

*Inside the CIA:*

# The Clandestine Mentality

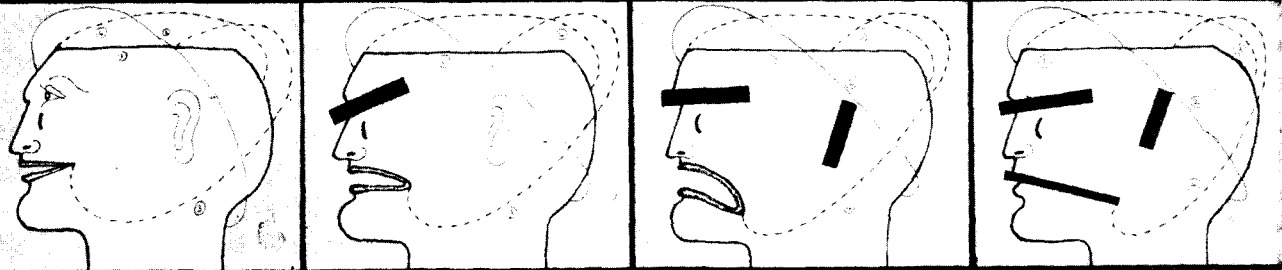
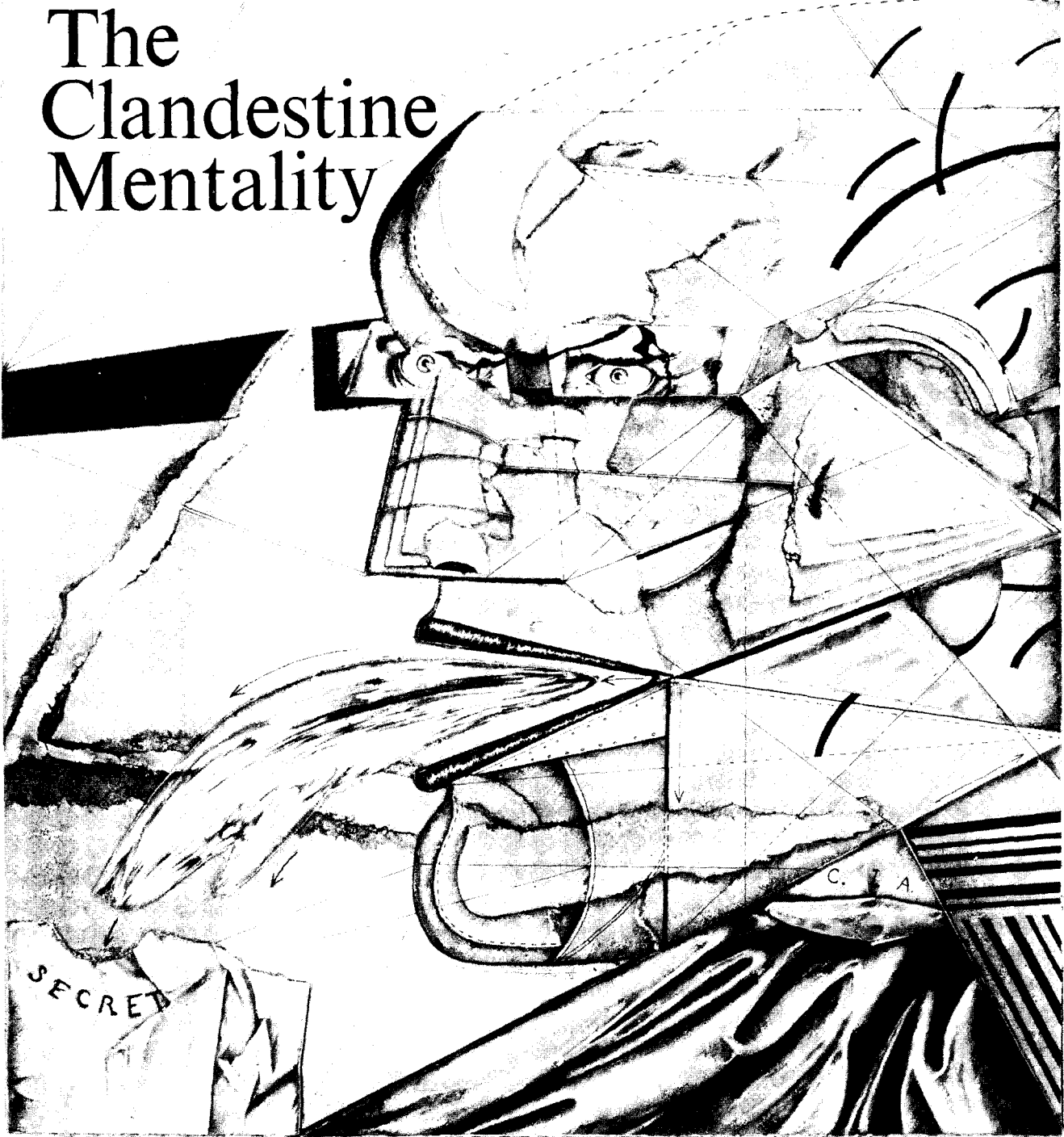


Illustration by Sue Coe



A few years ago *Newsweek* magazine described the CIA as the most secretive and tightly knit organization (with the possible exception of the Mafia) in American society. The characterization is something of an overstatement, but it contains more than a kernel of truth. In its golden era, during the height of the Cold War, the agency did possess a rare *élan*; it had a staff of imaginative and daring officers at all levels and in all directorates. But over the years the CIA has grown old, fat, and bureaucratic. The *esprit de corps* and devotion to duty its staff once had, setting the agency apart from other government departments, has faded, and to a great degree it has been replaced by an outmoded, doctrinaire approach to its missions and functions. The true purpose of secrecy—to keep the opposition in the dark about agency policies and operations—has been lost sight of. Today the CIA often practices secrecy for secrecy's sake—and to prevent the American public from learning of its activities. And the true purpose of intelligence collection—to monitor efficiently the moves of international adversaries—has been distorted by the need to nourish a collective clandestine ego.

After the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in 1970, a few hundred CIA employees (mostly younger officers from the Intelligence and Science and Technology directorates, *not* the Clandestine Services) signed a petition objecting to American policies in Indochina. Director Richard Helms was so concerned about the prospect of widespread unrest in the agency's ranks, and the chance that word of it might leak out to the public, that he summoned all the protestors to the main auditorium and lectured them on the need to separate their personal views from their professional duties. At the same time, similar demonstrations on the Cambodian issue were mounted at the State Department and other government agencies. Nearly every newspaper in the country carried articles about the incipient rebellion brewing in the ranks of the federal bureaucracy. The happenings at the CIA, which were potentially the most newsworthy of all, were, however, never discovered by the press. In keeping with the agency's clandestine traditions, CIA employees had conducted a secret protest.

To agency personnel who had had the need for secrecy drilled into them from their moment of recruitment, there was nothing strange about keeping their demonstration hidden from public view. Secrecy is an absolute way of life at the agency, and while outsiders might consider some of the resulting practices comical in the extreme, the subject is treated with great seriousness in the CIA. Training officers lecture new personnel for hours on end about "security consciousness," and these sessions are augmented during an employee's entire career by refresher courses, warning posters, and even the semi-annual requirement for each employee to review the agency's security rules and to sign a copy, as an indication it has been read. As a matter of course, outsiders should be told absolutely nothing about the CIA and fellow employees should be given only that information for which they have an actual "need to know." (The penchant for secrecy sometimes takes on an air of

ludicrousness. Secret medals are awarded for outstanding performance, but they cannot be worn or shown outside the agency. Even athletic trophies—for intramural bowling, softball, and so on—cannot be displayed except within the guarded sanctuary of the headquarters building.)

CIA personnel become so accustomed to the rigorous security precautions (some of which are indeed justified) that they easily accept them all, and seldom are caught in violations. Nothing could be more natural than to work with a telephone book marked SECRET, an intentionally incomplete telephone book which lists no one working in the Clandestine Services and which in each semi-annually revised edition leaves out the names of many of the people employed by the overt directorates, so if the book ever falls into unauthorized hands, no enterprising foreign agent or reporter will be able to figure out how many people work at CIA headquarters, or even how many work in non-clandestine jobs. Those temporarily omitted can look forward to having their names appear in the next edition of the directory, at which time others are selected for telephonic limbo. Added to this confusion is the fact that most agency phone numbers are regularly changed for security reasons. Most employees manage to keep track of commonly called numbers by listing them in their own personal desk directories, although they have to be careful to lock these in their safes at night—or else risk being charged with a security violation. For a first violation the employee is given a reprimand and usually assigned to several weeks of security inspection in his or her office. Successive violations lead to forced vacation without pay for periods up to several weeks, or to outright dismissal.

Along with the phone books, all other classified material (including typewriter ribbons and scrap paper) is placed in office safes whenever the office is unoccupied. Security guards patrol every part of the agency at roughly half-hour intervals in the evening and on weekends to see that no secret documents have been left out, that no safes have been left unlocked, and that no spies are lurking in the halls. If a guard finds any classified material unsecured, both the person who failed to put it away and the person within the office who was assigned to double-check the premises have security violations entered in their personnel files.

These security precautions all take place inside a headquarters building that is surrounded by a twelve-foot fence topped with barbed wire, patrolled by armed guards and police dogs, and sealed off by a security check system that guarantees that no one can enter either the outer perimeter or the building itself without the proper identification. Each CIA employee is issued a laminated plastic badge with his picture on it, and these must not only be presented to the guards on entry, but be kept constantly in view within the building. Around the edges of the badge are twenty or so little boxes which may or may not be filled with red letters. Each letter signifies a special security clearance held by the owner. Certain offices at the CIA are designated as restricted, and only persons holding the proper clearance, as marked on their badges, can gain entry. These areas are usually guarded by an agency policeman sitting inside a glass cage, from which he controls a turnstile that forbids

passage to unauthorized personnel. Particularly sensitive offices are protected, in addition to the guarded turnstile, by a combination or cipher lock which must be opened by the individual after the badge is inspected.

Even a charwoman at the CIA must gain security clearance in order to qualify for the badge that she, too, must wear at all times; then she must be accompanied by an armed guard while she cleans offices (where all classified material has presumably been locked up). Some rooms at the agency are considered so secret that the charwoman and her guard must also be watched by someone who works in the office.

The pervasive secrecy extends everywhere. Cards placed on agency bulletin boards offering items for sale conclude: "Call Bill, extension 6464." Neither clandestine nor overt CIA employees are permitted to have their last names exposed to the scrutiny of their colleagues, and it was only in 1973 that employees were allowed to answer their phones with any words other than those signifying the four-digit extension number.

Also until recent years all CIA personnel were required to identify themselves to non-agency people as employees of the State or Defense Department or some other outside organization. Now the analysts and technicians are permitted to say they work for the agency, although they cannot reveal their particular office. Clandestine Service employees are easily spotted around Washington because they almost always claim to be employed by Defense or State, but usually are extremely vague on the details and unable to furnish an office address. They do sometimes give out a phone number which corresponds to the correct exchange for their cover organization, but these extensions, through some deft wiring, ring at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

#### [THE AGENCY'S EMPIRE]

**T**he headquarters building, located on a partially wooded 125-acre tract eight miles from downtown Washington, is a modernistic fortress-like structure. Until the spring of 1973 one of the two roads leading into the secluded compound was totally unmarked, and the other featured a sign identifying the installation as the Bureau of Public Roads, which maintains the Fairbanks Highway Research Station adjacent to the agency.

Until 1961 the CIA had been located in a score of buildings scattered all over Washington. One of the principal justifications for the \$46 million headquarters in the suburbs was that considerable expense would be saved by moving all employees under one roof. But in keeping with the best-laid bureaucratic plans, the headquarters building, from the day it was completed, proved too small for all the CIA's Washington activities. The agency never vacated some of its old headquarters buildings hidden behind a naval medical facility on 23rd Street Northwest in Washington, and its National Photo Interpretation Center shares part of the Navy's facilities in Southeast Washington. Other large CIA offices located downtown include the Domestic Operations Division, on Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House.

In Washington's Virginia suburbs there are even more

CIA buildings outside the headquarters complex. An agency training facility is located in the Broyhill Building in Arlington, and the CIA occupies considerable other office space in that county's Rosslyn section. Also at least half a dozen CIA components are located in the Tyson's Corner area of northern Virginia, which has become something of a mini-intelligence community for technical work due to the presence there of numerous electronics and research companies that do work for the agency and the Pentagon.

(Of course the list of CIA facilities would be much longer if it included covert sites across the U.S.—a paramilitary base in North Carolina, secret air bases in Nevada and Arizona, scores of "dummy" commercial organizations and airlines, operational offices in more than twenty major cities, a huge arms warehouse in the Midwest, and "safe houses" for rendezvous in Washington and other cities.)

The rapid expansion of CIA office space in the last ten years did not happen as a result of any appreciable increase in personnel. Rather, the technological explosion, coupled with inevitable bureaucratic lust for new frontiers, has been the cause. As Director, Richard Helms paid little attention to the diffusion of his agency until one day in 1968 when a CIA official mentioned to him that yet one more technical component was moving to Tyson's Corner. For some reason this aroused Helms' ire, and he ordered a study prepared to find out just how much of the agency was located outside of headquarters. The completed report told him what most Washington-area real-estate agents already knew, that a substantial percentage of CIA employees had vacated the building originally justified to Congress as necessary to put all personnel under one roof. Helms decreed that all future moves would require his personal approval, but his action slowed the exodus only temporarily.

When the CIA headquarters building was being constructed during the late 1950s, the subcontractor responsible for putting in the heating and air-conditioning system asked the agency how many people the structure was intended to accommodate. For security reasons, the agency refused to tell him, and he was forced to make his own estimate based on the building's size. The resulting heating system worked reasonably well, while the air-conditioning was quite uneven. After initial complaints in 1961, the contractor installed an individual thermostat in each office, but so many agency employees were continually readjusting their thermostats that the system got worse. The M&S Directorate then decreed that the thermostats could no longer be used, and each one was sealed up. However, the M&S experts had not considered that the CIA was a clandestine agency, and that many of its personnel had taken a "locks and picks" course while in training. Most of the thermostats were soon unlocked and back in operation.

At this point the CIA took the subcontractor to court to force him to make improvements. His defense was that he had installed the best system he could without a clear indication of how many people would occupy the building. The CIA could not counter this reasoning and lost the decision.

Another unusual feature of the CIA headquarters is the cafeteria. It is partitioned into a secret and an open section, the larger part being only for agency employees, who must show their badges to the armed guards before entering, and the smaller being for visitors as well as people who work at



the CIA. Although the only outsiders ever to enter the small, dismal section are employees of other U.S. government agencies, representatives of a few friendly governments, and CIA families, the partition ensures that no visitor will see the face of any clandestine operator eating lunch.

The CIA's "supergrades" (civilian equivalents of generals) have their own private dining room in the executive suite, however. There they are provided higher-quality food at lower prices than in the cafeteria, served on fine china with fresh linens by black waiters in immaculate white coats. These waiters and the executive cooks are regular CIA employees, in contrast to the cafeteria personnel, who work for a contractor. On several occasions the Office of Management and Budget has questioned the high cost of this private dining room, but the agency has always been able to fend off the attacks, as it fends off virtually all attacks on its activities, by citing "national security" reasons as the major justification.

["THE LAST BASTION"]

Questions of social class and snobbery have always been very important in the CIA. With its roots in the wartime Office of Strategic Services (the letters OSS were said, only half-jokingly, to stand for "Oh So Social"), the agency has long been known for its concentration of Eastern Establishment, Ivy League types. Allen Dulles, a former American diplomat and Wall Street lawyer with impeccable connections and credentials, set the tone for an agency full of Roosevelts, Bundys, Cleveland Amory's brother Robert, and other scions of America's leading families. There have been exceptions, to be sure, but most of the CIA's top leaders have been white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and graduates of the right Eastern schools. While changing times and ideas have diffused the influence of the Eastern elite throughout the government as a whole, the CIA remains perhaps the last bastion in official Washington of WASP power, or at least the slowest to adopt the principle of equal opportunity.

It was no accident that former Clandestine Services chief Richard Bissell (Groton, Yale, A.B., Ph.D., London School of Economics, A.B.) was talking to a Council on Foreign Relations discussion group in 1968 when he made his "confidential" speech on covert action. For the influential but private Council, composed of several hundred of the country's top political, military, business, and academic leaders, has long been the CIA's principal "constituency" in the American public. When the agency has needed prominent citizens to front for its proprietary companies or for other special assistance, it has often turned to Council members. Bissell knew that night in 1968 that he could talk freely and openly about extremely sensitive subjects because he was among "friends." His words leaked out not because of the indiscretion of any of the participants, but because of student upheavals at Harvard in 1971.

It may well have been the sons of CFR members or CIA officials who ransacked the office housing the minutes of Bissell's speech, and therein lies the changing nature of the CIA (and the Eastern Establishment, for that matter). Over the last decade the attitudes of the young people, who in

earlier times would have followed their fathers or their fathers' college roommates into the CIA, have changed drastically. With the Vietnam War as a catalyst, the agency has become, to a large extent, discredited in the traditional Eastern schools and colleges. And consequently the CIA has been forced to alter its recruiting base. No longer do Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and a few other Eastern schools provide the bulk of the agency's professional recruits, or even a substantial number.

For the most part, Ivy Leaguers do not want to join the agency, and the CIA now does its most fruitful recruiting at the universities of middle America and in the armed forces. While the shift unquestionably reflects increasing democratization in American government, the CIA made the change not so much voluntarily as because it had no other choice if it wished to fill its ranks. If the "old boy" network cannot be replenished, some officials believe, it will be much more difficult to enlist the aid of American corporations and generally to make use of influential "friends" in the private and public sectors.

Despite the comparatively recent broadening of the CIA's recruiting base, the agency is not now and has never been an equal-opportunity employer. The agency has one of the smallest percentages—if not *the* smallest—of blacks of any federal department. The CIA's top management had this forcefully called to their attention in 1967 when a local civil-rights activist wrote to the agency to complain about minority hiring practices. A study was ordered at that time, and the CIA's highest-ranking black was found to be a GS-13 (the rough equivalent of an Army major). Altogether, there were less than twenty blacks among the CIA's approximately **12,000\*** non-clerical employees, and even the proportion of black secretaries, clerks, and other non-professionals was considerably below that of most Washington-area government agencies. One might attribute this latter fact to the agency's suburban location, but blacks were notably well represented in the guard and char forces.

Top officials seemed surprised by the results of the 1967 study because they did not consider themselves prejudiced men. They ordered increased efforts to hire more blacks, but these were not particularly successful. Young black college graduates in recent years have shied away from joining the agency, some on political grounds and others because of the more promising opportunities available in the private sector. Furthermore, the CIA recruiting system could not easily be changed to bring in minorities. Most of the "spotting" of potential employees is done by individual college professors who are either friends or consultants of the agency, and they are located on predominantly white campuses where each year they hand-pick a few carefully selected students for the CIA.

The paucity of minority groups in the CIA goes well beyond blacks, however. In 1964 the agency's Inspector General did a routine study of the Office of National Estimates (ONE). The Inspector found no black, Jewish, or women professionals, and only a few Catholics. ONE immediately took steps to bring in minorities. One woman

(Continued on page 48)

\* The figure is in boldface to indicate one of 339 items the CIA attempted to censor before publication of *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (see page 22).