

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
 William E. Colby, Director, Central Intelligence Agency
 Philip W. Buchen, Counsel to the President
 John O. Marsh, Jr., Counsellor to the President
 Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Friday, January 3, 1975
 5:30 p.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office
 The White House

SUBJECT: Allegations of CIA Domestic Activities

President: I asked Phil and Jack to analyze the [Colby] report for me, but first, why don't you tell me where we are.

Colby: We have a couple of problems -- one within the agency and one with Congress. Already the two Armed Services committees, the two Appropriations committees, and Muskie want me to testify.

I think we have a 25-year old institution which has done some things it shouldn't have. On the dissidents, the major effort was to check if there were any foreign connections. But we held it so close there was unease within the Agency -- was it really done for the foreign connections or was it anti-dissident? We infiltrated some people so they could go overseas. That was okay, but in the course of training within the groups they wrote on the dissidents. We passed the information to the FBI and they passed information to us. But what happened is we would file the reports the FBI gave us. That, together with our reports from overseas, amounts to about 10,000. So we can't deny that, but I will have to try to clarify it.

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President: When were the names gathered?

Colby: Beginning in '67. It was formally terminated in March '74.

President: When was the Schlesinger directive?

Colby: In May 1973. Schlesinger was concerned when things popped up-- the psychological profiles, and letters from McCord about CIA and Watergate. So, to find everything, he put out this directive. My report has some of it; I will cover the others now. I briefed Nedzi in July 1973; I gave Stennis a general briefing and Symington a detailed one. [He showed the President a looseleaf book.]

President: What did the three say?

Colby: I said "Here it is; we are not going to do it again." I then gave specific instructions to the Department. In March 1974, we stopped the program and I put it together with the dissident program and treated them as one. He mentions mail opening. We did have a New York and Los Angeles program in the 50's of opening first-class airmail from the USSR. For example, we have four to Jane Fonda. That is illegal, and we stopped it in 1973. In San Francisco we had one with respect to China, to find out who the contacts were. Some letters were opened. We did break in to some premises to see whether there were classified documents.

President: Were these former employees, or people on the payroll?

Colby: Former employees.

President: Had they been fired?

Colby: One had just left -- he wasn't fired.

President: Who would approve such operations?

Colby: I would think only the Director, but possibly at these times the Director of the Office of Security.

The third area is the fact that we surveilled some people to find out why they had classified information. Some of the names are pretty hot. [He mentioned a couple of reporters.] In 1971 we surveilled Mike Getler. He had run a story which was an obvious intelligence leak.

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President: Who would have approved that?

Colby: I'm pretty sure it was Helms, but whether it was directed from higher up I don't know.

In 1972 at the time of the India-Pakistan war, we put a tap on Jack Anderson and three of his associates.

President: Who ordered it?

Colby: Helms. Whether on his own or not, I don't know. This was not illegal, but (perhaps) outside our jurisdiction. We also followed some of our employees or former employees. Unfortunately, one was Marchetti. Again, it was not illegal, but it's a highly emotional area.

President: Was this outside the Agency's charter?

Colby: Helms says this is a gray area. We have the responsibility to protect our sources and information.

President: What would you have done?

Colby: I said at my confirmation that I have the duty but not the authority. I would go to the FBI or somewhere like that.

We have also run some wiretaps. Most of them are on our employees, but not all. Edgar Snow, for example. Generally, from 1965, they were approved by the Attorney General. One other was a defector, but most of them were employees. I doubt that before 1963 we had Attorney-General approval.

These were from 1951 through 1965. The last tap recorded was in 1971.

None of these have anything to do with the Hersh story, but he lists all these activities as being part of the anti-dissident effort.

Marsh: But Hersh will say that out of the dissidents program came the IEC and this is where the Getler and Anderson taps are very worrisome. He will say we turned to the IEC for operations when we couldn't get action from the regular agencies.

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Buchen: The directive was 9 May; the report was May 21. Isn't that a bit short?

Colby: Most of these skeletons were around, but just in memory rather than on paper. It didn't take much to get them on paper.

President: Who would have known of the dissident operation?

Colby: The Director, Karamassines, the Deputy Director, Ober -- 30 to 40 people were in the group.

President: Who assigned Ober over here?

Colby: When we terminated the program, I nominated him.

[General Scowcroft described how the NSC got him and what his normal NSC duties were.]

Colby: That's about it. We did collect the names of some Congressmen-- who weren't in Congress when we got the names. [He gave the President a paper on this.] An "X" by the names means we ran a clearance for the purpose of collaboration with them; "Y" means the name came up in connection with a foreign country.

[The President leaves.]

Buchen: The last directives are undated. Why?

Colby: They were all issued at the same time.

Marsh: They will try to get this all linked with Watergate. Do you think there is a connection?

Colby: Watergate is a code word. Only that concern about dissidents and leaks may have been hypoed by political concerns.

[Buchen and Marsh asked a series of questions. The President then returned.]

President: Is counterintelligence work suffering because of a lack of coordination with the FBI?

Colby: No. We are cooperating very well. I think NSCID 9 will formally regularize the arrangement we've had with the FBI since 1966.

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Colby: We obviously have a problem since we lost four of our top people.

President: Tell me about them.

Colby: It has to be a highly compartmented activity.

Angleton is an unusual type and totally dedicated to his mission. He is very intense. I thought of asking him to retire when I took over. I didn't because of the human factors. He also handled the Israeli account. On Friday before the Hersh article appeared, I told him he could move or retire.

Of the other three, one had already decided to retire. His deputy we told that he wouldn't be the chief and he retired. The third was younger, but he thought apparently he might get the job and he retired when he didn't.

Helms helped Hunt to get a job with Mullens when he retired.

President: We plan to do three things: One, early next week, all the Intelligence chiefs will come in and I will say "You know what the law is and I expect you to obey." Two, I'm going to appoint a Blue Ribbon Committee to look into all of this. Three, I am going to suggest to the Hill that a joint committee is the best way for them to go to investigate.

We don't want to destroy but to preserve the CIA. But we want to make sure that illegal operations and those outside the charter don't happen.

Colby: We have run operations to assassinate foreign leaders. We have never succeeded. [He cited Castro, Trujillo, General Snieder of Chile, et al]

There's another skeleton: A defector we suspected of being a double agent we kept confined for three years.

There is one other very messy problem: After the ITT-Chile Congressional investigation, there was an allegation that our testimony was not all kosher. I don't think there was any criminal action, but there was some skating on thin ice. There is an old rule that to protect sources and information you could stretch things.

But the White House hasn't been told about my book of skeletons.

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