—attempt to improve US intelligence, Nixon's principal lieutenant had been Colby's immediate predecessor, James Schlesinger, a Nixon confidant and now, as Secretary of Defense, controller of the bulk of US intelligence assets, budgets, and personnel. In March 1971, at Nixon's request, Schlesinger (then Assistant Director of the Office of Management and Budget [OMB]), had produced a searching criticism of the Intelligence

<sup>11</sup>The Nixon archives contain many such criticisms, couched at times in very strong language, by President Nixon, Kissinger, Andrew W. Marshall (at the time Kissinger's chief lieutenant for intelligence matters in the NSC staff), and other senior White House officials (see Top Secret examples in Nixon Materials, box 285, NSC files/name files; box 360, NSC files/subject files; and box 275, NSC files/Agency files). Years later, Nixon still held that the CIA had been guilty of "disastrously" underestimating the number of ICBMs the Soviets would deploy: "Thanks in part to this intelligence blunder, we will find ourselves looking down the nuclear barrel in the mid-1980's" (Nixon, *Memoirs*, p. 262).

<sup>12</sup>See Top Secret documentation in Nixon Materials, box 276, NSC files/Agency files.

<sup>13</sup>Andrew W. Marshall, National Security Council, Memorandum for William Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, no subject given, 5 September 1973, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 2, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~); Andrew W. Marshall, National Security Council, Memorandum for William Colby, DCI, "Areas for Discussion," 21 May 1973, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 2, folder 16, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~).

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Community. He had then found "gross redundancies" in collection, raw intelligence serving as a proxy for improved inference and estimates, and analysis "the stepchild of the Intelligence Community."<sup>14</sup> His findings, somewhat capsulated, became a seven-page Presidential directive of 5 November 1971. This directive ordered that the Schlesinger recommendations be carried out "urgently"; that the DCI delegate direct authority to the DDCI for CIA's day-to-day operations, so that the DCI could concentrate on directing the Intelligence Community; and that a new White House body, a National Security Council Intelligence Committee (NSCIC), be formed under the chairmanship of—guess who—Henry Kissinger. CIA files indicate that Colby treated this Presidential order as his central directive in attempting to improve US intelligence.<sup>15</sup>

Especially significant for Colby as the incoming DCI in 1973 was Nixon's view that the Intelligence Community's response to these 1971 directives had left much to be desired. The then DCI, Richard Helms, felt strongly that the President's order gave the DCI responsibilities beyond powers he actually possessed or realistically could be expected to gain. Helms believed that a DCI could not tell a Secretary of Defense what the latter could do with his budget. Therefore, in Helms's view, Mr. Nixon's directive was from the outset "a nonstarter"; whatever progress a DCI gained in these respects would have to come through persuasion, "not *force majeure*."<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, Helms had not pushed too hard. Although he did establish an Intelligence Community, he did not attempt to have it make recommendations on budgetary allocations; rather, he simply gave the White House the views of the individual intelligence components.

Nixon's creation of a new NSC Intelligence Community Committee also produced little improvement. For four years Andrew Marshall's Community staff worked on various possible improvements but in the end achieved very modest results. The parent NSCIC body met only twice in its

<sup>14</sup>*A Review of the Intelligence Community* (originally ~~Top Secret~~ ~~Confidential~~), 10 March 1971 (on file in the office of Chief, CIA History Staff). In 1970-71 then OMB officer James Taylor (who later became CIA's Executive Director, 1984-89) played a central staff role in assisting Schlesinger prepare his critique and was decorated for this service. From OMB in 1975, Taylor wrote Colby that, in drawing up Schlesinger's 1971 report on US intelligence, there had been "discussion about how one could create more diversity of view within the production community instead of the 'lowest common denominator' product which Marshall and apparently some elements of the National Security Council then believed they were receiving" (James Taylor, Office of Management and Budget, Memorandum for William Colby, DDO, subject not given, 6 March 1975, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 2, CIA Archives and Records Center [~~Confidential~~]).

<sup>15</sup>These directives of President Nixon also provided for the creation of a unified National Cryptologic Command under the Director of the National Security Agency (NSA), a single Office of Defense Investigations, and a consolidated Defense Mapping Agency. For the centrality to Colby of Nixon's 1971 directives, see the following: William Colby, DCI, letter to Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 19 September 1973 (~~Secret~~); William Colby, DCI, letter to President Nixon, n. d. (Unclassified); President Nixon, letter to William Colby, DCI, 29 June 1974 (Unclassified); CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 2, CIA Archives and Records Center.

<sup>16</sup>Richard M. Helms, interview by John Bross, tape recording, Washington, DC, 14 December 1982 (hereafter cited as Helms interview by Bross, 14 December 1982) (~~Secret~~).

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lifetime (late 1971 to 1975), produced nothing of consequence and in the end simply atrophied.<sup>17</sup> Kissinger, the NSCIC's chairman, preferred to influence US intelligence through more informal, personal means—a practice he continued throughout Colby's tenure as DCI.

In fact, from the outset of his Presidency in 1969, Mr. Nixon had moved to reduce the DCI's authority and to give Dr. Kissinger and the NSC staff added influence over the Intelligence Community. DCI influence steadily declined. According to R. Jack Smith, CIA's Deputy Director for Intelligence (DDI) when Nixon and Kissinger took office, "It was just as though the shades in the White House were pulled down all of a sudden. . . . They [Nixon and Kissinger] were antagonistic right from the outset."<sup>18</sup> According to Helms, by the time Colby became DCI in 1973, President Nixon had brought all control of intelligence matters into the White House, so that he could have more power over "the vast, sprawling bureaucracy he so distrusted." In this way, said Helms, President Nixon could control the government through the people that "were beholden to him, known to him, and believed loyal to him; and he wanted to get rid of anybody around that didn't fit into that particular pattern."<sup>19</sup>

The Nixon/Kissinger attitude was not lost on CIA officials. In March 1973 a CIA Management Advisory Group reported that "there is considerable feeling within the analytical components that the Agency has suffered a loss of impact with those officials who make national policy."<sup>20</sup> This is also clearly reflected in Nixon's and Kissinger's own memoirs. Nixon does

<sup>17</sup>This is the view, as well, of Maj. Gen. Jack E. Thomas, USAF (Ret.), who served as Executive Secretary of Kissinger's NSCIC. He noted, just two years after Nixon's November 1971 directive, that the NSCIC had thus far met only once and that "A total of six actions have been submitted to the Chairman, NSCIC (Kissinger), all of which called for some response. To date no formal reply has been received to any of the six action requests" (Jack Thomas, Memorandum for the Record, "NSCIC Record on Action Requests," 5 November 1973, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, CIA Archives and Records Center [Secret]); Thomas still holds the view, years later, that the NSCIC achieved nothing; it simply wasn't Kissinger's style (Jack E. Thomas, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 28 January 1987 [hereafter cited as Thomas interview by Ford, 28 January 1987] [Confidential]).

<sup>18</sup>R. Jack Smith statement to John Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), p. 499.

<sup>19</sup>Helms, interview by Bross, 14 December 1982 [Secret].

<sup>20</sup>Management Advisory Group, Memorandum for the Deputy Director for Support, "Agency Esprit," 1 March 1973, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 2, CIA Archives and Records Center [Secret]. At the same time, Nixon and Kissinger were also reducing Ray S. Cline's influence as Director of the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). In October 1973, after Kissinger shut him out of certain sensitive information during the Middle East war, Cline resigned in protest. According to Cline, "crucial intelligence was often suppressed to ensure that only Nixon and Kissinger had the full body of information on which to make broad judgments. The whole interagency bureaucracy was emasculated to provide a monopoly of power for the White House" (Ray Cline, *The CIA Under Reagan, Bush and Casey* [Washington, DC: Acropolis Press, 1981], p. 242).

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not refer to CIA at all after the year 1971 and makes only two brief references to Colby,<sup>21</sup> and Kissinger does not mention Colby in the first volume of his memoirs (to early 1973) and in the second volume makes only passing references to Colby, without evaluating him or his role as DCI.<sup>22</sup>

The changes Nixon and Kissinger desired constituted more than just an aggrandizement of their influence over intelligence. They sought a significant change in the very purposes of intelligence. As Andrew Marshall put it to Colby at the outset of his DCI tenure, intelligence must do far more in assisting policymakers to exert pressure on foreign governments: the administration wanted CIA to give it new insights into the specific weaknesses of given countries—that is, knowledge of their internal politics, perceptions, and policymaking styles—so that the White House could then “enhance the threats we make, to practice effective deception and other *psychological operations against them*.”<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, these White House aims to maximize US intelligence did not match the CIA's capabilities as Colby found them when he became DCI. Nixon and Kissinger seemed to want to restore the Agency to its previous character as the activist leading edge of US covert political action in the world. Yet for several years before 1973, the CIA had been slowly assuming a quieter, more prudent style of activity. Moreover, top foreign affairs practitioners for the White House were themselves extremely knowledgeable about the world and had shut CIA officers out of much privileged intelligence possessed by Nixon and Kissinger. That Colby himself epitomized the CIA's new manner accentuated the gulf between the administration's wishes and CIA's ability, at least as of mid-1973, to further the White House's operational wishes.

In view of the unpromising situation Colby inherited, the new DCI from the outset had a very difficult time making his voice heard in White House councils. In no way did he become a member of the administration's inner team. He rarely saw Nixon and for the most part had to deal with Kissinger or Kissinger's lieutenants. A career CIA professional, Colby did not enter office with much, if any, outside political influence. His own certainty that US intelligence must become more open was antithetical to Nixon's and Kissinger's style. It was Kissinger, not Colby, who was

<sup>21</sup>Nixon, *Memoirs*.

<sup>22</sup>Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982). Although Colby was Executive Director under Helms, he was not a key CIA figure until after James Schlesinger became DCI in February 1973.

<sup>23</sup>Andrew Marshall, National Security Council, Enclosure to Memorandum for William Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, subject not given, 5 September 1973, (emphasis in the original) CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 2, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~).

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Nixon's primary intelligence adviser, combining in himself the functions of Secretary of State, chief NSC policy adviser, and director of American intelligence.<sup>24</sup>

Colby's influence with the White House was further limited when Kissinger named one of his own protégés, William Hyland, to head State's INR. A very able officer, Hyland had been an expert on the USSR in CIA's Office of National Estimates and then an NSC staffer under Kissinger. Now, as head of INR, William Hyland accompanied Kissinger to key meetings in Moscow and elsewhere. In addition, as revealed in the Nixon archives, Hyland was present at a number of top decisionmaking meetings at the White House from which Colby was excluded. A year after Colby became DCI, journalist William Binder wrote in *The New York Times* that a State Department official had told him that, because of INR's analytic production for the White House, "when Kissinger says 'Bill is doing a great job,' he is usually referring to Hyland and not to Colby."<sup>25</sup>

Why then did Nixon select Colby to be the new DCI? In naming Colby, the beleaguered President apparently wished to demonstrate that he was choosing a professional, one untainted by Watergate. While serving as CIA's Executive Director under Schlesinger, Colby had demonstrated that he had broad vision and wished to bring about constructive intelligence reform. The White House was not willing to name the highly talented DDCI, Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters, as DCI because of his earlier refusal, along with DCI Helms, to go along with the Watergate coverup. Kissinger's deputy at the NSC, Alexander Haig, recommended that Colby be named DCI, as did DCI Schlesinger. In all, Nixon and his aides appear to have believed that in naming Colby they would be getting a quiet bureaucrat, a team player who would give the White House little trouble.

It is Colby's recollection that, because the administration was changing so many jobs at the time they nominated him, "by the time they got down to the end of that string, they were running out of names; so what the hell, I was there, I was an intelligence professional, nonpolitical."<sup>26</sup> According to George Carver, Colby was picked almost instantaneously, there were no other candidates, the

<sup>24</sup>One of the sharpest (and most unfair) portrayals of Colby and his status as DCI was made in March 1974 by journalist Tad Szulc, who wrote that the White House was tending to regard Colby merely as an efficient intelligence bureaucrat, and that it was hard to think of him as the real chief of the Intelligence Community in the sense that Allen Dulles had been: "There seem to be no giants nowadays in the spying business," he wrote. "It has been touched by the age of mediocrity, too" (Tad Szulc, "Inside the American Intelligence Establishment," *Washingtonian*, March 1974, pp. 55-56).

<sup>25</sup>William Binder, *The New York Times*, 17 June 1974.

<sup>26</sup>William Colby, interview by [redacted] tape recording, Washington, DC, 15 March 1988 (hereafter cited as Colby interview by [redacted] 15 March 1988) (~~Secret~~). All interviews by [redacted] are on file in the CIA History Staff.

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*Colby sworn in as DCI, 4 September 1973. First row: President Nixon, Colby, Barbara Colby, Judge George Hart, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Second row: Adm. Thomas Moorer, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger.*

White House had no obvious DCI up its sleeve, therefore, it was not so much a case of selecting a DCI as it was simply putting Bill Colby bureaucratically in place.<sup>27</sup> It is Ray Cline's belief that the White House looked on Bill Colby as a kind of errand boy picked by Schlesinger, someone just to hold the fort.<sup>28</sup>

In the end, President Nixon did get a quiet bureaucrat. But he also got a tough, stubborn officer whose particular initiatives concerning the proper role the DCI and CIA should play in American politics and society were to give Nixon and his successor, President Gerald Ford, considerable trouble.

<sup>27</sup>Carver interview by Ford, 12 February 1987.

<sup>28</sup>Ray Cline, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 31 March 1988 (hereafter cited as Cline interview by Ford, 31 March 1988) (~~Secret~~).

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### Chapter 3

## The Yom Kippur War of October 1973

A thorough search of the material issued prior to 6 October [Egypt's and Syria's sudden attacks on Israel] has failed to turn up any official statement from any office or committed officer responsible for producing finished, analytical intelligence which contributed anything resembling a warning, *qua* warning. There was an intelligence failure in the weeks preceding the outbreak of war in the Middle East on 6 October 1973. . . . The principal conclusions concerning the imminence of hostilities reached and reiterated by those responsible for intelligence analysis were—quite simply, obviously, and starkly—wrong.

Intelligence Community's Postmortem, December 1973<sup>1</sup>

Colby's tenure as DCI began with a major intelligence failure. He had been Director less than a month when Egypt and Syria suddenly attacked Israel. Colby and the Intelligence Community did not alert policymakers that a renewed Arab-Israeli war was about to break out, nor did they forecast that the fighting might provoke a US-Soviet confrontation in the Middle East. Although Colby, CIA, and the Intelligence Community did lend the administration excellent crisis management support once the war was under way, their misreading of its outbreak heightened White House dissatisfaction with CIA and US intelligence, and did not get Colby off to a flying start as DCI.

That the sudden Egyptian-Syrian attacks had taken the intelligence and policymaking communities by surprise is beyond question. President Nixon, in his memoirs, recalled that, "as recently as the day before, the CIA had reported that the war in the Middle East was unlikely, dismissing as annual maneuvers the massive and unusual troop movement that had recently been taking place in Egypt."<sup>2</sup>

[redacted] the Office of Current Intelligence—the principal CIA office passing tactical assessments of the crisis to the White House—agreed. He later remarked that he did not recall anyone "anywhere

<sup>1</sup>Emphasis in the original. This postmortem was prepared at the request of Colby, made shortly after the sudden Egyptian-Syrian attacks on Israel had taken US intelligence by surprise. The postmortem's text is given in Attachment to USIB-D-15/2/124, 17 January 1974.  
<sup>2</sup>Nixon, *Memoirs*, p. 920.

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in the Intelligence Community who definitely felt war would occur soon, or who markedly differed from the general consensus" that the early October crisis was simply another war scare such as they had seen repeatedly since May.<sup>3</sup>

Colby's recollection is similar: "It was obvious that the intelligence process had failed notably in this performance."<sup>4</sup> Henry Kissinger also agreed: "October 6 was the culmination of a failure of political analysis on the part of its victims. . . . Clearly there was an intelligence failure, but misjudgment was not confined to the agencies [CIA and DIA]." In Kissinger's view, every policymaker knew all the facts. The problem was that the US "definition of rationality did not take seriously the notion of [the Arabs] starting an unwinnable war to restore self-respect. There was no defense against our own preconceptions or those of our allies."<sup>5</sup> Nor did the United States have a monopoly on poor intelligence performance. Israeli Lt. Gen. Haim Bar-Lev later stated that his country's defense intelligence agency had erred: "The mistake lay in the evaluation of the intelligence data and not in the absence of accurate and reliable information."<sup>6</sup>

The Intelligence Community also failed to alert US decisionmakers to the related oil/financial crisis that ensued between October 1973 and January 1974, when the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) raised oil prices by 400 percent. As the US Senate's Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) later stated, US intelligence analysis at the time was not as perceptive as public sources were on the possibility that the Saudis might use oil as a political weapon. By comparison, said this Congressional report, analysis within the Intelligence Community had tended to stress continuation of the status quo in Saudi policy toward the United States, examining the question of oil price levels within the context of a narrow supply and demand framework and displaying only limited integration of political and economic factors. The Agency's response to these SSCI criticisms held that, because CIA's analysts had not anticipated the Middle East war, they concluded that Saudi Arabia and the other Arab nations would not employ oil as a political weapon.<sup>7</sup>

[redacted] interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 2 April 1987 (hereafter cited as [redacted] interview by Ford, 2 April 1987) (~~Confidential~~).

<sup>4</sup>Colby, *Honorable Men*, p. 366.

<sup>5</sup>Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 459 and 465.

<sup>6</sup>Lt. Gen. Haim Bar-Lev, as cited in CIA Warning Staff Study, *The DCI's Duty and Authority to Warn*, 24 December 1985, (hereafter cited as *DCI's Duty and Authority to Warn*), p. 7, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 2, folder 16, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~).

<sup>7</sup>US Congress, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Subcommittee on Collection, Production and Quality, *US Intelligence Analysis and the Oil Issue, 1973-1974*: Staff Report, 95th Cong., 1st sess., December 1977 (hereafter cited as SSCI, *Intelligence Analysis and the Oil Issue*), *passim*.

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The Intelligence Community's misreading of these questions had begun in the spring of 1973 with the production of a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), *Possible Egyptian-Israeli Hostilities: Determinants and Implications*. With no dissenting opinions, the USIB agencies had agreed that Sadat's campaign of growing threats was one of psychological brinkmanship, undertaken chiefly in "hope of inspiring US pressure on Israel." The situation could get out of hand, the Estimate concluded, but substantial Egyptian-Israeli hostilities appeared "unlikely in the next few weeks." Sadat did not yet appear committed to an attack on the Israelis, and, since Egypt's military capabilities were so limited, the participation of other even less impressive Arab forces—such as those of Syria—on a second front would "matter little in military terms." Egyptian forces, according to the NIE, probably could conduct small commando raids into the Sinai Peninsula, but did not have the capability to seize and hold any portion of it in the face of Israeli opposition. The only implications for the United States foreseen by the Estimate were those that would attend "another mauling" of the Arabs by the Israelis.<sup>8</sup>

Substantially similar views marked the assessments prepared by Colby and the Intelligence Community, right up to the Egyptian-Syrian attacks of 6 October. No NIEs or SNIEs (Special National Intelligence Estimates) were requested or undertaken between the National Intelligence Estimate of May and the end of September. This reflected the fairly relaxed view US intelligence had of the developing crisis. Finally, on 30 September, worried by evidence of unusual concentrations of Syrian tanks on the Golan Heights, Henry Kissinger (who had become Secretary of State just a week earlier), tasked CIA and State's INR to give him their immediate assessments, at the same time requesting a coordinated NIE.<sup>9</sup>

Although production of this NIE was overtaken by events within a week, Colby and INR each gave Kissinger quick evaluations. As events turned out, however, these analyses also left much to be desired. INR held that evidence concerning the military buildups in Egypt and Syria was inconclusive: although the possibility could not be excluded they might attack Israel in the near future, the chances of such were deemed

<sup>8</sup>NIE 30-73, "Possible Egyptian-Israeli Hostilities: Determinants and Implications," 17 May 1973, *passim*. (~~Secret~~)

<sup>9</sup>Kissinger often had more regard for CIA's Directorate of Operations (DO) officers than he did for Directorate of Intelligence (DI) or Office of National Estimates analyses. For example, in an earlier Middle East war scare of May 1973, Kissinger telephoned and told a CIA officer that he wanted only the judgments of the DO, not those of "those DI bastards." George Lauder, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 3 March 1987 (hereafter cited as Lauder interview by Ford, 1987) (~~Secret~~).

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“dubious.”<sup>10</sup> For the INR, CIA, and DIA assessments immediately before the Egyptian-Syrian attacks, CIA’s study concluded that Egyptian and Syrian military moves looked “very ominous,” but “the whole thrust of President Sadat’s activities since last spring has been in the direction of bringing moral, political, and economic force to bear on Israel in tacit acknowledgement of Arab unreadiness to make war.”<sup>11</sup>

Following these rather calm immediate analyses of 30 September, CIA, INR, and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) made similar judgments right up to—and even after—the 6 October Egyptian-Syrian attack on Israel. On 5 October, CIA concluded that, although large military exercises were under way in Egypt, the Egyptians “do not appear to be preparing for a military offensive against Israel.” Indeed the military preparations thus far, said CIA, “do not indicate that any party intends to initiate hostilities.” And, on the very day the Arabs attacked Israel, CIA estimated that neither the Egyptians nor the Syrians appeared bent on initiating hostilities. For Egypt to attack now, said this CIA study, would make little sense: “Another round of hostilities would almost certainly destroy Sadat’s painstaking efforts to invigorate the economy and would run counter to his efforts to build a United Arab political front, particularly among the less militant, oil-rich states. For the Syrian president, a military adventure now would be suicidal.” And later on 6 October, even after news of the outbreak of war had reached CIA, its Watch Committee could find no hard evidence of a major, coordinated Egyptian-Syrian offensive across the Canal or in the Golan Heights area. Rather, the Watch Committee reported:

“For the INR, CIA, DIA assessments immediately before the Egyptian-Syrian attacks, see Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 462-467; Nixon materials, box 129, NSC files/HAK files; *Sunday Times* (London) Insight Team, *The Yom Kippur War* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 104; CIA postmortem: US Congress, House Select Committee on Intelligence (Pike committee): Hearings on *US Intelligence Agencies and Activities: The Performance of the Intelligence Community*, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 11, 12, 18, 25, 30 September and 7, 30, 31 October 1975 (hereafter cited as Pike committee, Hearings, *Intelligence Agencies and Activities*), p. 637. During the months before the war, there had been a certain division of judgment within the State Department, so that some of its intelligence assessments were occasionally more alarmist than the above INR judgments. For example, shortly after the earlier NIE in May 1973, Ray S. Cline, INR’s Director, had given Secretary of State William Rogers a special memorandum that held the resumption of Arab-Israeli hostilities “will become a better than even bet” by autumn (Pike committee report, as cited in *CIA: The Pike Report* [Nottingham, England: Spokesman Brooks, 1977], pp. 141-142. Although the House of Representatives voted not to publish the Pike committee’s report [as discussed in chapter 11, below], a leaked version of the “Report” appeared in the *New York Village Voice*, and then was published in England—with an introduction by Phillip Agee—as *CIA: the Pike Report*). Cline has also claimed that at the last minute, on 5 October, he prepared a private assessment for Kissinger that held that hostilities probably were imminent, but could not get this alert through to the Secretary before Egypt and Syria attacked Israel the next day (Cline interview by Ford, 31 March 1988). In any case, frictions with Kissinger, (discussed in chapter 2), led Cline to resign from State a few days later.

<sup>11</sup>(London) *Sunday Times* Insight Team, *The Yom Kippur War*. See also CIA postmortem: Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 464.

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the weight of evidence indicates an action-reaction situation where a series of responses by each side to perceived threats created an increasingly dangerous potential for confrontation. . . . It is possible that the Egyptians or Syrians, particularly the latter, may have been preparing a raid or other small-scale action.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, CIA and the Intelligence Community did not cover themselves with glory. Even worse, Lawrence Eagleburger (then a senior assistant of Kissinger's) claims that "Henry reading some fairly raw intelligence came to the conclusion that Sadat was going to start a war before the Intelligence Community itself did, but too late all the same."<sup>13</sup> William Quandt (then a National Security Council staffer responsible for handling Arab-Israeli matters) explains that Kissinger's greater degree of alarm came from earlier warnings Brezhnev had privately given him that the Arabs were serious and that war was coming. The problem was, Quandt states, Kissinger had not shared this back-channel insight with DCI Colby or the Intelligence Community.<sup>14</sup>

A telling indicator that intelligence had not alerted policymakers to the imminent outbreak of war was the fact that, when the attacks came, on Saturday, 6 October, Henry Kissinger was in New York at the UN, President Nixon was at Key Biscayne,

[redacted] In all, this warning failure marked an inauspicious start for DCI Colby in a situation of enormous consequence for US crisis management, Israeli security, world oil supplies, and the threat of added Soviet presence in the Middle East.

That intelligence performed so poorly was all the more remarkable since before the October War, Andrew Marshall and Kissinger's NSCIC Working Group had drawn some constructive lessons from scrutinizing several previous crisis situations. Concluding that, in those cases intelligence analysts had received too little information on policy-level intelligence needs, the Working Group also found there had been too much current intelligence reporting and—contradicting Nixon and Kissinger's own expressed preferences—too little analytical perspective on the given

<sup>12</sup>CIA: *The Pike Committee Report*, 680-681; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 462-467; Top Secret documentation in Nixon materials, box 129, NSC files/HAK files.

<sup>13</sup>Lawrence Eagleburger, to John Ranelagh, as cited in Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), pp. 582-583.

<sup>14</sup>William Quandt, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 4 May 1987 (hereafter cited as Quandt interview by Ford, 4 May 1987) (~~Confidential~~).

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developing crises.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Marshall had called those findings to Colby's attention in May 1973, adding additional recommendations of his own.<sup>16</sup> In the event, however, the five months from May to October proved too short a period for Colby to achieve much in pushing the Intelligence Community toward such needed improvements.<sup>17</sup>

There were a number of reasons why US intelligence did not do a better job in anticipating the Egyptian-Syrian attacks on Israel in October 1973. To an important degree, the Intelligence Community relied heavily on Israeli intelligence for data and judgments on the Middle East. Although the Israelis had previously been remarkably accurate, in this instance they were not. President Nixon was "stunned by the failure of Israeli intelligence. They were among the best in the world, and they too, had been caught off guard."<sup>18</sup> Henry Kissinger's recollection is that "every Israeli (and American) analysis before October 1973 agreed that Egypt and Syria lacked the military capability to regain their territory by force of arms; hence there would be no war."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Jeanne W. Davis, Staff Secretary, National Security Council, Memorandum for the Attorney General, the Deputy Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Studies of Intelligence Crisis Support," 23 May 1973, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 15, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~); NSCIC Working Group, Memorandum for National Security Council Intelligence Committee, "NSCIC Working Group Summary of Findings Regarding Intelligence Support in Crisis Situations and Recommended Actions," 9 May 1973, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 15, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~).

<sup>16</sup>Andrew Marshall, National Security Council, Memorandum for William Colby, DCI, subject not given, 22 May 1973 with two attachments: Marshall, Memorandum for Colby, "Areas for Discussion," 21 May 1973; Marshall, Memorandum for the Record, "Additional Insights From the Three Crisis Studies," 21 May 1973; all three memorandums filed in CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 2, folder 16, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~). Those findings and recommendations held that US intelligence should place more emphasis on preparing personality studies of key foreign leaders; meeting the needs of top-level US consumers; presenting conflicting estimative judgments; treating and communicating estimative uncertainties; improving intelligence personnel management and management training; rigorously evaluating the Community's performance and product; preparing serious contingency planning before the possible crises; and developing broader, "less sheltered" views of world politics.

<sup>17</sup>The Community's performance in 1973 concerning possible Arab attacks on Israel contrasted sharply with the excellent alerts Helms's CIA had earlier given the White House in the runup to the Six Day War in 1967. Helms considered that performance to have been "the finest, across-the-board execution of our mission at every level that I have seen in my twenty years with the Central Intelligence Agency" (Richard Helms, DCI, Memorandum for CIA's Deputy Directors, 14 June 1967, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, CIA Archives and Records Center [~~Secret~~]). As a result of that performance Helms became a regular member of President Johnson's Tuesday luncheons, that inner circle where LBJ and his closest advisers attacked the country's principal questions of national security. Although Helms had a good deal less access to Nixon than he had to Johnson, he still fared better than Colby ever did.

<sup>18</sup>Nixon, *Memoirs*, p. 920.

<sup>19</sup>Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 459.

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There were many reasons why Israeli intelligence miscalculated the coming attacks. In an earlier invasion false alarm in May 1973 when Israeli Army Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. David Elazar had predicted war, Israeli military intelligence leaders had disagreed. This judgment had heightened the intelligence officers' credibility. In turn, these officers held stubbornly to certain questionable "lessons" learned from the 1967 war: that Egypt would not attack until its air force had neutralized Israel's, and that Israel would have at least 48 hours' warning before an invasion.

Since Secretary Kissinger had been prodding Israel toward peace negotiations its leaders did not want, they may have deliberately understated their degree of alarm about a surprise attack for fear that the White House would push them all the harder toward such negotiations. Such a thesis can be inferred from Kissinger's own account: "The approaching [Middle East peace] diplomacy distorted the Israelis' perspective as well. They acquired a vested interest in belittling Arab threats lest the United States use the danger of war as a pretext to press Israel for concessions."<sup>21</sup>

In addition, during the crucial week just before 6 October, Israeli attention had been distracted by Palestinian terrorists' attack on a train bearing Soviet Jewish emigres to Vienna (the "Schonau" affair), and by the subsequent negotiations for the release of those emigrants taken hostage. That crisis dominated the news in Israel, while Egyptian and Syrian matters were given back-page treatment. The terrorists in question

<sup>20</sup>William Colby, DCI, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State, "Critique of Middle East Crisis," 27 October 1973, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, folder 15, CIA Archives and Records Center (hereafter cited as Colby Memorandum for Kissinger, "Critique of Middle East Crisis," 27 October 1973) (~~Secret~~). [REDACTED]

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According to Raymond Rocca (then Deputy Chief of CIA's CI Staff), this unique report on Syrian intentions was in fact produced by the CI Staff, not the NE Division. Rocca holds that this report evidently made no dent on the US Intelligence Community's analysts and just "got lost somewhere in the shuffle" (Raymond Rocca, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 19 August 1987 [hereafter cited as Rocca interview by Ford, 19 August 1987] (~~Secret~~)). Although the report in question was apparently an excellent one, it did not pinpoint just when the attacks might come. In any event, this was just one of many DO reports at the time, others of which subsequently proved to be wrong.

<sup>21</sup>Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 461.

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were members of the Syrian-controlled Sai'qa. It has never been established whether the timing of their terrorist attack was a coincidence or a deliberate act to divert Israeli watchfulness.

Moreover, the mastermind of the Egyptian-Syrian invasions of Israel, President Sadat, had done a brilliant job of misleading the Israelis—and American intelligence. As Kissinger later wrote, Sadat “paralyzed his opponents with their own preconceptions.”<sup>22</sup> By orchestrating a false war scare in May, and then repeating more “scares” in the form of Egyptian and Syrian troop concentrations opposite Sinai and the Golan, Sadat lulled Israeli watchfulness. Hence Israeli and US intelligence judged the Arab military concentrations in the first week of October to be simply more of the same. And, whether or not the Sai'qa terrorist attack was also part of a larger Egyptian-Syrian deception plan, Sadat had created a certain aura of “progress” in Arab-Israeli deliberations at the United Nations, a development that found an expectant Henry Kissinger there when the attacks on Israel occurred.

Colby and US intelligence were further harmed by the fact that, by October 1973, the President's personal political crisis was far advanced, and much regular governmental access to the White House had diminished. Nixon's attentions were so distracted that he did not himself participate directly, later in October, in the momentous late-night decision in which Kissinger and a rump session of the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG, discussed below) brought US armed forces to an advanced state of alert (DefCon III) worldwide. In addition, the US intelligence and policymaking communities at the time were focusing on many issues other than Israeli-Arab tensions, such as the continuing Vietnam war, peace negotiations in Paris, SALT issues, and rapprochement with the People's Republic of China.

By coincidence, CIA's analytic capabilities in September-October 1973 were also in some disarray. Having disbanded the Office of National Estimates, Colby had begun to replace it with a system of individual National Intelligence Officers (NIOs), whose new procedures were not yet effective. A number of personnel changes had recently been made, and some of the most knowledgeable Middle East analysts had moved to other jobs. In CIA's Office of Current Intelligence (OCI, the office principally responsible for serving up current intelligence analyses to the White House), the [redacted] chief was new to that area and had just returned from a year away on sabbatical. His boss [redacted] happened to be on leave the week before 6 October. Also, most of CIA's DI officers had not had firsthand experience in the field, or the opportunity to gain the

<sup>22</sup>Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 460.

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up-close "feel" so necessary where available evidence is ambiguous. Furthermore, within the DI there was little integrated political-economic analysis as such: its political analysts and economists tended to work independently of each other, a separation that contributed to CIA's failure to anticipate OPEC's use of oil as a weapon. Finally, although some DO officers were more concerned about a possible Arab attack than were their DI colleagues, they could not get the analysts to sound a stronger alarm in their assessments for the White House.<sup>23</sup>

Then, too, as we have seen, Kissinger was in possession of certain sensitive intelligence that he did not share with the DCI or the Intelligence Community. Colby later told him, candidly, that he could have done a better job as DCI had the White House not cut him off from certain privileged data. "I fully understand the need for secrecy in our government on these delicate subjects," he wrote, "although it is clear that the back channel in many instances is becoming the main channel, causing lost and even counterproductive motion, aside from anguish, among many not in the circuit."<sup>24</sup> Such crucially important back-channel information included earlier warnings Brezhnev had given Kissinger of the Arabs' serious intent, as well as private dialogue between Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, and various private messages from Sadat.<sup>25</sup>

Last, and perhaps most important, accurate estimates of Arab intentions suffered from certain preconceptions strongly held by many of the Intelligence Community's analysts. These officers tended to denigrate Arab capabilities and to assume that past patterns of Arab military conduct would continue. Some of these analysts were also guilty of mirror imaging, in estimating that it "wouldn't make [American] sense" for Sadat to launch an attack that he knew would probably not carry the day militarily but might advance the Arabs' cause politically. "We had a bit of a mind set," Colby conceded in 1975,<sup>26</sup> a conclusion with which many other

[redacted] ex-DI officer, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 1987 (hereafter cited as [redacted] interview by Ford, 2 April 1987) (~~Secret~~); [redacted] ex-DI officer, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 16 March 1987 (hereafter cited as [redacted] interview by Ford, 16 March 1987) (~~Secret~~); Lauder interview by Ford, 1987 (~~Secret~~); [redacted] ex-Intelligence Community Staff officer, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 31 March 1987 (hereafter cited as [redacted] interview by Ford, 31 March 1987) (~~Secret~~). DIA's analyses were also harmed at the time because certain senior DIA estimators tended to accept Israeli evaluations uncritically and to override more cautionary judgments being made by some of DIA's more junior analysts (several CIA officers, but especially [redacted] interview by Ford, 31 March 1987).

<sup>23</sup>Colby, Memorandum for Kissinger, "Critique of Middle East Crisis," 27 October 1973 (~~Secret~~).

<sup>24</sup>Quandt, interview by Ford, 4 May 1987.

<sup>26</sup>Colby statement made at a news conference that, as discussed in chapter 11, Colby called to explain why the Pike committee should not include certain sensitive (communications intelligence) data in the report it was preparing at the time. At this unique news conference, held in CIA's auditorium, journalists raised a number of questions concerning the performance of US intelligence two years earlier in the Middle East war.

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observers have agreed. Kissinger later characterized the situation similarly, holding that the Arab attack on Israel had demonstrated the dangers inherent in the tendency of most intelligence services to fit the facts into existing preconceptions and to make them consistent with what is anticipated.<sup>27</sup> The House's, later Pike, investigating committee also attributed part of the problem in October 1973 to analytical bias. In its view, one reason for the analysts' optimism could be found in a 1971 CIA handbook, which stated that the Arab fighting man "lacks the necessary physical and cultural qualities for performing effective military services." The Pike committee concluded that, because the Arabs were thought to be so clearly inferior, another attack would be irrational and, thus, out of the question.<sup>28</sup> Finally, Robert Morris, a former NSC staffer, listed like reasons for the failure to anticipate the Egyptian-Syrian attack on Israel: "The worst common flaw in the reading of the intelligence was an abiding cultural, perhaps racial, contempt in Washington and Jerusalem for the political posturing and fighting skills of the Arabs."<sup>29</sup>

**The Performance of Intelligence After the October War's Outbreak**

Deficient though they had been in sounding the alarm beforehand, DCI Colby and the Intelligence Community did render the policymakers excellent support once the Egyptian-Syrian attacks had begun, which helped the White House's crisis management of subsequent diplomacy, cease-fires, and the diplomatic showdown with the USSR. This support applied throughout the course of the war, as this Middle East crisis escalated to US-Soviet confrontation.

[redacted] Colby set up special working groups that kept the White House abreast of fast-breaking events and provided Kissinger numerous short-term outlook studies and think pieces. Meanwhile, on a Community-wide basis, Colby's working groups integrated a rather large amount of special, compartmented intelligence, which gave Kissinger many particulars concerning battlefield developments and the various armies' logistic situations. They also provided him prompt cartographic support, essential to the negotiations that eventually reduced the Middle East crisis fever.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 460.

<sup>28</sup>CIA: *The Pike Report*, p. 142.

<sup>29</sup>Robert Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 253.

<sup>30</sup>Harold Saunders, former NSC Staff officer, interview by Harold P. Ford, summary notes, Washington, DC, 4 May 1987 (hereafter cited as Saunders interview by Ford, 4 May 1987) (~~Confidential~~), Quandt interview by Ford, 4 May 1987; see also Top Secret documentation in Nixon materials, box 123, NSC files/HAK office files; boxes 209 and 265, NSC files/Agency files; and boxes 664 and 665, NSC files/country files/ME.

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Of particular service to US policymakers were the technical services performed by CIA specialists [redacted]. These experts clarified complicated geographic boundaries in the Sinai, furnished detailed data on certain cities where the cease-fires under negotiation were designed to give the local disputants equal portions of land, and pointed out the differences between actual and claimed battlefield tank losses. In all, the intelligence particulars furnished by Colby's working groups enabled Secretary of State Kissinger to call certain bluffs or attempted deceptions on the part of the Arab and Israeli disputants and thus strengthened his negotiating leverage as the mediator of the crisis.<sup>31</sup>

Though surrounded by many other demands at the time, Colby personally played an active role in lending crisis management support to the Secretary of State. Meeting daily with Kissinger's Washington Special Action Group, the DCI not only was the best prepared source of intelligence details, but also the official to whom Kissinger turned for ordering specific intelligence needs concerning collection, clarification, and analysis. Within CIA, Colby held daily informal meetings on the crisis with the DDI, the DDO, and the nascent NIO officers, where they discussed the day's all-source take and shared their evaluations. These meetings kept the assessments sent to the White House as current and accurate as possible, ensured the personal input of the DCI, and prepared Colby for his many meetings with Kissinger and other top policymakers during the crisis.<sup>32</sup> Colby also commissioned the candid postmortem report on the performance of US intelligence before the outbreak of the war.<sup>33</sup>

### The DefCon III Affair

The war crisis reached its apex, as far as US security interests were concerned, on the night of 24-25 October, in the now famous White House decision—made without President Nixon present—to bring US military forces to a higher alert status (DefCon III) worldwide.

From an intelligence point of view, a number of developments had occurred by 24 October to justify top US policymakers careful scrutiny of the broader US-Soviet situation. A crisis had developed as the tide of the war definitely turned in Israel's favor. Cease-fires unraveled, Israeli forces

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

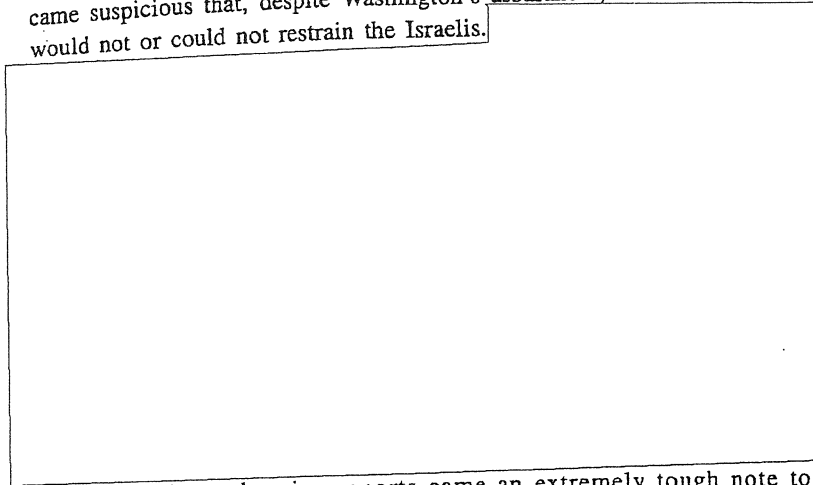
<sup>32</sup>DCI Morning Meeting Notes of 19, 23, 29 October, and 2 November 1973. CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 1, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~).

<sup>33</sup>Intelligence Community postmortem. Henry Kissinger sent Colby a "Dear Bill" note, 25 February 1974, thanking him for this postmortem. Kissinger called that study "an outstanding analysis of the Intelligence Community's reaction and performance during a major world crisis. It was both dispassionately candid and broad in coverage and should prove to be a valuable management tool throughout the Community" (Nixon materials, box 210, NSC files/Agency files/CIA, Vol. VII).

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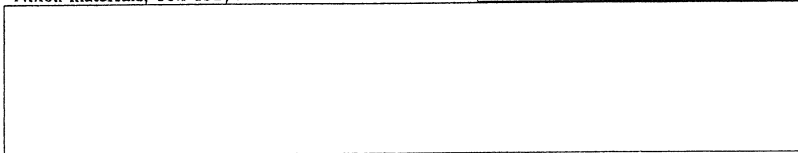
threatened to annihilate Egypt's 3rd Army in the Sinai, and Moscow became suspicious that, despite Washington's assurances, the United States would not or could not restrain the Israelis.



Atop these alarming reports came an extremely tough note to President Nixon from Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev threatening to dispatch Soviet troops to the Middle East unilaterally. Kissinger, Defense Secretary Schlesinger, JCS Chairman Admiral Moorer, White House Chief of Staff Alexander Haig, General Brent Scowcroft (Kissinger's NSC deputy), and DCI Colby were the officers who participated in the rump session of the WSAG during the night of 24-25 October that resulted in the remarkable decision for a Defense Condition III (DefCon III) alert. While they met, Nixon remained upstairs in the White House, although Kissinger conferred with him by phone before the group's decision.

[redacted] The 5 November issue of *Aviation Week* stated flatly that the Soviets had sent two brigades of nuclear-armed SCUD missiles to Egypt and that the US Government had satellite pictures to prove it.

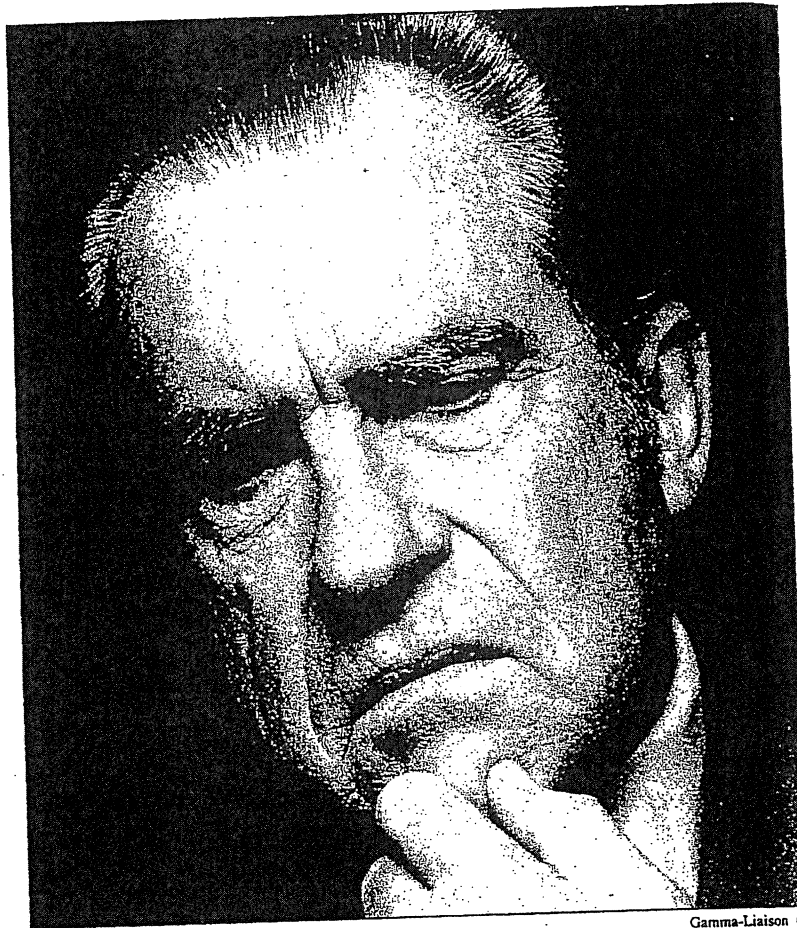
[redacted] A parallel study conducted within the NSC carried an even more alarmist tone (compartmented intelligence, Nixon materials, box 132, NSC files/HAK office files).

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Many questioned, then and later, whether the decision for DefCon III was based on legitimate alarms or whether it was an overreaction. There has also been speculation that the decision may have been politically motivated, at least in part, by the needs of a Watergate-beleaguered White House.<sup>35</sup> Colby considered that the DefCon III decision had been justified and, four days after that WSAG meeting, so informed Secretary Kissinger.<sup>36</sup> In his memoirs Colby explicitly supported Kissinger's decision for the DefCon III alert. Writing in 1978, Colby believed that Kissinger had not overreacted, inasmuch as Defense Condition III was the lowest level of US military alert, and the Strategic Air Command and a good portion of the Pacific Command were already at that level.<sup>37</sup> Ray Cline's view of Kissinger's role in the DefCon III affair is less generous. "I have always looked on this as a kind of shell game, a superficial exercise," he later stated. "That is, Kissinger knew what he wanted to do all along, had already decided to do it." In Cline's view, Kissinger only summoned Secretary of Defense Schlesinger and the others to give the decision the semblance of official action. "I've heard that President Nixon was upstairs drunk that night." Cline observed, "I don't know that that's a fact, but it is clear—and we didn't know it at the time—how far Nixon was out of things in those days."<sup>38</sup>

In retrospect, Colby held that the October Middle East War afforded a number of intelligence lessons. In his view, the experience demonstrated that the Intelligence Community's collection machinery could be superb when focused as it had been in the latter days of the crisis, but that the real challenge for the future would be to make the analytic process function with the same degree of excellence. To accomplish this, Colby believed that more automatic challenge or variations to the consensus must be built into the analytical process. In addition, Colby pointed out, US intelligence before the war had suffered from a dearth of independent coverage and

[redacted] The intelligence

<sup>35</sup>Among the skeptics at the time was Australia's Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, who, when asked at a press club luncheon (8 November) whether US bases in Australia had been put on more than normal alert, answered: "I don't know if they were put on alert. I wasn't told. I believe the announcement was for domestic American consumption." His remarks were noted, with anger, in the White House (see Top Secret documentation in Nixon materials, box 2, White House special files/staff and office files). This DefCon III nighttime episode took place just four days after Mr. Nixon's Halloween Massacre: the departure of Messrs. Cox, Richardson, and Ruckelshaus. One interpretation at the time was that the Washington Special Action Group's decision had been made at least in part to undercut any thought in the Kremlin that the White House was too paralyzed by Watergate to take decisive action on a crisis situation abroad.

<sup>36</sup>Colby, Memorandum for Kissinger, "Critique of Middle East Crisis," 27 October 1973.

<sup>37</sup>Colby, *Honorable Men*, p. 367.

<sup>38</sup>Cline, interview by Ford, 31 March 1988.

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provided the White House had been too much a CIA product. In the future, he concluded, the White House must more fully share privileged data with the DCI, while the full analytical weight of the entire Intelligence Community must be brought more directly to bear on policymaking considerations.<sup>39</sup>

Colby subsequently made some progress in correcting these weaknesses. He stimulated more competitive analysis and greater analytic contribution by agencies of the Community other than the CIA. He also encouraged advances in coverage by special technical systems, as well as the acquisition of [redacted]

[redacted] He broadened the responsibilities of the Intelligence Community's watch function, to prevent a repeat of the situation that existed at the time of the October War's outbreak—when the National Indications Center had had no explicit requirement to warn, only to watch, and the USIB's Watch Committee had "degenerated into participation only by action officers rather than serious analysts or high officials."<sup>40</sup> Colby also set in motion new initiatives that led ultimately to the creation of a Special Assistant to the DCI for Strategic Warning.

Colby was not successful, however, in changing Henry Kissinger's proclivity for keeping sensitive information to himself. Despite the excellent crisis management support that Colby and the Intelligence Community contributed after the hostilities began, their failure to foresee the war's outbreak hardened Nixon's and Kissinger's conviction that US intelligence was deficient on many scores and further damaged Colby's standing at this, the very outset of his tenure as DCI. His role thereafter remained that of a senior staff specialist to whom the White House looked for intelligence data and support, but not for interpretations of broader issues, to say nothing of policy recommendations. On most issues Colby had to deal with Kissinger's deputy, Brent Scowcroft, and NSC staffers and was shut out from any meaningful, continuing access to the major policy players.

<sup>39</sup>Colby, Memorandum for Kissinger, "Critique of Middle East Crisis," 27 October 1973.  
<sup>40</sup>*The DCI's Duty and Authority to Warn*, p. 12, CIA History Staff records, job 90B00336R, box 2, folder 16, CIA Archives and Records Center (~~Secret~~).

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