

CHAPTER 9

My Collaboration with Colby

Colby's "rebirth" in 1977 as an arms controller is explained. Colby and the author become a Washington odd couple.

I never met anyone with more of the "right stuff" than William Colby. The first time I ever laid eyes on him was when, as director of the CIA, he dared to confront a collection of vocal anti-CIA activists at a Capitol Hill conference. He was smooth and collected.

Later, shortly after he left the government, I found myself the only "dove" at a conference of the Young Americans for Freedom at which he was one of no less than twenty-five "hawks." I anticipated being completely isolated in my views. To my astonishment, I heard William Colby speaking eloquently about the arms race; when my turn came, I announced that I could not really do a better job of explaining what I felt. We chatted in the parking garage about the B-1 bomber, which Colby opposed.

The next day, at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I regaled a friendly staffer with the news, "Colby is a dove on arms control." *D*

"Well," he said, "let's have a hearing!" He sounded like Perle Mesta spotting an occasion to have a party. It was promptly agreed that General Daniel Graham, the arch-conservative director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), in the Pentagon, should be the right-wing foil. As a kind of finder's fee, I was offered a third seat on the panel.

When Colby and I met before the hearing to coordinate our statements, we did so at my house because, I had found, his resi-

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dence was still shrouded in secrecy; "Bethesda, MD" was all it said in the phone book. He seemed decent and approachable. The hearings were successful, and Bill developed a theme that he much emphasized thereafter—that in his experience "satellite photography and electronic eavesdropping were now sufficient to verify arms limitations."¹¹² But the main result of the hearing was to announce to the arms control community what the CIA would have called a wondrous new "asset"—an arms control "dove" who was believed, by everyone, to be a political "hawk."

Soon Colby was seen everywhere on the arms control conference circuit. There was neither money nor fame in it for him. On one occasion, when we both traveled to Denver to appear on some kind of "advocates"-style show—he the witness and I the interrogator—we had a few hours together on the plane. I learned that his father had been a journalist, as mine was, and that our views in many areas were quite compatible. I also learned that our entrepreneurial paths had crossed, at a remove, in the case of the *Glomar Explorer*, an enormous vessel built by the CIA under the cover of the Hughes Corporation, purportedly as a method of scooping up mineral modules from the ocean bottom. In fact, it was designed to raise a Soviet submarine.

This vessel's cover story had been used by the American Mining Congress (AMC) as a tool to torpedo longstanding and statesman-like negotiations by the Nixon administration at the Law of the Sea Conference—on the grounds that the vessel showed that America was already harvesting minerals from the sea and that a Law of the Sea Treaty dividing up the ocean bottom would be a sellout. At the time, I was busy exposing an unholy partnership between the AMC and Senator Lee Metcalf (D, Montana), the chairman of a Senate subcommittee that was advancing a bill that sought to undermine the multilateral negotiations. I wished I had known at the time what was happening!^[113]

In March 1987 I invited Colby to join a conference at Airlie House that included some Soviet scientists who quivered at the prospect of meeting a former CIA director. I introduced him as one

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who had dropped behind enemy lines during the Normandy invasion to help advance the second front so important for Russia. (My introduction was careful to note for the record that Colby had never worked for me and that I had never worked for him.)

Still, Colby and I were just friendly acquaintances until I returned from my first trip to Cambodia. I had become consumed with the goal of preventing the return of the Khmer Rouge, which had, by some estimates, murdered a quarter of Cambodia's populace from 1975 to 1978. In 1989, U.S. policy was to support a coalition of three factions, all trying to unseat the then Communist regime of Hun Sen in Phnom Penh. This coalition's strongest partner was the Khmer Rouge. A victory for the coalition, I believed, would be victory for the Khmer Rouge. The policy had to be changed. (I later learned that the CIA analysts agreed and felt that the State Department's policy was wrong.)

I called Bill and asked if he would lunch with me. He invited me to the Cosmos Club, and when I saw that he shared my concerns, I asked if he would help me. *U* He said the only problem was that he was a "hawk" on nearby Vietnam and was, indeed, completing a book showing how we might have won that war. He wondered how this would play out.

In the end, we agreed that these were not incompatible positions. *U* In fact, it made his Cambodia position (and his Vietnam position) all the more credible at home. And, as time went on, we became the "odd couple" on Cambodia. Before the dust had settled, we had written two op-ed pieces in *The Washington Post*¹¹⁴ and had testified jointly before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.¹¹⁵

Our unusual alliance was not limited to Cambodia. When, in 1992, the Serbs were laying siege to Sarajevo, I asked Paul C. Warnke and Robert Adams, the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, to lunch with me to discuss what might be done. I suggested a U.S. effort to lift the siege, and when these two experienced observers showed sympathy for the idea, I went immediately to see Bill. He said he was an "old artilleryman" and started explaining

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how fire could be homed in on enemy mortars. He was all for the idea, and we soon published an article in *The Washington Post*, "Break the Siege of Sarajevo."¹¹⁶

Articles published in either *The Washington Post* or *The Los Angeles Times* are automatically sent to *The International Herald Tribune* for possible republication on its editorial page. Such republication is especially important in advancing ideas on European or Asian issues. In this case, as in the case of the Cambodian articles, *The International Herald Tribune* gave us a break. And the entire episode definitely seemed effective.

Bill was a reserved person, and his past as a CIA director added to this reserve. But by this time, we were friends. His wife, Sally Shelton (a former ambassador to Barbados and Grenada and now an assistant administrator of the Agency for International Development, or AID), and Bill had invited us to more than one Christmas or Thanksgiving dinner.

I was living on the outskirts of Washington political and intellectual life. I was not ostracized, as my father had been during the witch-hunts of the McCarthy era, but I certainly was not in great demand on the social circuit for one reason or another. In particular, there was no way I could help anyone climb the Washington social ladder. I lived quietly.

To my surprise, Bill seemed, in his seventies, to be somewhat outside Washington society also. Being a former CIA director, he was somewhat estranged from non-agency persons. And as one who had affronted so many CIA colleagues, through his cooperation with Congress and attention to legality, he seemed to have distanced himself from the agency. Of course, as his very well attended funeral in 1996 showed, Colby was deeply loved.

In the 1990s I confided to him, in private, many of my old war stories—most of them in this book. And when I would go off on some FAS mission, I would sometimes visit him in Georgetown, where he then lived. I would get that quietly respectful send-off that many others, embarking on more dangerous missions, must have also received and valued for its empathy.

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Once when I had a serious moral problem uniquely relevant to his previous experience (and discussed later in this book), I saw that he was a real friend. And, in a search for secondhand books with which to write a related newsletter, I came across his book *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA*.¹¹⁷ In reading it, I realized how similar our attitudes were. He had tried to make the CIA an instrumentality of the law; without even knowing each other at the time, we had, in effect, collaborated in ending the mail-opening program. What happened is revealing.

Inside the government, he had been, at the time, secretary of the management committee for CIA director James Schlesinger, and was charged with preparing the matter for Schlesinger's decision. As he wrote:

Two things bothered me about the project. First was the fact that opening first-class mail was a direct violation of a criminal statute; I looked it up in the law library to make sure. And secondly, I could get nothing beyond vague generalities from the Counterintelligence Staff when I asked what the operation had actually accomplished of any value over the years.¹¹⁸

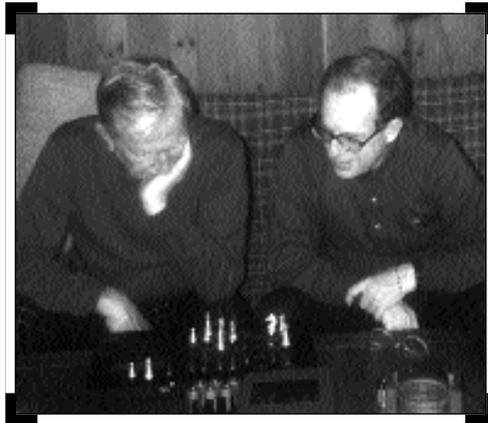
That was Bill Colby, a rare CIA director who repaired, when unsure, to law libraries. Colby had also terminated Project Chaos, a program of spying on domestic dissidents, the program, I have little doubt, that placed a rather remarkable woman in my office in the 1970s whom I was forced to fire for obvious acts of organizational espionage.^[119]

The more I read, the more I liked Colby. I saw, also, that in his treatment of his mentor, Richard Helms, he had put conscience and belief in law above friendship in forcing Helms to stand trial. I saw, also, that Bill believed in friendship.

In 1989 I purchased a splendid vacation home, a log cabin high on a cliff overlooking the Chesapeake Bay, in Calvert County, Maryland.¹²⁰ After hearing more than enough about this, and my theories about vacation homes, Bill and Sally decided to buy one,

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too. Sally asked me for the name of the excellent realtor who had helped me, and I referred her to Denise Gardner of Solomon’s Island. They told Denise they wanted someplace in the woods. But, on learning that Colby was a sailor and had a boat, she promptly insisted on taking them to an unusual site, almost completely surrounded by water, adjacent to Cobb Island, where a single house stood on a promontory.



William Colby and the author examining a chess-playing machine in Stone’s cabin in Scientists’ Cliffs, Port Republic, Calvert County, Maryland

Bill fell in love with it immediately, bought it, and, to my immense relief, actually used it and enjoyed it. (I was worried that I had nudged him into buying something that he and Sally would have no time to use.) But what could never have been anticipated, of course, is that he would have a heart attack or stroke while canoeing late at night and would topple out of the canoe and drown.¹²¹

During the week it took for his body to surface, the press had ample time to recount his exploits and to dwell on his admirably modest persistence. They talked, especially, of his difficult decision to tell Congress of past CIA misdeeds. What the journalists never mentioned, of course, is that Colby, in addition to all else, had had the independence of mind—in Washington, D.C., of all places—to befriend, and openly collaborate with, Jeremy J. Stone.

Washington rules go well beyond “gladiator, befriend not gladiator.” They instruct political climbers not to be associated—not to “maintain relationships”—with those who might be judged, by others, to be of an inappropriate political coloration. Probably none are more conscious of the system than those who have been read out of it.

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Washington, and Washington political outcomes, cannot be understood until there is a much better understanding of the magnetic lines of political force along which the iron filings of humanity are lining themselves up. Colby was completely different. He looked at each issue from a zero base of intellectual curiosity and brought to it a fount of common sense and wisdom. If we could bottle what he had and distribute it around, Washington politics would be an entirely different kind of place.

