

*Anonymity, security, discipline*

## WE BELIEVED IN OUR WORK

*The William J. Donovan Award was presented to the Honorable Richard Helms on 24 May 1983 at the Veterans of the OSS Dinner in the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. Ambassador Helms' acceptance remarks follow.*

I am touched and honored to receive the William J. Donovan Award. My reasons can be no mystery to any of you. So I want to thank Bill Casey, John Shaheen, Jeff Jones, and the others who participated in my selection for their perspicacity in ferreting me out and in persuading me with incomparable eloquence to appear here this evening. Most particularly I want to thank the Vice President for honoring us all with his presence. Soon after taking over at the Agency, Bill Casey commented that "out there at Langley they think that guy—meaning you, Mr. Vice President—walks on water!" Maybe you do, maybe you don't, but there is no doubt of the respect and affection in which you are held by intelligence officers everywhere.

### Encounter with Donovan

General Donovan's life is so well known that it requires no description tonight. For me and many of my friends his most important contribution was to found, defend, and operate the first integrated intelligence organization in US history. He was truly the father of American intelligence. Before him our efforts were trivial.

My first personal encounter with General Donovan came in 1944 when Colonel Passy, whose real name was Andre de Wavrin, had been under fire in London for what were known as the Duke Street murders. Frenchmen under interrogation had allegedly died in the basement of the Free French intelligence headquarters.

A few days before Colonel Passy's scheduled arrival Colonel Atherton Richards, a senior OSS officer, phoned me out of the blue, verified that I had been a newspaperman and could speak French, informed me that I was to join him and two other officers as an escort group to take Colonel Passy and two French subordinates on a tour of the United States. My assignment was to insure that there was *no* press coverage.

At the airport to greet the French visitors I approached General Donovan with considerable trepidation and the following exchange took place: "General Donovan, what about publicity in connection with this visit?"

"We don't want any."

"I know, but what if some newspaperman asks me whether it is true that Colonel Passy is in this country?"

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"That's what *you're* here for, Lieutenant."

And the General walked away. There was no press coverage.

My introduction to OSS was to be rushed off to a training camp in the Maryland countryside known as Area E. There we were warned to use only first names, to try to spy out the backgrounds of our classmates, and to learn how to handle ourselves in life or death situations. Colonel Fairbairn, once of the Shanghai police, later trainer of the famed British commandos, taught us the deadly arts, mostly in hand-to-hand combat. Within fifteen seconds I came to realize that my private parts were in constant jeopardy. I will not describe the unpleasant techniques taught, except to point out that Fairbairn's method of dealing with a hysterical woman was to grab her lower lip, then give her a resounding slap on the face. If the fear of being disfigured by move No. 1 did not sober her up, move No. 2 might. In short, the good Colonel's theory was that gentlemanly combatants tended to end up dead, and he persuaded us that this was the proper attitude in the area of self-defense. If some of us brought a tough outlook into CIA a few years later, it is hardly surprising.

#### "Gadgets Cannot Divine Man's Intentions"

Many who had served in OSS became the foundation of the operational or clandestine section of the new CIA when its doors opened in September 1947. We had been trained to work against the Nazis, the Japanese, the Italians, and we had done so. Now we were to confront the Eastern Bloc, adversaries little understood but certainly tough, at least in the intelligence field. Then came the People's Republic of China. For some years we used the same methods, learned from the British in World War II, that had been tried and proven. But the Soviet Bloc in peacetime, particularly the Russians themselves—suspicious, disciplined, possessed of a formidable security police—proved a tough nut to crack. Then in the late fifties technology came to the rescue. The U-2 brought photographs with a mind-boggling volume of detail on Soviet arms and weapons systems, and the intelligence explosion of the century was on, a relentless stream of detailed data which turned analytical work on these so-called "denied areas" from famine to feast. Our best Russian agents, Popov and Penkovsky, suddenly seemed pale and inadequate.

But with the passage of time a distortion threatened to change the character of our work. The collectors with technical gadgets began to disparage the efforts of the human collectors. The new cry from the gadgeteers was, "Give us the money and leave it to us." And indeed, why take risks running spies when gadgets would tell you what you wanted to know? But therein lay a fallacy. And the debate over the elements of that fallacy is with us today and will inevitably crop up from time to time in the future. Why? Because gadgets cannot divine man's intentions. Even if computers can be programmed to think, they will not necessarily come to the same conclusion as Mr. Andropov. And if they should, how would we know? There is no substitute for old-fashioned analysis performed by old-fashioned brain power any more than there is a substitute for sound judgment based on adequate facts.

## *We Believed*

Another reason why we cannot rely exclusively on spies in the sky but also must have some on the ground is the extent to which the Soviets have closed the technology gap. We can no longer rely on our superiority across the board to protect us from the surprise of a devastating technological breakthrough. Since it takes seven to twelve years to develop a new weapons system to the point of testing, detection of a new weapons test could come too late. More than ever we need agents in place to give us advance warning of what is on the drawing boards.

If there is a weakness in our intelligence apparatus, it is in our ability to figure out what the leaders of a foreign power are going to do in any given situation. For example, it is open knowledge in our government that we do not know how the Saudi royal family arrives at its decisions. The same applies to the Russian leadership. In that case we may not even divine for some time that a decision was made, let alone the nature of it. Arkady Shevchenko, the Russian defector from the United Nations, recently wrote that American followers of Kremlin politics have a regrettable lack of understanding about how the Soviet leaders think, how they act behind the scenes and how they make decisions. The attacks on our Embassy in Iran and the political infighting which brought on the taking of the hostages were surprises born of an inadequate grasp of Ayatollah Khomeini's bigotry and zealotry. To this day the varied patterns of Islamic thought are mysterious to our American minds. I could go on and on, but you have my point. As a country we must develop a far deeper knowledge of other peoples' culture, religion, politics than we possess today. Believe it or not, we are still essentially a provincial nation.

I recognize that my formulation here is in extreme shorthand, but there can be no denying that the underlying concept is sound and important.

But back to the interplay between humans and gadgets. Let me now use as examples events involving Cuba and the United States in the early sixties.

### **"The President Needs Hard Evidence"**

What is today known as the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred in October 1962. As you will recall, Mr. Khrushchev attempted to sneak into Cuba intermediate range ballistic missiles which could easily reach the heartland of America. This action jolted President Kennedy, who had been assured by his Russian experts (diplomatic, military, intelligence) that the Soviets would never make such a rash move. Agents had reported seeing missiles on the island, as had refugees fleeing to Florida. But it was not until a reluctant government resumed U-2 flights over Cuba that the photographs showed unquestionably that missile sites were being built and that missiles had indeed arrived on the island. The so-called "hard evidence" was at hand. President Kennedy's success in getting the Russians to withdraw the missiles and the bombers is public history. But it took the combined efforts of human and technical resources to make the case convincingly to a skeptical world.

On a later occasion I asked Attorney General Kennedy, who was the President's honcho on matters Cuban, why the White House was not making more of an issue of Cuban weapons support to dissident and opposition

elements in other Latin American countries. He replied, "The President needs hard evidence that this is going on." Again that term "hard evidence." Did it have to be a photograph? Perhaps not. That time the human collectors came to the rescue. On a finca in Venezuela a large arms cache was discovered, the purpose of which was to arm a group intent on mounting a coup in Caracas. In this cache were submachine guns of Belgian manufacture with holes the size of a 50-cent piece braised on the stock. Skilled Agency technicians were able to recover for a few seconds the insignia which had been braised away, long enough to photograph it. The official seal of Castro's Cuba emerged. Triumphantly, a colleague and I marched down to the Attorney General's office, gun in a briefcase. A half hour later we were ushered into the Oval Office, Bob Kennedy having made the appointment for me to present the "hard evidence." I apologized to President Kennedy for bringing such a mean-looking weapon into his presence. He laconically replied, "Yes, it gives me a feeling of confidence." Three days later he was dead.

**"If This Is a Mistake. . ."**

The estimating process did much better on what became known as the June War of 1967, but there the analysts had military statistics and known weapons systems to deal with. As war clouds gathered in the Middle East during May, the Israeli government finally sent an estimate to Washington designed to demonstrate that Israel might well be defeated by the Arabs without US assistance. Within five or six hours of receiving this estimate, the Agency produced a written estimate of its own contending that Israel could defeat within two weeks any combination of Arab armies which could be thrown against it no matter who began the hostilities. When Dean Rusk read this commentary, he asked me if I agreed with it. I replied that I did. Then with a wry grin he commented, "Well, in the words of Fiorello LaGuardia, if this is a mistake, it's a beaut!" Later at the request of President Johnson the estimate was reworked or to use his words "scrubbed down." The new version had the Israelis winning in one week. In fact, they took six days.

**"Integrity with Each Other"**

In conclusion, I want to pay heartfelt tribute to the friends and colleagues with whom I shared the long road which started in OSS and ended ten years ago at CIA. My son, Dennis, had an intern job at the Agency one summer while he was in college. He said to me one evening, "Dad, you are very lucky to be working at CIA." "Why?" I inquired. His answer I've never forgotten: "Because the people there are so civilized." That was my experience in OSS as well. With few exceptions these men and women stood up to the stern challenge of anonymity, security, and discipline. Admiral Rufus Taylor, my deputy at one point, recognized these traits when he wrote to President Johnson on his retirement saying that he had never in his life been exposed to a more disciplined group of people, and that included the US Navy. We all did our work because we believed in it, and we understood the need to obey a code of integrity with each other despite the lies and crafty tricks we might be required to use on our adversaries.

**We Believed**

That "long road" to which I just referred was sometimes bumpy; unseen potholes punctuated the way. We sometimes wondered whether our compatriots were for us or against us. But in the end few would have traded for any other career. General Donovan would have approved. He was not one to walk away from adversity. Neither was Frank Wisner, who inspired and guided me for many years starting in OSS. The other day Bob Ames fell in Beirut, the victim of an incomprehensible trick of fate. Twenty years my junior, I knew him for the star he was. Other names like Allen Dulles, Tom Karamessines spin through my head. But enough.

To all of you and to all of them, thank you.