

## AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD HELMS\*

*As you look back over your long career in the CIA what would you say was the high point, the greatest moment, and what was the lowest or the saddest?*

Well, it is a little difficult to say what was the greatest moment because there was some success that was not manifest, perhaps, to the public. I think that one of the high points was the time that we predicted beforehand how long the Six Day War would last almost within a matter of hours. In other words, before the war began we told President Johnson that it wouldn't last more than seven days no matter what combination of forces was brought to bear by the Arabs.

When you come as close as that in the intelligence business, it has to be regarded pretty much a triumph.

I think the lowest point came after I had left when in 1975, during the investigations, I saw what was happening to the Agency and heard the charges being brought against it and saw the amount of material pushed into the public domain at the time. I think that was probably the lowest point. It was not while I was in the Agency itself.

*If you'd known at the outset what you know now, how many things would you have done differently in your life?*

That is impossible to answer, as you knew when you asked it. But if you mean would I spend a good part of my life as I did working on intelligence, I would be glad to repeat the experience, because I think that it was not only useful to try and get intelligence established in this country, I think it was a help to the country. I was interested in it. I enjoyed working at it and I would like to do it over again if I had to retrace my steps.

*With minor modifications?*

Certainly with some minor modifications, but that is true of everyone. But in the last analysis the association with the people and the work in intelligence has been a privilege and anybody who is fortunate enough to work there is a fortunate man indeed.

*If you were drawing up a balance sheet to answer the question, "Okay, what have we got out of having the CIA since 1947? What are its triumphs? What has it achieved?" What would be your sort of condensed balance sheet?*

It would be that we had brought into being and had, up to a point, settled into American society an intelligence organization which not only was designed to prevent

\* Adapted from an interview with Mr. Helms taped by David Frost in Washington, 22-23 May 1978.



**RICHARD HELMS**  
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**1966-1973**

another Pearl Harbor, that is an intelligence organization which could review and analyze independently and objectively all of the material coming into the United States Government, but we also made some significant contributions in the technical field. The CIA has been in the vanguard of that quantum jump in the use of intelligence derived from photographics, satellites, electronics, overflights—a whole series of technological achievements. Some were developed in consort with the Department of Defense but the ideas for many of them originated in the Agency itself.

Then last, but by no means least, we did develop a worldwide network of intelligence collection which has made a significant contribution.

*What about the complaints of liberal critics of the CIA that we always end up in the name of freedom on the side of the suppressors of freedom? Where has the CIA advanced human rights?*

That is simply an unfair charge. The whole history of the CIA, if you care to examine it, was to support the non-communist left, not only in Europe but in Latin America and elsewhere, and I think the record will show that this is what was done. Obviously, we have dealt with dictatorships of the right in various places where it seemed required in the anti-communist context which certainly governed this Government's policies overseas during the 50s and the 60s. But if you examine the record, I think that a great deal was done to support the non-communist left against takeover by the Soviets. Take the youth movement of the 50s and 60s when the Agency was supporting the young people at international conferences. The Soviets put on about two of these meetings after we began to do so and then never put them on again because young people from the free world were able to dominate the conferences and prevent the Soviets and their satellites from controlling youth movements the world over.

*So do you think in a sense there is a double standard in the media that applies to right wing dictators as opposed to left wing dictators?*

There is no question that there is a double standard; left wing dictators seem to be treated very well by the media, whereas right wing dictators are beyond the pale. We suffer, it seems to me, from a bit of provincialism in thinking that the kind of democracy that developed in the United Kingdom and in the United States is exportable everywhere. That simply isn't true.

*But there are certain irreducible human values that are universal, wouldn't you say?*

I would and I believe that firmly. But I don't find that those values are adhered to any more in left wing or communist dictatorships than in any other.

*Is it practical that the public be informed of what Intelligence is doing in its name?*

I don't quite see how, particularly in the secret intelligence field. It may be possible to tell them about oil imports and wheat estimates and things of that kind, although I happen not to agree even with that. I don't think that the Agency ought to make documents public, even if theoretically they are sanitized. Anybody reading them knows that a lot of the information came from secret sources and even if it's fuzzed up, the fact remains that there is put in the public domain more evidence, more material, for the opposition to examine and to study and to deduce how the data have been gathered.

*What would happen if we were to disband the clandestine services?*

We would run a real risk, particularly with a country as powerful and having as good an intelligence service as the USSR. They would simply run us off the map in the rest of the world—if they are not doing so already.

*Presumably the public must accept the fact that for clandestine activities to work, some of it has to be dirty work by definition?*

It is by definition. I believe that the American public is mature enough to understand. Except for certain very shrill voices, you don't find very much ill-will when you travel around and talk to people in this country. They think it is quite sensible that we should protect ourselves. We have a right to survive, to protect our way of life. The allegation that the Agency and the FBI have eroded our civil liberties is nonsense.

This country has never been more democratic than it is today. Civil rights have never been so vigorously defended. How anyone can say that their personal liberties have been impinged upon by these various things, except in the abstract or theoretically, I don't know.

*Should the American public trust CIA employees or anyone with engaging in "dirty work" in their behalf?*

A professional intelligence service is essential to our survival.

Who are these CIA people, after all? They are the men and women living next door, down the street or across town—these are normal Americans who have gone through an extraordinary experience to get into the Agency in the first place.

They are interviewed, then they take a difficult intelligence test and if they get through that they take a probing psychological test to establish their stability and their personality and so forth. They are then the subject of a detailed security investigation during which their entire past, from the time they were born, is combed out. Last but not least, they are asked to submit voluntarily to a lie detector test in which they are asked very intimate questions.

These are people serving this country very well and very loyally and very patriotically, in some cases under very difficult circumstances. But too often they are reviled and cast as second-class citizens.

If this is the way the public wants to deal with its intelligence professionals, then we ought to disband the Agency and go back to the way we were before World War II. Otherwise, it is up to the citizens of this country, the Congress and the President, to support these people and to support them adequately or else there is no reason to expect them to do these kinds of dirty jobs. It isn't fair, it isn't right, and it won't work.

*We went from a hot war, World War II, into a Cold War, and then into something called Detente. Are we back in a Cold War situation today?*

I happen to agree with George Will who says we have never left the Cold War. The underlying antipathy between the East and the West is as real today as it was when Winston Churchill warned in 1945 about the Iron Curtain descending over Central Europe. Detente was a term used to describe limited efforts by the U.S. and USSR to get on a better footing and a better relationship, and there was nothing wrong with attempting to do so. But the basic hostility between us and the goals which the Soviet Union has espoused from Lenin through Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, have not changed.

*Do you think that the weakened position of the intelligence community has made our ability to warn of another Pearl Harbor questionable?*

I am not so concerned about that aspect. We have a first-rate indications and warning capability. The Central Intelligence Agency still has a top-notch analytical and estimative capability. There is nothing secret about that function of the CIA. Pearl Harbor might have been avoided or its impact lessened had information available been brought together and properly analyzed and presented to the leaders of the United States.

The clandestine service established by Executive Order can contribute only a small amount of information compared to the hoard acquired by other means. Nevertheless, sometimes that tiny bit can be terribly important—particularly if it tells you what the other fellow's intentions are.

*There are two memorable quotes in your speech of 1971. The first, as you may have guessed, is, "I cannot, then, give an easy answer to the objections raised by those who consider intelligence work incompatible with democratic principles." And, "The Nation must, to a degree, take it on faith that we too are honorable men devoted to our service." Do you stand by both, and if you would want to amplify them now?*

I stand by them. I think they sound fine.

*You still couldn't give an easy answer to those who are worried?*

I could not. In fact, I think that it has even become more difficult, because the problems have multiplied as a result of the charges, the allegations, and the efforts to write charter legislation in the Congress, and so forth. In a democratic society there are endless ambiguities; it is inevitable by the very nature of the society in which we live. These things cannot be made black and white; there have to be gray areas.

We have to do the best we can, take some chances and hope for the best. And this is why I advocate that authority over a Clandestine Service should be in the Office of the President where it is now, that it should have Congressional oversight, certainly, but that the responsibility should not be shared. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, he is the formulator of American foreign policy; intelligence is a tool available to him.

*How would you compare Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon in their approach to the CIA? In what way were they different to deal with?*

The CIA got off to a very weak, rocky start with President Kennedy because the Bay of Pigs came along not long after he was inaugurated and after that we had to pick up the pieces. One dealt with him on a personal and very straight forward basis. He held a lot of meetings, calling to the White House experts at lower levels in the government in an effort to find out to his satisfaction what the facts in any given case were. He wouldn't even have the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense there. Gradually, I think by the time 1963 had rolled around, we had rather reestablished ourselves, and he could see the Agency's good points, as well as the warts, if you like.

As for President Johnson, it was not very clear to him, I believe, what role intelligence could play until the Six Day War in 1967 when suddenly he realized that intelligence could be premonitory and could keep him informed in a way that was helpful to him. After that, I was invited to the so-called Tuesday lunches which he held almost weekly. I did not play a policy role, however. I don't want to be misunderstood on that score. But I was at the table. If I may put it this way, having me

there kept the game honest. The other people present had to be a little careful about the way they pushed their individual causes on policies, because they knew very well that I probably had the facts fairly straight and wouldn't hesitate to speak up.

I think it is fairly clear that President Nixon was very distrustful of the CIA—largely because of the missile gap which was alleged to have existed at the time of his 1959 campaign against Mr. Kennedy. He felt that he lost that election because of the so-called missile gap and held the CIA at fault. He had it in for the Agency in the sense that he was very distrustful of what we advocated and felt that our estimates had been wrong at times. There was not very much opportunity to talk to him personally. He liked to deal through Kissinger and Haig, and so we had an arrangement whereby written reports were sent to him and he read them. When necessary, one could talk to him, obviously, but it was a more stylized and formalized arrangement. He took it in faster through the eye, and preferred to do so. So did President Johnson, for that matter. He liked to read reports; he didn't want to be talked to.

*In his book, The Ends of Power, H. R. Haldeman claims Nixon also resented the fact Kennedy had been briefed by Allen Dulles on the possibility of a Bay of Pigs operation so Kennedy was able to advocate aggressive action against Castro while Nixon, since he knew it was really going to happen, had to seem to oppose it in order not to tip the administration's hand.*

I have seen that, but I know nothing about the merits of the allegation.

*In the same book, Haldeman refers to an unspoken feud between CIA Director Richard Helms and Nixon.*

There was none on my part. He was my President. I worked for him, and I had no sense of a feud at all. I was doing the best I could to satisfy his requirements and the requirements of the office. Haldeman must have got the notion of a feud from President Nixon—not from me.

*Is the story in the Haldeman book that Nixon wanted certain documents on the Bay of Pigs and that you resisted handing them over true?*

It isn't only in the Haldeman book but in President Nixon's book, as well, that I was asked for certain documents by Ehrlichman. I collected the documents, ones that I felt would be satisfactory for the purpose. I then insisted on seeing President Nixon, because I wanted to be sure that he wanted them himself and that he, as my boss, asked me for them.

The appointment was arranged and I did go down to see him in October of '71. I turned over the documents that he had requested and, as far as I knew, they were satisfactory. He never told me later that he hadn't received what he wanted. So, I don't understand the complaint in the Haldeman book—or in Nixon's—that they asked for more material than I provided.

After all, under the law the Director of Central Intelligence reports to the National Security Council, which, in effect, is the President. He was my boss. We have one President at a time and if he wanted a document from the CIA, what right did I have to decline to give it to him?

*Haldeman says in his book that when Ehrlichman read the materials you had delivered, he found that several reports, including the one on the Bay of Pigs, incomplete. But they never said that to you?*

They didn't. They just said it among themselves apparently. As I recall, I took three documents with me. One was about the Bay of Pigs, the second about Trujillo

and his demise, and the third—written by John McCone—made it clear that the Agency had had nothing to do with President Diem's being killed in Vietnam.

*You wanted to hear directly from the President that he wanted these documents. What were your misgivings?*

The documents dealt with episodes that had occurred on other Presidents' watches and I wanted to be very sure that Mr. Nixon, himself, wanted them and that they were not going to fall into the wrong hands or be used for purposes other than what I thought might be proper.

It turned out that that was not the design, but I didn't know this. I just simply wanted to be sure that this wasn't an Assistant to the President asking for information which might be used politically. It seemed only proper to me that the President himself should ask for them.

*Given that the motive of the President himself seems now to have been political, was that abuse of the Agency?*

It might have been. He assured me at the time that he would protect the Agency, that he did not intend to use the documents for political purposes. I had no choice other than to accept his word. But I don't think in the end that actually they were used for any nefarious purposes.

*Do you think there was abuse of the CIA by the Nixon administration?*

I think that the effort to involve the CIA on 23 June 1972, vis-à-vis the FBI, was an abuse. So, too, was the effort by Mr. Dean to get us to put up bail money and so forth for the break-in men. I don't recall anything else. The materials for Howard Hunt and certain related things I didn't like, and it may just be that we should have stood up more firmly against the requests even though we didn't know what they were for. I mean all of those second guesses by the Monday morning quarterbacks do come at issue, but the things I have mentioned were real abuses. Had we gotten involved in those, I think the consequences for the Agency would have been very serious.

*The Epstein book, Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald, which tries to pull together a lot of fragmented information, contains two great mystery quotes of Nixon. Presumably when he said, "We protected Helms from a lot of things," when he actually probably meant the CIA, and when he said, "Bring out the whole Bay of Pigs thing," he meant the assassination plots against Castro?*

Well, Mr. Nixon makes clear in his book and also has made clear in an affidavit in a law case, that the only thing he meant when he said, "We have done a lot of things for Helms," was that he helped me get a lawyer appointed in the Department of Justice to seek to enjoin Marchetti from publishing a book about the Agency. That is the only case mentioned in his book, and the only case mentioned in a legal affidavit, and I assume that is the only case he had in mind. I know of no favors he did me, other than the perfectly official interchange of business.

As for the Bay of Pigs, I don't know what Haldeman was talking about. All I knew was that that was a failure that the Agency had had, but I didn't see any reason to drag it into conversations that we were having at the time. The efforts to upset Castro are well-known and I didn't have a moment's thought about this.

So if this is Haldeman's interpretation, it is his and his alone.

*When I talked to Richard Nixon in Monarch Bay in the Spring of '77 his criticism of the CIA was that it had not done a good job on Cambodia, that it failed*

*to warn of the Yom-Kippur War, and that it thought that Allende was likely to win the Chilean election, albeit not with the plurality.*

*Do you think he was right on those three things?*

We did miscalculate the flow of arms, weapons and supplies provided to the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese forces through the port of Sihanoukville in Cambodia. The economists built a model to try to do so, and we underestimated, I think rather considerably underestimated, what was going through Sihanoukville. Later, when we had access to things in Cambodia, and found the bills of lading for the ships that had called at Sihanoukville, they totalled up to a larger volume than we had estimated.

As for the Yom-Kippur War, I was in Tehran as ambassador and I don't know the merits of that case.

I don't see how he could assert that we were mistaken on Chile, because we said relatively early on there was a very real question whether Allende could be defeated. And all of that higger-mugger that took place in Chile was a result of that estimate. I can't imagine that President Nixon should have been surprised when Allende was the winner.

*Did the Nixonian idea that there must be a sort of "bamboo pentagon" somewhere in Cambodia, a sort of "Dr. No's Palace," to be found by the April 30 incursion, emanate from the CIA?*

They were looking for but never found something called "COSVN" which was the North Vietnamese Command of the forces in South Vietnam. The CIA had no illusions of a "bamboo pentagon." We knew that there was kind of a command structure which may have been no more than a General and two or three aides and maybe a table that moved from place to place, but you can't run armies without communications and without a headquarters.

If President Nixon had kept the American troops in the area longer and really had cleaned it out, as the operation was designed to do, I think we would have found a lot more. But the operation started and then stopped suddenly and the troops withdrew because of domestic pressures in the United States. It is hard to say today that there was no headquarters in there just because we didn't find it.

*There are people who told us that the idea of an incursion into Cambodia was one of Nixon's greatest passions, and that in fact there was a good deal of information, that such an incursion would not be successful, that you had some of that material but you thought that it was hopeless to show it to Nixon because he was intent on doing it come what may. Did you have evidence that the thing wouldn't be a success that you didn't give to Nixon?*

I don't really know, in this context, how you define success. We did our very best to provide Mr. Nixon information on what we thought was there. There was a very real concern about what would happen if Cambodia were invaded. We had no illusions about domestic dissent in the United States, either, but that wasn't our job to assess.

It has always seemed to me, quite frankly, that President Nixon early-on paid a very high price for that invasion and therefore should have seen it through to the bitter end. It didn't help him any to pull out before it was finished. And we will never know whether it could have been more productive.



*Did you have evidence that it wouldn't be successful unless he stayed there for a long time?*

That is too minute a detail for me to remember.

*Do you think that overall, the CIA was responsible for overly optimistic assessments by both Presidents Johnson and Nixon of how we were going to do in Vietnam, or do you think that was political optimism overlapped on not overly optimistic CIA estimates?*

I don't think that the CIA was in the vanguard of optimism about the Vietnamese war at any time. As a matter of fact, one of the most difficult problems for the DCI during that period with both President Johnson and President Nixon was the charge of negativism, that after all you are Americans, you are on the team, why is it you see these things so negatively? Why is it these things are never going to work? What is the matter with you fellows?

*The OPEC oil embargo came about in October '73 but the Nixon people seemed to have resented the lack of any contingency plans for an embargo going back months or years. Is that a fair point?*

I would not have thought so. I would have thought that the United States Government should have had a contingency plan for an embargo of that kind because it affected the entire country.

*Were there ever CIA people in any other government department without the knowledge of the head of that department?*

Never. But there might have been instances in which a responsible person in the department knew, whereas the head may not have been personally aware, if you want to make that qualification. However, the CIA did not go about planting agents or spies or the like in any agency of the Government or—most importantly—in the White House. I would like to put this myth to rest forever.

There were as many as 90 or 100 employees of the CIA in various parts of the White House at different times—in communications, handling telegrams in the Secretariat, in the Situation Room. There were Agency secretaries working in parts of the White House. We loaned telephone operators. It was our effort to help the White House staff itself in the way that it thought was required. There was nothing secretive about it. For a long time, the White House was staffed largely by people seconded from other agencies—the Department of State and Defense, the CIA and from any place that they could borrow people. That was one of the ways the President kept the White House budget down.

*To revert to H. R. Haldeman, was Alexander Butterfield a CIA plant?*

He was not.

*Let's come on to that 15 September 1972 meeting after Allende had already won the popular election on 4 September though not with a plurality. You said later that if ever you left the Oval Office with the marshal's baton in your knapsack, it was on that day.*

Well, that was one of those zingy phrases which one should refrain from ever using.

*But it is basically true, that Nixon was extremely exercised?*

He was very interested in preventing Allende's accession to the presidency. There wasn't a one of us who thought we had any chance whatever of achieving that objective and I had tried to make that point but it was like talking into a gale. We were to go out and do the best we could and that was all there was to it.

The possibilities of succeeding in the short time span were so remote that we had a most difficult time putting together anything that was even a semblance of an effort.

One of the things not generally realized by people who are not familiar with the process, that advanced planning is critical for any covert operation. You have to have assets in place—real estate, individuals, money and sometimes automobiles, newspapers, printing plants and even loud speakers. You have to have everything organized and ready to use.

We had nothing in place in Chile. We really had to extemporize from the very beginning and it was an almost impossible situation.

*Why do you think Nixon was so worked up about Chile?*

I think that he makes the point clearly in his book that with Castro in Cuba, right off the coast of the United States, that another communist-led country with frontiers contiguous with Argentina and Bolivia and Peru would make things in Latin America difficult for the United States.

*One of the reports critical of the operation asked "Did the threat to vital U.S. national security interests posed by the Presidency of Salvador Allende justify the several major covert attempts to prevent his accession to power?"*

*Answering that question today would you say yes or no?*

With benefit of hindsight, I think that the Chilean business would be handled differently. I can't imagine wanting to go through such a nightmare a second time. When President Kennedy launched the Agency into the 1964 Chilean election, the work was started many months ahead of time so that there was some chance it would be effective. Against Allende it was started much too late to be very effective. The thing went from bad to worse.

Any judgment as to whether Mr. Nixon was justified in trying to defeat Allende or whether President Kennedy was right earlier in wanting to defeat him, rests within the foreign policy establishment. The President has the right, under our Constitution, to formulate foreign policy—whether everybody agrees with it at the time or their perceptions change through the years.

The Agency is often criticized, "Well, you did what the President wanted." What is the Agency for? It is part of the President's bag of tools, if you like, and if he and proper authorities have decided that something has to be done, then the Agency is bound to try to do it. We would have a very strange government, indeed, in this country if everybody with an independent view of foreign policy decided he was free to take or not take the President's instruction according to his own likes and beliefs.

*But when you left that meeting on September the 15th you knew that the brief was impossible?*

Let's say, most difficult.

*Were you tempted to resign or did you think "This is part of my job"?*

No, I thought it part of my job.

*Chile was central to what I think Harold McMillan once described as "local difficulties" that you experienced. Looking back on those Senate hearings at which you said "No sir," to the question about CIA activities in Chile and so on, if you had your time over again, would you handle it differently?*

I don't know how I could handle it differently because the dilemma posed at that time has never been resolved. If I was to live up to my oath and fulfill my statutory responsibility to protect intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure, I could not reveal covert operations to people unauthorized to learn about them and that was the predicament I was in before Senator Church's committee. If I had to do it again tomorrow, I don't see that I would have had any choice. It should be made clear what Congressional committees a Director of Central Intelligence must confide in or to which he must provide operational details. The chairmen of at least eight committees, four in the Senate and four in the House, can summon the Director of Central Intelligence and swear him, ask him any questions they want, and force from him any information they want.\*

*There have been suggestions that, when you were called to Camp David and then sent as Ambassador to Iran, you held a pistol of some kind to Nixon's head. Did you, and, if so, what was in it?*

I certainly did not. Of all the accusations made about me and about my leadership of the Agency and about the Agency itself, I have resented none more than the charge I blackmailed President Nixon. It is nonsense. I did not blackmail him; I threatened him with nothing. When he said that he wanted me to leave, I said fine. It never occurred to me to argue. I was never one of those presidential appointees who thought he had an entitlement to his job. You serve at the pleasure of the President of the United States; when he wants you to leave, this is time for you to leave.

And, last but not least, why should I want to blackmail my boss, the President of the United States? I worked for him. The Agency worked for him. What point would there have been to do this?

*When he asked you to leave, did he also offer you your new appointment? Did you feel you were being fired and then given another appointment or promoted or what?*

He told me that he wanted me to leave and that he wanted to appoint a new man. There was some conversation about timing and then he asked "Well, would you like to be an ambassador?" We discussed this and I said "I wanted to think it over, because I didn't know." So the two were not put together, no.

*Was Iran mentioned at that meeting?*

Yes, it was, because by the time I said that I wanted to think about the idea, he asked "If you would like to be an ambassador, where would you like to go?" I thought for a minute and I said "I thought Iran would be a good post." I never regretted it.

*Presumably, one of the reasons that you thought the appointment appropriate was that the CIA has enjoyed good relations with Iran ever since it helped restore the Shah to power in 1953.*

That is the conventional wisdom, and while it may be true that the Shah appreciated the help that both the British and the American governments gave him in 1952, his later feeling about the Agency had a great deal more to do with the quality

\* The Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980 subsequently established the sole authority of the Senate and House Select Committees on Intelligence to oversee the Agency and the Intelligence Community.

of its personnel who had served in Iran and whom he came to know over the years than with the earlier events. He thought them a first-class group of officers, who knew their business.

*You have testified that you didn't know about the Watergate break-in in advance.*

*Given that in an organization as large as the CIA, there are things that the Director doesn't get to hear about, like the Lee Pennington Affair, until later, I could quite believe the theory that since Martinez was reporting to his case officer and had reported his contacts with Hunt as early as November '71 and that Hunt was working for the White House in March of '72, I could quite believe that although word never reached you, somebody in the CIA knew that a break-in was going to happen.*

The FBI, Special Prosecutors, grand juries, Senate committees, House committees, Lord knows who all, have been trying to find who it might have been. As far as I know, he doesn't exist. Martinez did not share his information with his case officer.

Nobody has ever been found, in the Central Intelligence Agency, who knew about the Watergate break-in beforehand, period. And let's put a period to it right now.

*But everybody has such a vast respect for the intelligence gathering capacity of the CIA that it seems almost incredible that they didn't know that something like this was going on.*

*Do you think they ought to have known?*

No, because we don't have a charter to do any investigative work in the United States. Why would we have people around the Democratic National Committee or around the White House or around the CRP, the organization to re-elect the President?

The CIA had nothing to do with any of them. We were very conscious that we ought to stay out of anything having to do with the political process in the United States and to the best of my knowledge we did. So why would a tip-off to the break-in come to our attention.

*Only under the guise of self-protection, I suppose. But once you had found out that Hunt was a potential troublemaker in August of '71, shouldn't some one of your underlings have kept track of him in self-protection?*

That would have been the worst thing we could have done. Then we would have been tied into the thing and never could have extricated ourselves. I think it would have been a disaster if we had tried to keep an eye on Howard Hunt. He was working for the White House. He was their man. And he was doing their bidding. And he paid a horrendous price for it, but that was the way it was.

*When you first learned that Hunt had come to the Agency for help in August of '71 and you and Cushman switched him off because he was getting to be a bore or potential danger or whatever and when Osborne called to say that various people with CIA connections, including Hunt, had been detained in connection with the Watergate break-in, and—without knowing any of the details—didn't your mind go, click, click, click, what the Whole Bloody Hell, and your heart sink?*

Well, I didn't like the notion of any people that formerly worked for the Agency being involved, but the interesting thing about Hunt was that, when I got the call from

Osborne, I believe it was a Saturday evening, but then the papers the next morning made no mention of Hunt's name at all. So on Monday when we had our staff meeting, I turned to somebody and said "Osborne tells me that Hunt is involved in this. I haven't seen his name in any of the papers. How come he is making that allegation?"

Then I called Osborne and he said that Hunt was involved in it and in what way.

So during the 24 hours in between, I was more concerned about the names in the paper than I was about Hunt.

To go back just a moment, I don't know why Gray didn't believe me when I told him early-on back at the time of the Watergate break-in, that those fellows were involved with Ehrlichman. I did tell him that. I am certain he will tell you I told him. But for some reason his people seemed to feel that the Agency was involved. But I didn't hold back from the head of the FBI. As a matter of fact, I told him in a telephone call I made at the time of the break-in. I think he was in Los Angeles. I said, "You'd better watch out because these fellows may have some connection with Ehrlichman." I knew Ehrlichman was the one who had arranged for the hiring of Howard Hunt.

We were notified when the White House hired Hunt. We were never asked about it beforehand. We never asked about his background or anything. Not that it might have changed the course of history, but it interested me that the White House hired him without ever going to his employer of many years standing for a recommendation or a reference.

*There have been allegations since, whether in books by prosecutors or committee reports, that while the CIA wasn't involved and didn't know about Watergate in advance, it could have been more cooperative sooner. Do you regret that the CIA didn't blow the whistle a bit quicker and perhaps shorten the agony of Watergate?*

I don't think that it would have shortened the Watergate agony. That should have ended in 1974 with President Nixon's resignation, but it seems to have been continuing. Something in our psyche likes to keep working this one over. My problem as Director was to distance the Agency from anything which looked like involvement. That problem began the minute the announcements about the break-in were made. Who were those fellows? They were Cubans that had worked for the CIA. There was McCord and there was Howard Hunt.

I knew that we were not in any way culpable with respect to Watergate, and it seemed to me that the thing I had to do and what I was paid to do, was to adhere to truth, to distance the Agency from the whole problem.

I recognize that I have been accused of not having turned out my pockets and made everything available to the prosecutors, but the fact remains that their office and the FBI and so forth were leaking information to the press in a way that looked very dangerous to me.

If I had said to them, "talk to this man, here is a fellow who did such and such," the next thing you know we would never be able to unsnarl the Agency from the Watergate thing.

If I was wrong, I was wrong. Monday morning quarterbacks always have a better way to play the game.

*To clarify the record, Haldeman says, in his book: "Interestingly the CIA never allowed the Ervin Committee investigators to see reports of Martinez's case officer. . . ." When they asked to interview the case officer they were told he was on safari in Africa.*

*There were no reports from Martinez's case officer for them to see?*

I don't recall ever having gotten into it and they may not have been able to get them, but certainly the FBI could have, if they had wanted to, or a Special Prosecutor or a grand jury. You know there is nothing that you can deny to a grand jury if they want to subpoena it.

*Again Haldeman, in November of '73, "Andrew St. George said in Harpers Magazine that he had visited CIA Headquarters and discussed the break-in with his former associates. What he discovered was that Martinez had indeed reported to the CIA hierarchy on the planning of the Watergate break-in."*

*Who said this?*

*Andrew St. George said it in Harpers Magazine.*

That fellow is a discredited individual. The Senate Armed Services Committee went into his background and so forth, and if you take Andrew St. George as a witness, you can believe anything.

*When did you realize that what you had been invited to take part in was a cover-up?*

"Cover-up" became a word of art much later in 1973. At this particular point the things that concerned me were Dean's requests to give money for bail and things of that kind.

Now, this is not the first time that the Agency had been asked to use its unvouchered funds for things that were not strictly our business. I don't want to go into the history of this; there is no sense in dredging it up. But, this was not the first time by any means and we were used to turning these things off—or pointing out that we had an understanding with the Chairmen of the Appropriations Committees of the Senate and the House, that any monies expended this way would be reported to them.

This we religiously abided by. So when Dean's request was denied and then the pressure dropped off and so forth, we resumed our own normal business.

Now this whole area of cover up and so forth developed much later.

*In fact, it was May '73 before Walters informed the Department of Justice of these White House efforts to have the CIA stop the FBI investigation—11 months after they happened.*

*It was 11 May before General Cushman provided testimony that it was Ehrlichman who had telephoned him to assist Hunt, rather than that he couldn't recall.*

*It was the same month, May '73, before the first James McCord letter, which Osborne had shown you in August '72 came to light. It was January '73 before the casting photographs of the Fielding break-in came to light. Those four things together might have held up the investigation considerably.*

*In retrospect, perhaps it was a mistake that those things were not brought to light sooner?*

Possibly, and I don't have any reason to argue with your recital of the events. I left the Agency in February of 1973 and I don't remember any more the exact dates on which these things came out.

But I don't recall either any people from the Department of Justice or any place else up until the 1972 election asking for any of this material.

The real investigation began in March 1973 and that was when the thing really started to move. The Ervin Committee was organized, etc. There were just small pieces of it being nibbled around the edges in February of 1973 when I was being confirmed as Ambassador to Iran. The first questions were being asked about it. Prior to that, I don't recall anybody asking about these things. If they did I have forgotten about it. I am not ducking here, I just don't recall it.

*Your priority was that you felt the whole future of the Agency might be at stake here, in fact?*

I did indeed.

*And you told Gray right at the time of the break-in that there was a link between Hunt and Ehrlichman?*

I did indeed.

*It was a major lead?*

I would have thought so.

*Given that the CIA got quite a lot of "stick" for the fact that for 11 months General Cushman didn't name Ehrlichman as the man who called him about Hunt, as I mentioned, why didn't the CIA ever get credit for your call to L. Patrick Gray right after the break-in, when you said that it was Ehrlichman who had called Hunt?*

I don't know to this day because at the time we were attempting to deal with all of these various factors. I didn't see Gray. I had asked to see him on one occasion, but he cancelled the appointment. I learned later he cancelled on instructions from the White House.

I think that he was in a most unfortunate position. He had taken over the Bureau at a most difficult time. I think he had a very tough time of it. And I have no interest in picking on Pat Gray. He doesn't deserve it.

*Who was "Deep Throat," do you think?*

I haven't the faintest idea.

*Someone I talked with yesterday is convinced it was you. Was it?*

No. I never even met Bob Woodward or Carl Bernstein. I think it is most unlikely that they would even have thought of me in this connection.

*Wouldn't it be very good for your image if you had been?*

I would prefer not to have that image. There would be no reason for a person in my position to sneak around in garages and so forth to keep a couple of reporters straight. If I had all of this information I should have walked out and said something about it, publicly, or before a properly authorized body.

*Moving away to broader issues of Watergate, taking a broader philosophical view, in retrospect, is there any period when you wish that you had resigned because the demands made upon you were improper?*

The only time that there was a real question in my mind as to what was going on was at the 23 June 1972 meeting because neither Walters nor I, especially, could figure out what this was all about. Everyone must realize that at that time we knew nothing about money being laundered in Mexico, we knew nothing about money at all.

We couldn't figure out what the preoccupation with Mexico was. We didn't want to bring Walters into that aspect of it too much because he had only been with the Agency for six weeks, but after all he is a clever man and he obviously was wondering, too, about why they were interested in Mexico and what was going on down there that might cause a problem for the CIA.

When I left that office that day, therefore, I was in a quandary trying to figure out what we could be involved with here.

But you must remember, as I had said earlier, the President was the boss, and if he had information about something that I apparently didn't have, I wanted to find out what it was and see what it portended for the Agency or for any of us.

So when I got back to the Agency and we finally got to working on these things, I realized that there was nothing in Mexico that was going to affect our operations. Gray eventually was told this when we had been able to ascertain it.

Then gradually those several names came to light. They didn't mean anything to us at the time. It was only later that I understood that they had to do with something in this line of laundering the money.

So, during that period, that weekend Walters and I talked frequently and later on Dean called Walters down on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

*If you had to choose an adjective to characterize your personal relationship with J. Edgar Hoover, what word would you choose?*

I can't choose any adjective except "correct." I used to see Mr. Hoover at an occasional reception and we held very pleasant conversations on those occasions. In some respects, I came to know him relatively well—in contradistinction to most because he never saw very many outsiders.

When I say I came to know him relatively well, that is only by contrast; other people didn't know him at all. We always greeted each other with proper respect and cordiality. It has been said often that we didn't meet very frequently in a formal way. The reason I didn't call on him more frequently, rather than handle the business between the agencies through liaison officers or memoranda, was that when I went to his office I was lectured the entire time and then left when it was time to leave. I could barely get a word in edgewise. I used to succeed a little bit when I had something important to talk about, but Mr. Hoover liked to dominate the conversation, and he was quite a figure around this town for 40 years. A lot of people are throwing arrows at him and saying unkind things about him now. I didn't see very many people including Presidents, who said unkind things about him when he was in office.

*One of the reasons that is given for the feeling that you may have felt no more than correct toward him is that throughout the Nixon administration Hoover was adding legal attaches to embassies around the world everytime he saw Nixon and that he was encroaching on your territory. Broadly speaking, is that so?*

Broadly speaking, it is accurate, but it really had nothing to do with this, so-called, breakdown of relations because, after all, we were grown-up people. I



recognized that Hoover was encroaching on my territory, and I did my best to keep this encroachment down to a minimum. President Nixon wanted it, and since he did, we would accommodate to it.

There is no sense in being immature about these things. I felt that the breakdown over the Colorado affair was quite unnecessary, but this was, obviously, in a fit of petulance on Mr. Hoover's part, and, like most things that come as a fit of pique or petulance, it was short-lived. It wasn't very many days before we were back to the status quo ante, but the papers had been going back and forth, and people were talking informally, and the work of the two agencies was not impeded.

A lot has been made out of it. It is one of those episodes that are easy to dramatize, but the working level in both agencies kept things on an even keel.

After all, you must recognize that if these two organizations don't work together, the United States is ill-served, and I think most of us had that sense.

*You knew that Hoover was trying to encroach on your territory. How did you limit that encroachment?*

I think the word "encroach" is too strong. There have been so-called "legal attaches" in embassies abroad since World War II. Those legal attaches were Hoover's men. Hoover wanted to expand those legal attache officers in certain places. This would not "encroach" on the CIA's efforts. We have a great deal of work to do. There is a certain specialized kind of work the FBI did overseas and it did not get in our way. What was involved here, more than encroachment, was the fact that the embassies had to absorb additional people—which the State Department and the Foreign Service obviously didn't like very much.

I didn't like it much either, but I was in no position to remonstrate about it, since it was quite clearly delineated that the legal attaches were not going to duplicate any of the work that our people did.

*Do you think Hoover, knowing Nixon didn't like the CIA, sold the plan to him partly by intimating that he could also keep an eye on the CIA?*

I never suspected that because, frankly, what was there to keep an eye on? We had a highly disciplined organization overseas with first quality people doing the best job they knew how to do and if somebody wanted to mind their business for them, let them mind it. But I doubt very much that the FBI fellows wanted that kind of job or would have done it anyway.

*In the last resort, who do you think was responsible for exposing CIA to the public? Was it Ehrlichman? Nixon? Daniel Schorr? Was it William Colby?*

I don't think there is any place to lay it except at the feet of Director Colby who, after all, was the one who made available all of this material. To this day, I am not sure why he handled matters the way he did. He explains his reasons in his book and obviously I am required to accept his explanation.

But the thing that had bothered me, quite frankly, is Mr. Colby's belief that he had a constitutional obligation to do all this. I am no lawyer, but it has always been my understanding that any question of constitutionality has to be decided by the courts, with the Supreme Court the final arbiter.

But the legality or the requirement for the release of these hordes of documents to the House and Senate Committees never was tested before the fact in the courts. Finally, President Ford stood aside and watched it happen, when if it was going to be

stopped, he had to dig in his heels and say "Don't send down those documents. We are going to find out here whether it is required that secrecy be breached in order to conduct this investigation in public."

That would have forced the issue into the courts. If the Congress then insisted on subpoenaing the documents, the courts would have had to decide.

I would have felt a lot more comfortable if they had done so, if there had been an order from the courts to Director Colby, to turn over those documents—but this never happened. In the end, it was decided by Mr. Colby's interpretation of the Constitution.

*Could Colby have stopped the hemorrhaging? What should he have done?*

Once one starts to bleed it becomes a question of quantity. The time to try to head this off was at the beginning. That was the time for the President of the United States to take a firm stand in favor of the security of the CIA's files. President Ford could have forced the issue into the courts and maybe to the Supreme Court. I would have felt a lot more comfortable if the Supreme Court had directed the Executive to turn over those secret documents to the Legislative Committee. But they didn't have a chance to rule. We must not forget that the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA, a secret service or a clandestine service, was founded just before our involvement in World War II and the concept never has been tested in the courts.

*One review of Colby's book said that he could have scarcely done more damage to the cause of U.S. intelligence or counterintelligence if he had been a KGB agent. Would you go along with that?*

I think Colby did considerable damage, but he explains in his book why he took the actions he did. He has gone to great pains to explain himself and I think only History can judge the merits of the case.

I don't believe that Colby was a KGB agent. I don't believe that we had any KGB agent in the inner circle of the Central Intelligence Agency. The nightmare of every Director is that one day he will be told that somebody inside his immediate organization has been spying for a foreign power.

So I was very conscious always of the charges and countercharges that some individual might be off base or something of this kind. It was my conviction that none of the people with whom I was closely associated was in any way working for any foreign intelligence organization. I certainly do not believe it about Colby and I don't think such allegations serve the cause of the United States at all.

So much paper and so much information were released that it is almost impossible to tell what has been compromised. Moreover, the legal requirement to satisfy inquiries under the Freedom of Information Act are further eroding security. The Agency is trying to be careful about what it releases, but blotting out something with black ink on a piece of paper doesn't mean it can't be recreated by somebody who knows the facts. I find that this is a very difficult on-going kind of "leaking" and I put the "leaking" in quotations because it is done under the guise of legality and by law. I have pleaded with the Senate Select Committee to exempt the intelligence and security agencies from the Freedom of Information Act.

FOIA is good legislation if it results in someone learning from the Department of Transportation or the Department of Interior or elsewhere information the American public has the right to know. But it is used as a device to ferret out information about intelligence and security operations and I think that is bad and ought to be changed. I

realize that I am opening myself up to criticism about the public's right to know, but the public's right to know is the Russian's right to know. It is everybody else's right to know. The Russians read our newspapers and our magazines and our technical journals very carefully indeed.

*Colby says in his book that he felt that he had to go to the Attorney General's office and that it was an unpleasant thing for him to do and so on. How do you feel about it?*

Obviously I have always wondered why he did it, but I haven't anything further to say. If he felt he had to do it, then he did and it has been done. I would have preferred, however, that he had gone first to the President, his boss, and said "Mr. President, I am going to turn over this material on one of my predecessors and I just want you to know it is being turned over to the Attorney General."

*Have you seen Mr. Colby on a personal basis since he decided that he had to advise the Attorney General's office that you might have committed perjury in the Chile hearings?*

We have seen each other in public since that time, but we haven't had any detailed conversation. But I don't mark it from that time. I just haven't had any detailed conversation with him since sometime in 1975 when I went to his office for lunch and talked about a particular situation. That was the last time I had any conversation with him.

*In retrospect, do you agree with the findings of the Rockefeller Commission that some domestic activities, such as Operation Chaos, exceeded the CIA's statutory authority?*

Yes, I think there were two or three cases in the Operation Chaos context where we went too far. I would like to explain though, if I may, that the word "chaos," which has such an unhappy connotation, was not chosen because it was descriptive of the operation. You will remember that Winston Churchill always said that you should have happy optimistic cryptonyms when engaged in any big undertaking in the world. This was not all that big an undertaking. We didn't think anything about it at the time. But, I have noticed since that the word "chaos," although only a cryptonym, has been seized on as an indication of some terrible thing that the Agency was involved in, whereas in point of fact, the operation was an attempt to collect information on foreign involvement with American dissidents and domestic bombings and things of that kind.

*What about the mail opening, HTLINGUAL or SRPOINTER from '52 - '73? The Rockefeller Commission said that was unlawful. Do you think it shouldn't have happened?*

Mail opening is a very important counterintelligence technique, particularly if it can be done as we did it, under conditions of secrecy. Whether it should have continued as long as it did is debatable, but it was useful at the outset. The Korean War was just winding down and then American soldiers were being killed in Viet Nam. We were looking for evidence of the involvement of Americans with the Soviets and so forth. After all, the Soviets were backing the North Vietnamese, just as they had backed the North Koreans.

I can't imagine that Allen Dulles embarked on the program without President Eisenhower's knowledge. President Kennedy was briefed. There is some controversy over whether I informed President Johnson, but I am relatively certain that I did on 10

May 1967 when we went over certain things that the Agency was doing. There is no record of it, however.

I did not testify to this effect before the Church Committee because there was no document to support such testimony. It was solely my word; President Johnson can't speak for himself. So, I didn't want to get this into any controversy. I don't feel, however, that it is was the wrong thing to do in terms of our efforts to see what the Soviets were doing to us.

Let me say that this issue is important for the future. We still have a problem with counterintelligence in this country. Not only has it fallen into disrepute, but there isn't very much being done.

Now is the moment for the Executive and Legislature to decide how they are going to protect this country against spies, saboteurs, and terrorists at home.

It is an important question. Our young people seem to be rather cavalier about such questions because of a lingering distaste for the Vietnamese war and other things, but they are the ones who are going to be affected. I think they ought to decide whether the right of survival of the country takes precedence over human rights in certain cases.

*But, the Agency did end up with files or a cross index or whatever on over 300,000 Americans, files on protest organizations and 7,000 details of those figures?*

These were names—most provided to us by the FBI. To hold names you need lists. Sometimes you open a file, but that doesn't mean you are targeting anyone. As a matter of fact, most of the files in the CIA aren't targeting anybody. They simply hold material, like the filing case in your office, the kind of correspondence you conduct.

For example, someone in the CIA today receives a letter from the FBI mentioning David Frost. Now, do you file the letter or throw it away? Usually you file it because you don't destroy material in the government except under a certain process. So, it would be filed and henceforth there would be a file on David Frost, who might be innocent as a lamb. Maybe it just said you went across the street and had a beer.

So that this question of the files on Americans has been blown out of all proportion and I am delighted to have the opportunity to set the record straight.

*Including photographing individuals attending anti-war demonstrations?*

There were two cases of this. There were two fellows for whom we were trying to build overseas cover so that when they went abroad they would have the proper credentials to penetrate foreign dissidents working against the United States.

We overstepped the line by encouraging these two to become a part of the demonstration, to get their credentials by meeting the leaders, so they could say when they went overseas that I was with Joe in that May Day demonstration and so forth.

In one of these cases all that material was put aside and never used or passed to anybody. But, when the boss of the section left, a new man arrived, found this material and distributed it all over the place.

When finally it was taken down to the Senate, it looked as though we had been spying on everybody in the United States. I want to wipe out that impression. We were not spying on people in the United States. We were not spying on anybody; we were trying to get this fellow prepared to go overseas. In retrospect we overstepped the line and I am sorry.

Nobody was damaged that I know of and nobody was disadvantageded.

*Do you agree with the Rockefeller Commission's view that you exercised poor judgment in January of '73 by destroying documents that might have contained evidence?*

Tapes—not documents—were destroyed. No, I don't agree.

One recorder was attached to my telephone and the other could be used to record conversations in my office. Neither, may I say, was activated by sound; both required the pushing of a button.

These tapes contained material having to do with foreign policy and US intelligence; they would have been damaging to our foreign policy, if they had gotten into the public domain. I thought that then, I think so now. I would do the same thing today. A great deal has been made of the fact that Senator Mansfield wrote various government agencies not to destroy material having to do with Watergate. I did not destroy material having to do with Watergate. Nobody can examine those tapes, so there is no way to verify my assertion—but I promise you it is true.

*In the case of Operation Mud Hen, do you think you overstepped the line there with the surveillance of Jack Anderson?*

When I was testifying before the Senate Select Committee in May 1978, I said this is a totally unclear area and needs to be looked at.

I was criticized in the Rockefeller Commission Report for undertaking this surveillance of Anderson, saying I had no authority to do so under the Director's charge by statute to protect intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure.

Now if you are going to give the Director this responsibility in the future, then I think you have either got to define it, give him the wherewithal to achieve his purpose, or don't give him the responsibility.

This is an unclear area to this day, and I think it ought to be cleared up one way or the other.

*The drug testing is a mystery to me. How did the CIA feel that LSD and such things fitted in with national security?*

All of this started back in the very early fifties, when you will recall we were just coming out of the Korean War and there was deep concern over the issue of brainwashing.

As a matter of fact, a man named Hunter had written a book entitled "*Brainwashing in Red China*," and "brainwashing" was a literal translation of the Chinese words, and we wondered what it was all about. Did they use sodium pentothal or drugs of one kind or another?

We had learned that something called LSD had been discovered in Switzerland by a scientist named Hoffman. It was tasteless, odorless, and colorless and taken even in small quantities created a kind of schizophrenia.

Coincidentally, I think it was in 1952, Ambassador Kennan came out of Moscow and made a speech in Berlin that the Soviets regarded as so egregious that they declared him *persona non grata*. We wondered whether he'd been administered some

drug that caused him to act in such an aberrant fashion. There were a number of things going on that puzzled us.\*

We felt that it was our responsibility not to lag behind the Russians or the Chinese in this field, and the only way to find out what the risks were was to test things such as LSD and other drugs that could be used to control human behavior.

These experiments went on for many years. There is the inevitable question of whether they should have been ended sooner.

Allen Dulles, who was the Director back in those days, authorized this thing to be undertaken, but we all felt that we would have been derelict not to investigate this area.

Who else in government was going to investigate it? It was our field. Maybe our people abroad would be administered drugs. In other words, in a defensive way we felt we would have failed in our responsibilities if we hadn't investigated what was there, if anything.

*The commission said it is clearly illegal to test potentially dangerous drugs on unsuspecting US citizens.*

There was one instance in which that was the case, and in retrospect I agree we should not have done it.

*There is virtually no drug-related MK-ULTRA material in the files, we gather? In terms of destruction of those files, the seven boxes of progress reports that I think you had recalled from the Archives and destroyed on 31 January, was a booklet called "LSD 25, Some Unpsychedelic Implications." Why did you decide to do that?*

It was a conscious decision that there were a whole series of things that involved Americans who had helped us with the various aspects of this testing, with whom we had had a fiduciary relationship and whose participation we had agreed to keep secret. Since this was a time when both I and the fellow who had been in charge of the program were going to retire there was no reason to have the stuff around anymore. We kept faith with the people who had helped us and I see nothing wrong with that.

*In principle, do you think there is ever an occasion when somebody has a right to lie in the national interest?*

I don't recall specific episodes, but it seems to me that if one goes through history there are examples of it and that it has been upheld by public opinion at the time. I don't encourage lying. I have never been confronted with this problem. I testified many years before various Congressional committees cleared to hear my testimony.

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\*The remarks in question were delivered at a plane side press conference at Templehof in Berlin on 19 February 1952. Ambassador Kennan, en route to a Chiefs of Mission meeting in London had learned shortly before his departure from Moscow that his study in Spaso House had been bugged and had seen Soviet militia keeping Soviet children away from his two year old son at play in the Embassy garden. In his own words, he was both depressed and irate. He thought that his remarks to the press in Berlin were off the record, but later admitted that they and particularly a young reporter for the *Herald Tribune* may not have sensed his intent. In any event when asked by the reporter for the *Tribune* whether diplomats in Moscow enjoyed social contacts with the Russian people, Kennan snappishly compared life in the Embassy in Moscow with that he had known in an internment camp where he was imprisoned by the Germans in 1941-42.

On 26 September he was attacked by *Pravda* in an editorial which said he'd "lied ecstatically" and made "slandorous attacks" on the Soviet Union. He was declared *persona non grata* on 3 October.

For a full account of the incident see *Memoirs 1950-1963*, Volume 2, George F. Kennan, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1972, pp 145-167.

This is the first time I was questioned about operational matters before a committee that I had understood the Congress did not want me to testify before on such matters. The consensus in the Congress, it always seemed to me, was quite clear. There were two attempts, one in 1955 and another in 1965, to broaden the committees that had oversight of the CIA. Both were defeated in the Senate. That should have settled the matter it would seem to me. But apparently it didn't.

*So that there can be situations in which a Director of the CIA would have a right to lie in the national interest?*

I don't think there is any question about that—just as other officials of the United States government would. I would suggest that if you unearth the transcript of the hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after the U-2 was shot down over Russia, you will find that there were very high members of the United States Government who were not telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. They were trying to protect the President. He later admitted that he knew about the U-2 flight and revealed it. I am sure there are other examples of testimony before the Senate and House where the whole truth was not disgorged by members of the Executive Branch.

*In fact you were not charged with lying, but rather with withholding information. I suppose that critics of the Intelligence Community would say that the sorry state that the intelligence business finds itself in now is not so much that things were made public but that the CIA and other agencies had done things which made news, that if there hadn't been assassination plots, if there hadn't been Operation Chaos, if there hadn't been drug testing and so on, then public disclosure would not have been harmful?*

If the CIA had done nothing, then there would have been nothing to expose. When Vice President Humphrey came out to speak at the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Agency, he made the point to the audience very strongly that, "You are criticized and you will be criticized, but if you are an activist and get out and do the work that you are supposed to be doing in the world, you ought to be able to bear the criticism, but the only people that aren't criticized are those who do nothing, and I would hate to see this Agency get in that state." I grant you that the point you make is a valid one except that I would like to submit in evidence that the way that these matters were brought to public attention in the most flamboyant manner possible and sometimes almost in an atmosphere of hysteria, was most unfortunate.

*Have you ever had any doubts about the Warren Commission's conclusions that J.F.K. was killed by a lone gunman acting alone?*

No, I have never had any doubts about it. I didn't have any doubts when the Warren Commission made its report, and I don't have any today. I have never seen any persuasive evidence that anyone other than Lee Harvey Oswald shot President Kennedy.

*How close did either of the Kennedy brothers get to ordering attempts on the life of Fidel Castro?*

I can't answer the question directly. If you read the transcripts of the Church Committee, and there are many pages in the public domain, you can see what the problem is all about.

All I would like to ask is what did these so-called assassination plots against Castro amount to? The business about the suit that was supposed to have powder put on it

and some big sea shell and so forth are just pipe dreams. There were fellows trying to figure out if some device could do this, but the idea was never seriously considered, and the gadgets never left the laboratory.

As for the Mafia, that is one of the great regrets of my life. We were under great pressure to make contacts in Cuba. I let the pressure to do something—because we didn't have very many contacts—overwhelm my judgment. We never should have gone forward the second time with that Roselli thing.

When I found out about it, I should have corked it off then and there. I am genuinely sorry that I didn't. It was a case of poor judgment.

I was told Roselli was attempting to find out if there were Mafia elements or organized crime elements still in Havana. That was all I authorized, but I shouldn't even have authorized that, and I am sorry.

On the other hand, let's not exaggerate what was involved. There isn't the slightest creditable evidence that any poison pellets ever reached Havana. We have only the word of a gangster that they did, and I don't believe him. I think he and his case officer grossly exaggerated what they were trying to accomplish.

*What about the testimony of Nosenko the Soviet defector who is referred to in the Epstein book? You told Earl Warren there were two opinions about Nosenko. Do you believe his claim that the KGB had no contact with Lee Harvey Oswald while he was in the Soviet Union?*

I went to Chief Justice Warren because I didn't know what to believe then; and I don't know what to believe now. I don't know what the facts are today. But it did strike me at the time that it would be a great mistake for the Warren Commission to shape its findings on the basis of a statement made by a man whose bona fides we could not establish.

I told Justice Warren that I did not know what the truth was but that we could not vouch for Nosenko, and the Commission should take this into very serious consideration in their conclusions. I think that was the right thing to do.

*When Nosenko was given a new identity, after three years of hostile interrogation, had you decided on his bona fides?*

By this time, the issue was what to do with him. Obviously, I recognized we couldn't keep him in durance vile, as we had, against the laws of the United States. Lord knows what would happen if we had a comparable situation today, because the laws haven't been changed, and I don't know what you do with people like Nosenko.

We sought guidance from the Justice Department at the time. It was clear we were holding him in violation of the law, but what were we to do with him? Were we going to release him and then a year later have it said "Well, you fellows should have had more sense than to do that. He was the whole key to who killed President Kennedy."

The controversy has been bad enough without our having done that, but everything would have come down on our heads, I am sure, if we had released him before we did, and we would have been bitterly criticized. So, we did the best we could, but eventually it became necessary to give him a chance to go on about his life. There were those who felt he was bona fide, and others who felt that he was not. As far as I know, that controversy endures. May I say one of the most difficult things about counterintelligence is that it tends to be very untidy. There is no answer to the Lee



Harvey Oswald and Nosenko cases and there won't be unless the KGB in Moscow or the Soviet leadership is going to tell the United States exactly what the facts were. I think that unlikely to happen and, therefore, these cases are going to remain untidy. They don't end up like novels; they end up with long Irish pendants.

*What about the assertion that during his residence in the U.S.S.R. Oswald provided information on the U-2 to the Soviets?*

I was totally unaware of that until I read Mr. Epstein's book, and I know nothing about the merits of the assertion. In other words, I have no way of verifying it. I don't call up the Agency about matters of this kind. After all, when I was DCI, I wasn't interested in having former Directors guide my hand.

*In retrospect, do you think the Warren Commission should have known about AMLASH and those contacts?*

This is a very confused area, as far as I am concerned. Allen Dulles, who had been Director of the Agency for many years, was on the Warren Commission. I don't know what he did or did not tell the Warren Commission about what the CIA was doing.

When one is running secret operations, there is a great reluctance to spread knowledge of them. In retrospect, I can't question the fact that it might have made for some clarity if these things had been laid on the table for the Warren Commission.

On the other hand, that is a hindsight judgment. I just don't know why Allen Dulles didn't make these things clear to them or John McCone go down and talk to the Warren Commission about these, or the Attorney General go down, or somebody go down.

But suppose they had known it, what different conclusion would they have come to? This is a question I simply raise. I am not making judgment; I am simply raising it, as if to say, what does it signify?

*One of the Senate reports makes the point that you were on the horns of a dilemma because you were in contact with the Warren Commission and you knew about AMLASH.*

It wouldn't have occurred to me to go to the Warren Commission with information about on-going, covert operations without the clearance of the Director and maybe the clearance of the executive committee that passed on those things at the time. In those days I think it was known as the Special Group.

But the thing that seems to be quite forgotten, with respect to the Kennedy Administration and Castro, was the Missile Crisis. Nobody talks about that anymore. The Russians came along at Castro's invitation in 1962 and were about to score one of the great strategic coups of the century by placing medium range ballistic missiles in Cuba—missiles which could shoot right into the American heartland and hold us hostage in a way which their intercontinental ballistic missiles could not. We seem to have forgotten that Castro was a co-conspirator of Khrushchev's; he was making it possible. But that never seems to be mentioned anymore. We become snarled up in the question of whether CIA was running this or that operation against Cuba, as though that had everything to do with what later happened to President Kennedy; whereas the antipathy between Mr. Kennedy and Castro was manifest at the time of the Missile Crisis and for good and serious reasons.

The Missile Crisis happened in October 1962. In December 1962 when the Brigade that had landed at the Bay of Pigs, Brigade 2506, was repatriated as a result of

the arrangements made by Attorney General Robert Kennedy in exchange for drugs and medical supplies and so forth. President Kennedy went to the Orange Bowl in Miami and greeted them with words to the effect that "I can assure you that this flag will be returned to this Brigade in a Free Havana."

President Kennedy himself was keeping the pressure on the Castro government. This wasn't anything hidden or anything of that kind. I mean, if provocations were needed, both Castro and Kennedy had provided fine provocations for each other. But what does it say in the end?

*If History renders the verdict that President John F. Kennedy did not rule out the assassination of Castro, and even said in so many words that he would quite welcome it, would History be unfair?*

I don't know how to answer that and I think one is simply going to have to wait for History.

*You were asked if Robert Kennedy told you to kill Castro and you said "Not in those words, no." Can you remember what the words were?*

No, I don't recall any more. Let's leave this judgment to History. We are not going to contribute anything by trying to make a judgment today.

*If the Kennedy family, for reasons of national security and so on, had endorsed or not turned off assassination plans, if the CIA didn't want the details of something like AMLASH to be made public, then there was a vested interest between the CIA and the Kennedys that these facts not be put before the Warren Commission, just as you didn't mention them to Rusk in '66 or LBJ in '67.*

I know of no conspiracy about these matters. If there were oversights and things that should have happened didn't, I assure you there was no conspiracy involved.

*Turning to the subject of assassinations in general, you made your point that you think assassination is unacceptable as a policy tool, both because of the public aversion to it and also for practical reasons. Is the most practical reason the danger of reciprocity?*

No, that is not the most practical reason. But I think this is a good place to note that the CIA never has assassinated anyone.

There were many of us who never liked any idea of assassination. Plotting such an act is one thing and committing it is another. Plotting is a buzz word—all you have to do is say somebody is plotting and it reeks of crime and all kinds of horrible things.

But the fact remains that none of this happened.

Let's leave aside the notion of theology and the morality of all good men for just a moment.

Leaving that aside, one comes smack up against the fact that if you hire someone to kill somebody else, you are immediately subject to blackmail and that includes individuals as well as governments.

In short, these things inevitably come out. That is the most compelling reason for not getting involved.

But then there is an ancillary consideration. If you become involved in the business of eliminating foreign leaders, and it is considered by governments more frequently than one likes to admit, there is always the question of who comes next. If

you eliminate one leader, have you really improved your position? That is a very critical point.

And if you kill someone else's leaders, why shouldn't they kill yours and so forth.

On the other hand, may I say that there isn't a chief of state or chief of government in the world today who does not feel vulnerable to some terrorist or would-be assassin, and they all take great precautions. There isn't one so naive as to think he isn't a possible target by someone, some disgruntled individual.

*Do you feel the world would be a safer place if those assassination attempts on Castro had succeeded?*

It is an awfully hard thing to bring a case against a specific individual. But I think the world would have been a nicer place if somebody had gotten to Hitler before he had a chance to eliminate six million Jews and cause God knows how much destruction.

Discussing assassinations is a very difficult thing, for an American, particularly for one of any religious persuasion, because we are against killing. But we are peculiarly ambivalent; we are glad to have certain people eliminated if we don't have to do the eliminating.

I cited the case of Hitler. But there are others. What about the thousands of people killed in Cambodia in 1977-78? There would be a revulsion in this country if it was thought anybody in our government was trying to kill Pol Pot. The same was true with Idi Amin, and, yet, the death of a tyrant might save hundreds of innocent people. A human life is a human life. Nevertheless, assassination is not a way for the American government. It is not a way for the CIA.

Nonetheless, I can only say I agreed with Clark Clifford, when he testified that it should not be barred by law. That would make us look silly.

*It makes us look silly, or there might be a Hitler-type situation where it should happen?*

If there were, maybe you would have to break the law, but I don't think anybody would notice particularly. We don't notice if laws are broken in the best causes. It is when somebody questions the causes that we get uptight, but the fact remains that if you say we are going to bar assassination and to bar this and to bar that, there are a lot of other things you are going to permit—by implication.

*When you say that the subject of eliminating foreign leaders is discussed more than anyone would like, does that mean that you, on your initiative or that of others actually said "No," or turned off such discussion or had suggested to you other assassinations plans?*

I don't want to go into any details but obviously I have heard such suggestions and turned them off. But the idea does come up, because it looks like a quick and relatively cheap way of achieving something in the foreign policy or national security area.

*Right. You said "No" for the reason that you have just given, I suppose?*

Yes. I have never believed in assassination.

*There are two accounts, one of them very fresh, to put it in perspective, in the case of Lumumba, where lethal biological substances were supposed to have been*

*transmitted to the Congo and two Europeans with criminal backgrounds were allegedly involved.*

*I have read that you told CIA officer Michael Moroney that you thought that the Lumumba plan was ill-founded.*

*Now Leonard Mosely in his book, Dulles: A Biography of Eleanor, Allen and John Foster Dulles and their Family Network, says that in fact you planned one operation with lethal toothpaste but that Lumumba did not use toothpaste and that the joke was that he preferred halitosis to no breath at all. Which is the truth?*

Leonard Mosley has a fascinating imagination. I don't know the gentleman. I have never met or talked to him. I don't believe that story. I have no recollection of any such plot. I had nothing to do with the Lumumba business. Moroney, as you call him, which is obviously not his name, asserts that he came to discuss this business with me and I intimated that I didn't think that this was a very good idea. But I was not the boss and it was the boss who was talking about this at the time.

But I don't think we should leave on the record any suggestion that anything came of this, even though certain things may have been transported to the Congo. The final decision was to do nothing and that is the important thing. What happens in the end is important. This is what we are all judged on.

*But given there were so many plots.*

There weren't so many plots.

*There were plots against five leaders.*

What five?

*Well, there was Castro, obviously.*

We have discussed Castro.

*To quote the Senate report, which you said is your Constitutional right to say was wrong, the CIA encouraged or was privy to coup plots which resulted in the deaths of Trujillo, Diem and Schneider. That was the final result. But there were also plans against Lumumba and Castro?*

A "coup plot" is very different from an assassination—maybe. Let us take an example. President Daoud of Afghanistan was killed in a coup. Was he intentionally assassinated or was he simply killed in the course of the coup? I don't know—but he is dead.

The Agency had nothing whatever to do with the demise of Diem and didn't plot it. If there was any plotting, it was someone else in the United States Government.

As far as Trujillo was concerned, he was killed but there has never been any real evidence that those guns that were allegedly sent to the Dominican Republic were used to shoot him. We did not pull the trigger.

I think that it has been abundantly pointed out that Schneider was killed accidentally, that he was not killed intentionally by anybody—let alone the CIA. I think that what this line of questioning tends to lay out is that no matter which of these leaders dies, if the Agency was anywhere around they were the ones who are assumed to have plotted. Whereas if you had an objective rendition of history, I think you would find that a lot of people at all levels of the United States Government were involved in these things.

*But I suppose the point on Schneider is that if the CIA gave ammunition, albeit to other kidnap groups, as they did, the Agency must have been aware that ammunition might be used in a kidnap. Isn't that fair?*

It is perhaps a fair question, but who can prove that any ammunition was given. One of the difficulties with the Senate report about this business in Chile was that it is all based on second-hand stuff—from CIA case officers' documents, allegations and so forth. But nobody has ever demonstrated exactly what went on down there, and in 1975 it was very popular to pick on the CIA and give the worst cast to all of these things. Someday, with the aid of the Chileans who took part, maybe the proper history of this will be written, and then maybe we will have a correct rendition.

*My own feeling about the Schneider affair is the irony of it, that given President Nixon's instructions, the United States was a party to removing a democrat in order to install somebody else, who would support overthrowing the democratic process in Chile?*

Who was the democrat in this?

*Schneider was the man who believed in constitutionalism in Chile.*

That is a better term, constitutionalist, rather than democrat.

*Should we really not have been on the side of a constitutionalist, rather than trying to have him removed?*

We could discuss for hours the backings and forthings of what went on during this period of time in Chile, but I agree that it is ironical. Let's leave it there. I have no other insights to contribute, to help unwind the tangled skein of who did what to whom in connection with Schneider's kidnapping and death. I don't know the facts to this day and I don't believe they have ever been put down any place accurately.

*It will only be with the aid of the Chileans that were involved?*

I would think so.

*How many Chileans were involved?*

I don't remember any more.

*It has often been reported that Israel, with the help of persons in the United States, achieved the wherewithal for the atomic bomb. What was the reaction in the Intelligence Community to the news that the Israelis had almost certainly joined the nuclear club?*

Intelligence officers are so used to the Quixotic developments of life that what they are really interested in is trying to make a correct assessment and getting something right. In the study of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, there were certain countries referred to as "threshold countries." These were countries thought to have the capability to make an atomic bomb if they chose, but most have not done so.

If you don't test such a bomb, it is not difficult to make one secretly. You can put the bomb together and the only way that anybody is going to know that you have it is either to spy it out and take a photograph or have you explode it. Anyone who wants to assume that the Israelis have nuclear weapons is free to do so. There has been enough evidence in the newspapers and so forth to argue both ways.

*For the record, during the Johnson administration, did you hear that the Israelis probably had a nuclear capability and did President Johnson tell you that that must remain a secret?*

I have no recollection of President Johnson ever enjoining me in this fashion. I don't think it happened, but I obviously can't swear to it.

*One of the most interesting incidents in your life must have been when you had the opportunity to interview Hitler.*

It was unforgettable, particularly since I was only 23 years old and didn't expect it. It was only on Saturday afternoon (the day before) that I had been invited to have lunch with the Fuehrer. He talked with us for almost an hour, so that I had a chance, being as close to him as I am to you, to hear his views and see his gestures, the expressions on his face, how he treated various questions and so on.

One of the problems of dealing with history is that everybody wants to run it together—run it on real time, rather than historical time. But this happened in 1936 when one couldn't help being impressed then with how astute he was in the geopolitical sense, what a good politician he was, German-style. He understood his people very well, what they wanted, what their aspirations were, how to appeal to them.

The luncheon took place in connection with the Party Congress which was run annually in Nuremberg and in the course of the conversation somebody asked him "Why have this party congress?" He said, "Well, this is the way I reward the faithful party workers. . . . Besides, they come for two days and then they go back home, and it is exactly the kind of an operation that the German railways would be involved in if we had a mobilization, so it is very good practice." The statement gives you pause in the light of what happened later.

*Whereas former secret agents in Britain tend to defect to the Russians, in America former secret agents tend to defect to their publishers. When you look at somebody like Phillip Agee would you describe what he does as treason or what?*

I find the terminology a little bit difficult to come by. I am not a lawyer and I realize that certain words have legal implications which other words do not have, but I don't have any difficulty agreeing that what he did and the way he did it was treasonable.

*What about people like Frank Snepp that have a moral crusade about the fall of Satgon or Stockwell talking about Angola?*

Well, I would think of them in a different category entirely. I am not in favor of turning off dissent or suppressing disagreement. The thing that I think somewhat unfortunate about Snepp and Stockwell is that they published without abiding by earlier agreements both made to clear their writings with the Agency. It doesn't seem to me that is such a bad agreement. I can't conceive that the points that these gentlemen wanted to make about mistakes and misfeasance and so forth would have been censored by anybody at the CIA. They certainly were not classified or anything. I don't know why they didn't go the normal course and submit their books for review.

It is very different, it seems to me, to want to correct abuses by making points in a book rather than by going out and comprising the names of agents in a way designed to do harm literally to human beings. And that is what I criticize about Agee.