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RUDY MAXA'S

Front Page

SORRY, NO HELMS BOOK

An apology to ex-CIA chief Richard Helms, who was identified in this space last month as having written a bland portrait of his years with the CIA. In fact, Helms hasn't written a memoir. His wife wrote a book about her experiences in Iran, and Thomas Powers wrote *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms & the C.I.A.*



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Executive Registry

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Dear Dick,

When I returned to the office I found your thoughtful and generous contribution of the "David Frost Show" tapes and transcript. This material will be of great future value to our employees, and I wish to assure you it will be used as you requested and as outlined in Ben's note to you.

With much appreciation.

Yours,

Bill
William J. Casey

*Looking forward
to your dinner*

The Honorable Richard Helms
Suite 402
1627 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

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THE WASHINGTON STAR (GREEN LINE)
17 March 1981

Ambassador's Wife Can Put Caution Aside

By Joy Billington
Washington Star Staff Writer

During the long hostage crisis, two people in an ordinary-looking brick colonial house in Wesley Heights watched the nightly television news with a special intensity.

As pictures of the captured Americans flashed across the screen, Cynthia Helms might say urgently to her husband, "Dick, look, surely that's our bedroom" — as she dashed to the set to point out a window or door frame she recognized.

These small clues, at a time when the White House and the State Department were trying to figure out where the hostages were being held, meant little to others.

But the former ambassador to Iran and his wife, sitting in their brown and white tulip-printed sitting room — uncalled upon by the Carter administration to tap their special knowledge of that residence and chancery halfway across the world — viewed such pictures from a unique perspective.

"They held five hostages in our bedroom and four in the study of the apartment in the residence," Cynthia Helms says now. "We didn't expect the Carter people to approach us, although we had photographs of all the rooms. But we were surprised they didn't ask someone who knew the buildings. The Iranians moved the furniture around, but

things like windows and doors couldn't be moved. And the commentators kept saying that they didn't know where the hostages were being held.

"One of the things I often wondered was how the plumbing, which was never good, was holding up under those conditions."

Cynthia Helms, whose book "An Ambassador's Wife in Iran" has just been published, sits in her tranquil brown-toned sitting room. The glossy auburn hair of the younger Cynthia in the portrait over the fireplace — the Englishwoman and ex-WREN (the British equivalent of the WAVes) from a comfortably-off yeoman farming family who rocked Washington in 1967 when she and Helms divorced their former partners and married — is now streaked with sandy gray.

Richard Helms is 57, and his public life is behind them. The final scene was played out in 1977, when the former CIA director pleaded no contest after being charged with failing to tell the whole truth about earlier CIA activities in Chile.

His four-year ambassadorship to Iran, which also ended in 1977, is only an amazing memory. Today, Helms is a consultant to American firms doing business abroad. And his wife can lay aside some of the caution that became second nature to her over the years.

This caution characterizes the book she began writing when they came home from Iran — a manuscript which gathered dust on a publisher's desk until the shah's departure from Iran made it suddenly timely. But in conversation now, with even more distance from

Iran than when she was writing about it, she is more frank.

"I'm not sure the shah really was a strong person," she says. "All that bombast and selling himself as a strong ruler covered up the fact that he wasn't a strong person. At least that's what I think now, and while hindsight is always easy, when we were there you could see the problems — although not that it would lead to an Islamic revolution."

The shabanou, the beautiful Farah Diba, she thinks "lost her usefulness to the shah" by surrounding herself with "some very unthinking jet-setty friends and by putting her relations in key positions. For instance she started a project of books for young children — a project I was sold on at the time. But when you went out to the villages you saw that the children couldn't relate to her beautiful, expensive books.

"She had so much money, she didn't see it should have been done in a simpler way. She sold herself on the glamour of her life. She could have helped him understand far more about what was going on."

Both Helmses sensed the shah's isolation, she recalls, and even though Richard Helms had attended the same Swiss school as the shah (although at a different time) and had for several years given intelligence briefings to the shah on his visits to the United States, he could not alert the monarch, she insists.

"How do you tell a head of state he's not being told the truth by his people? And anyway, how do you produce the evidence that he's not?"

Argeshir Zahedi, the shah's ambassador in Washington — whom she barely mentions in her book — exacerbated the shah's problems, Helms contends.

"We saw him from a different perspective. His lavish living was not in tune with an Islamic country and the tremendous poverty. And those parties were reported in Iran. He was apt to mislead the shah on the policies of our government, which led to some of the shah's confusion."

She does not believe that her husband's appointment to Tehran — he had refused Richard Nixon's offer of Moscow on the grounds that his CIA background would make that post unworkable — fueled anti-American feelings there, as some Helms critics believe. "A few radicals might have been against Dick but they were essentially anti-western feelings, against anything that took power away from the religious leaders.

"And the shah had become so enamored of his foreign policy role, he no longer listened for domestic discontent."

She shrugs sadly — an observer who felt a need to help, but whose growing sense of helplessness in the face of the Iranian mentality came to dominate her feelings.

It is this that pervades her book, despite its cool style, its arm's length perspective that allows little emotion to show. "I tried not to be gossipy or judgmental," she explains. "Also, when we were there, I couldn't find anything to read about Iran but scholarly treatises — for which I was not then ready — about Shia Islam."

To fill the need for an all-purpose book about Iran, she writes of this branch of the Muslim religion and of the importance of the mullahs, of Iranian history — entwined with the thread of their own lives in that American compound where the age-old practice of diplomatic immunity was soon to be threatened as never before.

"Do not step on a Persian carpet or a mullah because it increases their value" is an old saying, she uses as a chapter introduction. By the end of

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PARADE MAGAZINE
THE WASHINGTON POST
15 March 1981

PARADE'S SPECIAL intelligence report

BECAUSE OF VOLUME OF MAIL RECEIVED, PARADE REGRETS IT CANNOT ANSWER QUERIES

by LLOYD SHEARER ©1981

Who Goofed? Now that

our 52 hostages have been home nearly two months, Congressional committees will surely be asking some key questions about U.S.-Iran relations. For starters, here are two.

Question No. 1: Why did Jimmy Carter succumb to the appeals of Henry Kissinger and David Rockefeller and permit the late Shah to enter this country on Oct. 22, 1979—especially when he had previously been cautioned not to do so by Charge d'Affaires Bruce Laingen, our man on-the-spot in Tehran?

"We should not take any steps in the direction of admitting the Shah until such time as we have been able to prepare an effective and essential force for the protection of the embassy," Laingen reported. "We have the impression that the threat to U.S. personnel is less now than it was in the spring... Nevertheless, the danger of hostages being taken in Iran will persist."

Did Jimmy Carter goof when his humanitarian considerations for the medical care of the Shah overruled his humanitari-

an considerations for the safety of our embassy staff in Tehran?

Question No. 2: Who during the Nixon-Kissinger and Ford-Kissinger Administrations was responsible for the inexcusable intelligence failure to discover the Shah's cancer? In retrospect, that may have been the single most glaring sin of omission in the entire tragedy.

Under four different directors—Richard Helms, James Schlesinger, William Colby and Stansfield Turner—our CIA was unable to learn or detect the truth about the Shah's health.

In 1972, when this reporter was in Tehran with Nixon and Kissinger, the rumor of the Shah's malady was rife. A year later, Cynthia Helms, wife of then-U.S. Ambassador to Iran Richard Helms, heard the gossip: "I remember it well, but none of us could verify it. I saw the Shah on numerous occasions. To my eyes, he looked well and fit, and he kept denying the rumors of his illness. It's incredible that our government couldn't learn the truth."

As far back as 1973, French doctors diagnosed the Shah's illness as a form of blood cancer and began to treat him. The French intelligence service is notorious for wiretapping, and it is difficult to believe that if Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon—men also not averse to the use of wiretaps—had seriously wanted a valid report on the state of the Shah's health, they could not have obtained it.

For years we backed a Shah who knew he was terminally ill but refused to tell us.

At this stage of the game, the American public is entitled to learn the truth about the American experience in Iran. Hopefully, a Congressional committee will supply it.

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March/April 1981

SABOTAGING THE DISSIDENT PRESS

The untold story of
the secret offensive
waged by the U.S.
government against
antiwar publications

by ANGUS MACKENZIE

The American public has learned in the last few years a great deal about the government's surveillance of the left during the Vietnam War era. The report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (the Church committee) first suggested how widely the government had been involved in planting informants inside New Left groups, propagating false information about these groups, and using a variety of tactics to disrupt their activities. That such tactics were also used on a vast scale against dissenting magazines and the underground press, however, has not been reported in a comprehensive way. The story has lain scattered in a hundred places. Now, documents obtained by editors and writers under the Freedom of Information Act, and interviews with former intelligence agents, make it possible, for the first time, to put together a coherent — though not necessarily complete — account of the federal government's systematic and sustained violation of the First Amendment during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The government's offensive against the underground press primarily involved three agencies — the CIA, the FBI, and the Army. In many cases, their

activities stemmed from what they could claim were legitimate concerns. The CIA's Operation CHAOS, for example, was set up to look into the foreign connections of domestic dissidents; however, it soon exceeded its mandate and became part of the broad attack on the left and on publications that were regarded as creating a climate disruptive of the war effort. At its height, the government's offensive may have affected more than 150 of the roughly 500 underground publications that became the nerve centers of the antiwar and countercultural movements.

A telling example of this offensive was the harassment of Liberation News Service, which, when opposition to the Vietnam War was building, played a key role in keeping the disparate parts of the antiwar movement informed. By 1968, the FBI had assigned three informants to penetrate the news service, while nine other informants regularly reported on it from the outside. Their reports were forwarded to the U.S. Army's Counterintelligence Branch, where an analyst kept tabs on LNS founders Ray Mungo and Marshall Bloom, and to the Secret Service, the Internal Revenue Service, the Navy, the Air Force, and the CIA. The FBI also attempted to discredit and break up the news service through various counterintelligence activities, such as trying to make LNS appear to be an FBI front, to create friction among staff members, and to burn down the LNS office in Washington while the staff slept upstairs. Before long, the CIA, too, joined the offensive; one of its recruits began filing reports on the movements of LNS staff members while reporting for the underground press to establish his cover as an underground journalist.

The CIA was apparently the first federal agency to plan actions against underground publications. Its Operation CHAOS grew out of an investigation of *Ramparts* magazine, which during the

rectorate of Plans (its "dirty tricks" department) assigned to counterintelligence agent Richard Ober the task of "pulling together information on *Ramparts*, including any evidence of subversion [and] devising proposals for counteraction." While those proposals remain secret, several details relating to the *Ramparts* operation have become known.

On February 1, an associate of Ober's met with Thomas Terry, assistant to the commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, to request that the IRS review *Ramparts'* corporate tax returns to determine who the magazine's backers were. Terry agreed to do so. Subsequently, Ober's office provided the IRS with "detailed informant information" about *Ramparts* backers, whom the IRS was requested to investigate for possible tax violations. Ober's investigation of the magazine uncovered no "evidence of subversion" or ties to foreign intelligence agencies. By August, however, it had produced a computerized listing of several hundred Americans, about fifty of whom were the subject of detailed files.

In August, too, Ober's mandate was expanded as the CIA, responding to pressure from President Johnson, ini-

Angus Mackenzie is a free-lance writer in northern California. Editorial assistance was provided by Jay Peterzell of the Center for National Security Studies, which also provided research assistance. The article was financed in part by the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

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