

# Helms and the Shah

Longer column, CIA (d).



## Jack Anderson

**T**HERE is startling new evidence that former CIA chief Richard Helms still hasn't learned the lessons of Watergate.

In faraway Iran, where he is now the U.S. ambassador, he has been conspiring with the Shah to suppress an anti-Shah newspaper in the United States.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department appears to be maneuvering strangely to save Helms from a perjury rap.

In the spring of 1973, the Shah was preparing for a July trip to the United States, and he let Helms know that he wanted an orderly reception.

"It occurs to us," Helms cabled the State Department, "that GOI (Government of Iran) is putting us on notice and indirectly suggesting that we tidy up as much as possible anti-Shah elements in US to reduce or avoid untoward incidents or anti-Shah demonstrations during his forthcoming visit to US."

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**I**N THE SAME confidential cable, Helms requested passport information about Nasser Afshar, the publisher of a stridently anti-Shah newspaper. Afshar happens to be an American citizen, and his newspaper, the Iran Free Press, is protected by the Constitution.

Yet the cable indicated that Helms not only intended to pass on to the Shah the information about his critic but that

the State Department had actually been exploring ways of putting Afshar's anti-Shah newspaper out of business.

Cabled Helms: "DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) said that embassy was generally aware of Afshar's activities in US, including Iran Free Press, and agreed that Afshar's performance was scandalous and his efforts to mount anti-Iranian campaign in US extremely unfortunate.

"In fact, in last two years embassy had several times raised with department question whether Iran Free Press could be closed down. Matter had been carefully studied but lawyers had concluded that under US laws there was regrettably no basis for such action."

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**A**LTHOUGH respect for the Constitution ultimately prevailed at the State Department, Helms at least found a way to keep the newspaper out of Iran. Afshar had mailed hundreds of copies of his tabloid to embassy employees in Iran. These copies often were smuggled into the streets of Teheran.

But Helms, in defiance of postal regulations, simply returned all the newspapers to Washington unopened. Each envelope was stamped with the notice: "Refused by addressee. Return to Sender." It is unlikely, of course, that all the addressees suddenly turned down newspapers that they previously had been reading and circulating.