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INFOCUS

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A military sedan moves easily down a one-way, residential street in Santiago, Chile. It is morning, a little after 8, on Oct. 22, 1970.

Gen. Rene Schneider, chief of Chile's army, is on his way to the De-

Last of five articles.

fense Ministry downtown, determined to take further steps to insure that the military stays neutral in the political power struggle going on.

Suddenly his sedan is cut off by another car. Two young men jump out of the other auto, one carrying a small sledge-hammer, the other a .45-caliber pistol.

A rear window of Schneider's car is broken, and one of the youths reaches in and fires the pistol repeatedly — at least five times. The general is hit as he tries to draw his own pistol. Wounded in the chest, neck and right hand, Schneider lingers for three days, then dies.

Five men, some of whom are known to be associated with extreme rightist political groups, are the prime suspects.

"ALL THESE people have been trained by the CIA . . . The CIA is the moral author of this crime," a Chilean senator charges. He is Aniceto Rodriguez, secretary-general of the Socialist party — part of the left-wing coalition, including Communists, that put Dr. Salvador Allende Gossens into the presidency of Chile.

Two days after the shooting of Schneider, the Chilean Congress approves Allende, making him the first Marxist president in Latin America.

Three years later — on Sept. 11, 1973, — Allende himself is dead, shot in a military coup.

Somewhere in all of this — it is not yet clear exactly where and how deeply — the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency was, indeed, involved. So was "Track II." And so was Richard Helms.

'Track II,' the Anti-Allende Plot, and How It Worked

The charmed life of Richard Helms—Part 5

When Allende came to power, Helms was director of the CIA and thus was a key man in carrying out the anti-Allende plot known as "Track II." By the time Allende died, Helms had left the CIA to be U.S. ambassador to Iran, but "Track II" may still have been in effect, in some form.

IT IS NOT settled, even yet, whether "Track II" worked or failed. Schneider died, but the death of that key opponent of military overthrow did not keep Allende out of office. The seeds of plotting sown in 1970,

nevertheless, may have grown into the coup three years later.

What is settled, and quite clearly now, is that the whole Chile episode is a continuing problem for Helms, maybe his most serious.

If he is charged with the crime of lying to congressional committees, it most likely would be over his testimony on Chile.

The Chilean operation and its aftermath have become symbols in the three years of revelations about the CIA — and about Richard Helms.

Perhaps no secret U.S. intelligence "operation" has been so deeply and frequently probed. For many, it illustrates the lengths to which an

American president will go in trying to deal with foreign adversaries. It also shows the degree to which the CIA has been put to work by presidents to get results overseas that no president would try to justify publicly at home.

IN THE CIA's annals, the Chilean operation is not an isolated entry. The agency has done similarly bold things at other times against other adversaries.

None of those plots, however, stands out in Helms' career as do the one involving Chile.

See HELMS.

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He recalled later that, at a White House meeting Sept. 15, 1970, on the Chile problem, he got as sweeping a mandate as he had ever had. "If I ever carried a marshal's baton in my knapsack out of the Oval Office, it was that day."

The CIA had, in fact, been turned loose by the president himself, Richard M. Nixon. Helms' handwritten notes on the meeting in the Oval Office read:

House aide, and his deputy at the time, Alexander M. Haig, have insisted that a decision was made on Oct. 15 to stop the coup plan, and that they thus knew nothing about a plot to kidnap Schneider or about the supplying of money or weapons. CIA aides disagreed with that version, saying

Valenzuela was not supposed to be turned off — only Viaux — and that they kept the White House fully informed on the whole plan.

MILITARY PLOTTERS in Chile did make two unsuccessful attempts to kidnap Schneider, and U.S. officials were aware of these. Then, Schneider was killed in the third attempt to abduct him.

"American officials," the Senate committee concluded, "did not desire or encourage Schneider's death. Certain high officials did know, however, that the dissidents planned to kidnap Gen. Schneider . . . The possibility of his death should have been recognized as a foreseeable risk of his kidnapping."

One who did know was Helms. It is unlikely at this stage that he will be charged with violating any law because of his direct role with Track II or other parts of the Chilean operation. His legal problem, rather, arises out of what he has told senators about all of this.

On Feb. 7, 1973, he appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to testify on his nomination to be ambassador to Iran. The senators wanted to know about Chile, among other things.

Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., asked: "Did you try in the Central Intelligence Agency to overthrow the government of Chile?"

Helms: "No, sir."

Symington: Did you have any money passed to the opponents of Allende?"

Helms: "No, sir."

On March 16, 1973, he appeared before a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee investigating the Chilean operation. The subcommittee chairman, Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho (now the Intelligence Committee's chairman), asked Helms: "Up to the time that the Congress of Chile cast its vote installing Allende as the new president, did the CIA attempt in any way to influence that vote?"

Helms: "What vote?"

Church: "The vote of the Congress."

Helms: "No, sir."

IN APRIL 1974, CIA Director William E. Colby secretly informed a House

subcommittee that the Nixon administration had had an \$8 million program between 1970 and 1973 to try to undermine the Allende regime.

Some eight months later, on Dec. 19, 1974, Colby paid a visit to then-Acting Atty. Gen. Laurence H. Silberman to inform the Justice Department that Helms may have committed perjury in his 1973 testimony. Colby apparently decided to make that contact voluntarily, after the CIA had finished a probe of its own into past agency activities, including the Chilean episode.

Helms came before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee again a month later — Jan. 22, 1975. It was a closed session. He was asked about what he had said in reply to Symington two years before, and he answered:

"As far as the earlier statement is concerned, whether the agency tried to overthrow the government of Chile, I answered, 'No.' I believe that is true. If it has been alleged differently by someone else, I would appreciate having it."

He volunteered: "If the agency had really gotten in behind the other candidates and spent a lot of money and so forth, the election might have come out differently."

HE ALSO SAID that the idea of bribing members of the Chilean Congress to get them to vote against Allende was considered "quite unworkable" in 1970. He testified: "Allende had this all wrapped up, it was put in the bag, and there was nothing that was going to change it."

In addition, Helms told the senators:

"As best I recall, a very secret probe was made to find out whether there was anything in Chile that looked like a force that would overthrow Allende. The Allende government was not even in at the time the probe was made; just to see if there were any forces there to oppose Allende's advent as president. It was very quickly established there were not and therefore no further effort was

made along those lines, to the best of my knowledge, at least I know of none."

He did concede to the committee that day that he had withheld information at the 1973 hearings, saying that "at that time, Allende's government was in power in Chile and we did not need any more diplomatic incidents . . . I felt obliged to keep some of this stuff, in other words, not volunteer a good deal of information."

A month later, Justice Department officials acknowledged that they were investigating Helms for possible perjury.

A HELMS associate now offers a simple defense for him: "He had a feeling that these weren't his secrets to give."

There is no indication that Helms is in any other legal trouble because of any of the plots involving possible "elimination" of foreign leaders. There has been some suggestion that a variety of U.S. treaty commitments may have been violated by some of these activities, but it would be rare for the government to prosecute because of that.

Helms, like other CIA officials who had some role with the plots, has been drawing heavy criticism from members of Congress and in the press over the assassination issue. That is the one issue on which Helms has allowed himself to lose his temper in public — a most uncharacteristic blowup that continues to puzzle some of his closest friends.

It happened last April 28, after Helms had finished a long session with the Rockefeller Commission during its probe of the CIA. As he walked down a corridor, pursued by reporters, he confronted CBS reporter Daniel Schorr and shouted at him: "Killer Schorr! Killer Schorr!"

Schorr had been reporting that the CIA had been involved in assassination plots, and also had been pursuing Helms somewhat aggressively, trying for an interview on the subject.

HELMS' OUTBURST, whether spontaneous or calculated, did seem to re-

fect the frustration that he and many former colleagues feel over the assassination question.

Focus on plots to kill leaders such as Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, Rafael Trujillo, Ngo Dinh Diem, and Gen. Schneider, intelligence officers think, misses a key point: any country, including the United States, is going to have an "arsenal" of varied techniques available for use in pursuing its interests beyond its borders.

A Helms colleague comments: "Covert action is a substitute for landing the Marines, or open war."

"If there comes a time," another suggests, "when, after due process, the government decides something is to be done, there ought to be a mechanism to do it. It can't be whistled up at a time something has got to be done. You can't have an organization which doffs its pajamas in the morning and says, 'Today we are going to have a little political action.'"

HAVING A mechanism or capability is distinctly different, many CIA professionals believe, from actu-

ally carrying out a clandestine operation.

Thus, they are not prepared to concede that the critics of assassination planning are, in fact, sincere about attacking actual secret operations. These men tend to doubt that senators and other critics really believe that America can get along without any kind of secret operations.

But the professionals firmly deny that "political action" or other "covert" skirmishes, whether assassination or something else, control what the nation does in intelligence. "The clandestine service runs the political action, not the contrary," says one former CIA official.

Helms' associates say they agree that it is healthy for Congress to study "political action" and decide whether it wants that stopped. But they are at least frustrated, and often angry, at the way this is being done.

"There is a legitimate issue here, but you can look at it without stripping the intelligence capacity naked before its enemies," says a long-time CIA official.

THE SECRET of secret intelligence is now out, and there are many professionals who say they wonder if it can ever be kept again.

"Congress should either relieve us of the responsibility, or give us protection so that we can carry it out. There can be no covert action until Congress organizes itself to deal with the problem of the leak," says a former CIA professional.

Along with the frustration and the anger that now trouble Helms and his old associates, there is sorrow. Part of it seems to be the sense that the old order is passing. The days of the OSS alumni are gone, and Washington seems to feel differently now about patriotism and mobilization for wars.

But another part of the sorrow is a sense of personal rejection. "All of this," says one of Helms' closest friends, "is denigrating all the years that we put in."

No one, apparently, is more sorrowful than Helms. "Dick," says that friend, "has served his country, and now his whole career comes to a sorry end."

(NOTE: Helms declined, through the State Department, to be interviewed for this series. Former associates agreed to interviews, provided that their names not be used.)