Epilogue

MODERN American intelligence has evolved since its beginnings at the end of the Second World War into a complex cluster of agencies. The nature and pace of this evolution have, for the most part, been dictated by advances in technology, by changes in the international and domestic security environment, and by the changing needs and resources of the federal government. Each of these conditions will continue to have a bearing on how U.S. intelligence is organized, how it operates, and at what level it is funded.

Ways must continually be found to do things more effectively and efficiently. Organizational arrangements must be regularly assessed and challenged; opportunities provided by new technologies must be seized. The size and skills of the workforce must be continually adjusted to meet changing needs. Intelligence is not, therefore, a static enterprise. Progress comes through evolutionary change, not by setting ideas in stone.

The Commission sees its own work as part of this evolutionary change. Whatever effect our work may ultimately have, it should not be taken as a stopping point. It is one step in a larger and continuing process.

A number of ideas were presented to the Commission, in fact, that appeared to hold promise, but whose time had not yet come. One was to create a single intelligence agency responsible for all technical collection. It was noted that digital technology will soon reduce all information flows to the same physical characteristics and that, where intelligence gathered by technical systems is concerned, the various information flows go to essentially the same users. Therefore, significant efficiencies might be achieved by lodging in one agency the responsibility for processing and disseminating intelligence from all technical sources, creating one information flow to users rather than several. The Commission was not prepared to endorse such a far-reaching proposal at this juncture, but, in time, it may merit serious consideration. The Commission took a similar view of other proposals, alluded to in the text, that called for placing greater reliance upon commercial imaging systems and building new generations of smaller and cheaper satellites. Both ideas hold promise, but the technical capabilities involved have not matured to the point where the Commission feels comfortable in endorsing them at this time.

The Commission also was presented with a number of significant issues that did not lie squarely within its charter. As noted in Chapter 2, for example, several witnesses pointed to the lack of an effective governmental structure to coordinate efforts to protect computer networks in the private sector from electronic attack from abroad, either by manipulating the data in such systems or by bringing them down altogether—what is commonly referred to as information warfare. While the Commission believes that serious shortcomings are apparent in the Government's response to this problem to date, responsibility for protecting private-sector computer networks lies outside the purview of intelligence agencies.

A different type of shortcoming suggested to the Commission had to do with the absence of clear and up-to-date guidance to intelligence agencies, as well as other

elements of the national security structure (e.g., the military and the foreign policy establishment), with respect to identifying U.S. objectives towards particular countries at any given time. While statements of objectives are issued periodically with regard to particular countries or regions, no effort has been made to do this on a systematic basis or to keep these objectives current by reflecting changes in the ongoing relationships. The absence of such guidance is not viewed as a problem at senior levels of the government, but is seen to result in occasional disconnects at lower levels. Defining and maintaining a list of such objectives, it is argued, would bring greater coherence and consistency to decisionmaking at all levels of the national security establishment. While this proposal obviously raised an important substantive issue, the responsibility for implementing such a system would necessarily rest outside the Intelligence Community itself. The Commission did not, therefore, attempt to analyze this suggestion.

In the course of this inquiry, the Commission discovered a huge reservoir of talented, thoughtful people, both inside and outside of Government, who earnestly wanted to be of help—from the several hundred who were formally interviewed to the hundreds more who communicated with us in other ways. We were continually impressed by the quality and quantity of their contributions. The Intelligence Community should find a way to harness such talent and energy to the ongoing process of evolutionary change.