

Dec. 1968
Dear Doc

In Response

Editor's note: Anatol Rapoport's article was sent out for comment to various authors. We are pleased to publish their replies.

Alfred de Grazia:

I cannot find much of a theory in the eminent theorist's diatribe against classified military research, and therefore comment in kind.

I love an open society and I hate secrets. Some of my best friends keep secrets (the scoundrels!). My own life has unfortunately involved many secrets.

I have met men who carry a secret and they are unpleasant men. Some men are power-hungry and, like professors without ideas, gather secrets so as never to be starved out of their strongholds. Then there are all the secrets that are too banal to be publicized; those who hold them are ashamed to reveal them. One could go on; but the point is that most secrets are not worth keeping—or learning. Most classified research is for the birds.

But professors, unlike the birds, try to supplement their incomes. They feel that they need to get equipment, travel, meet people, blow their minds, etc., and classified research helps them do these things. Why keep them from it?

That's the question: Why? Professor Rapoport elevates the question sky-high. He talks of an academic community that doesn't exist and of a defense community that he says (regretfully) exists. He says secrets spoil the academic community. (I think they also usually spoil the defense community.)

But this academic community that we adore—this womb of pure scholarship—where is it? Peel away all the dependencies of classified military and nonmilitary research, and little is left—maybe some Chaucerian scholars (with their cryptic specialties), cuneiform experts (half-a-dozen vestal virgins), and organ-grinders to whom knowledge is a potpourri that they crank out.

I have news for Professor Rapoport. Practically everything is classified. Eighteen years ago I suggested limited outside access to Survey Research Center punched-card files and heard a lot of tongue-clicking. (The situation is now greatly improved.) Yet here is a group as pure as they come. Move to the condition of the pure astronomers and pure physicists and pure psychologists: They're so open-minded that they squirrel away their ideas and will fight you tooth and nail for the right to date their manuscript ahead of yours. Still they love that word "pure," although, or perhaps because, it is devoid of operational meaning.

Then go on to a hundred departments and schools. In all of them professors hold their secrets—the secrets of many types of clients. Following Rapoport's logic, why shouldn't we know who is being interviewed by a teaching psychiatrist or social worker, and why, and whether he is being paid for the knowledge he is concomitantly gaining? Or why shouldn't we bar all corporate, legal, and foundation consultantships, all studies for school boards, all party politicking, all confidential client and subject relations?

Are 2,000 practicing Democratic political scientists going to be made to spill their party secrets to their Republican students? Do we bar medical-school faculty from practicing? No, even though they return to our halls with green on their hands and secrets in their hearts, for we know from the history of

science what can happen when medical teaching is kept from bodily contact. And anyway, they won't let us stop them.

In a strangely limited search for a supporting example, Rapoport says we should demand that Communists reveal their secret red selves, so that we can have the pleasure of shunning them. Why not homosexuals, too? Why not the shadowy informants of deans and trustees? Why not everyone? Let us all confess and do it publicly: we of the great Rapoport Academic Community—no secrets, please!

The wicked secret, of course, is the defense secret. "Purge the academic womb of these wickedly secret men, if not of the others." It is not the secret that is disliked; it is the wicked kind of work involved. Never mind that most nonacademic people think classified military research is more noble than the other kinds of classified work. Why not say it? "Let no true academic womb sustain this martial worm." Very well, then there will be no one who will talk intelligently of what went on in the martial community. We would dance around it like savages about a secret source. Whom would this benefit: scientists, students, public, opposing politicians, pacifists? None of these; no one at all. We should become ignorant victims, paranoid dogmatists, smiling organ-grinders.

It occurs to me that, in the "defense" field as in any other, a man should do his duty by his academic community; he should translate his private knowledge into public form; he should teach the young and old to think; he should do good research. In short, he should be a good professor and scholar. If he can be so, and wants to, or has to keep secrets, that's his business. If he cannot be a good professor, he should be fired.

Pari passu, a university administration that cannot administer classified projects in ways that are congenial to our academic way of life should not allow them in or should be fired if it does. But why blame classified military research for the massive delinquencies of our universities? It is merely a leaking tap in this slum dwelling. If the reason is to help raze the slum, well then, that is another matter. ■

Henry M. Pachter:

Terms such as "secret" and "classified" often apply not to the results of research but to the techniques. During the war I was interested in certain violence the Nazis had done to the German language; but to gain access to monitored transcripts of German broadcasts I had to have "clearance." The results of my studies were shared with the "community of scholars," though their ostensible purpose had been "defense." On the other hand, after Hiroshima I wrote to a dozen nuclear physicists imploring them to go on strike and to deny the military any further knowledge of their ghastly invention—but received unanimous refusals on the ground that science could not be stopped. H. L. Nieburg has shown in *In the Name of Science* how the scientists themselves are pushing projects that place them in a commanding position and how they become research tycoons who milk the public treasury under the pretext of "defense." Other examples point in the opposite direction: "Little black boxes" were to record earth tremors and underground explosions; though invented through classified research, their purpose was to police a nuclear-test-halt agreement, a first step towards disarmament.

Classified research is not necessarily connected with warlike purposes and is not necessarily imposed by a scheming "defense community" on a reluctant "community of scholars." The latter simply does not exist; few departments are even on speaking terms with each other; nor do the denizens of one