

Helms Defends the C.I.A. As Vital to a Free Society



Associated Press
Richard Helms addresses editors in Washington.

Rare Speech Discloses Some Russians Aided U.S. in Cuban Crisis

APR 15 1971

Excerpts from Helms address will be found on Page 30.

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 14 — The Director of Central Intelligence, Richard Helms, vigorously defended his agency today as necessary to the survival of a democratic society and asked the nation to "take it on faith that we too are honorable men devoted to her service."

Mr. Helms asserted, in his first public address since becoming head of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1966, that "we propose to adapt intelligence work to American society, not vice versa."

He spoke with the specific approval of President Nixon before a luncheon meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

In a footnote to history, Mr. Helms revealed that American intelligence in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis was aided by "a

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number of well-placed and courageous Russians."

He told reporters later that he was alluding not only to Col. Oleg V. Penkovsky, who was identified previously, but also to others who provided information on Soviet missile systems. When asked for their names, Mr. Helms laughed.

Colonel Penkovsky was a Soviet intelligence officer secretly working for the Americans in 1961 and 1962. He was detected in October, 1962, and executed in May, 1963. The publication of his alleged memoirs in the West in 1965 aroused considerable controversy over their authenticity.

Mr. Helms asserted today that United States intelligence would have "a major and vital role in any international agreement to limit strategic arms."

Noting that the Soviet Union had rejected proposals for in-

spection within its territory, Mr. Helms said the United States could undertake an agreement to limit such arms "only if it has adequate intelligence to assure itself that the Soviets are living up to their part."

China Held Police State

At a time when the visit of an American table tennis team to mainland China has generated official hopes for better relations with Peking, Mr. Helms told his audience that "some of our most important intelligence targets lie in totalitarian countries where collection is impeded by the security defenses of a police state—for example, Communist China."

Mr. Helms's rare public appearance today was initiated by Newbold Noyes, editor of The Washington Star and president of the society of editors. When Mr. Helms said he could speak only with the approval of the White House, Mr. Noyes wrote to Herbert G. Klein, the President's director of communications.

Mr. Klein said today that President Nixon had readily approved Mr. Helms's appearance. He said the Administration thought it a good time for the American public to have Mr. Helms explain the role of the C.I.A., since the agency was not under the kind of fire that had been directed toward it in the past.

Mr. Helms noted in his address that in Britain and other European democracies, "it would be unheard of for the head of intelligence services to talk to a nongovernmental group as I am talking to you today."

Dulles Talks Recalled

A spokesman for the C.I.A., in response to an inquiry, said later that Allen Dulles, the Director of Central Intelligence from 1953 to 1961, spoke publicly about twice a year. But he could not recall an instance in which Mr. Dulles's successors, John A. McCone and Adm. William R. Raborn, delivered public addresses. Thus, Mr. Helms's speech was probably the first from an intelligence director in 10 years.

Mr. Helms, who has a reputation as a skilled administrator, said, "There is a persistent and growing body of criticism which questions the need and the propriety for a democratic society to have a Central Intelligence Agency."

"It is difficult for me to agree with this view," he said, "but I respect it. It is quite another matter when some of our critics, taking advantage of the traditional silence of those engaged in intelligence, say things that are either vicious or just plain silly."

No Domestic Functions

Mr. Helms emphasized that the agency had no domestic security functions and had never sought any.

"In short," he said, "we do not target on American citizens."

The agency was discovered in 1967 to have financed several international activities of the National Student Association and to have given subsidies to unions, foundations and publications.

More recently, the agency was implicated in the Government's surveillance of political dissidents in the United States by the testimony of former military intelligence agents given before a Senate subcommittee.

Mr. Helms asserted that the agency had no stake in policy debates.

'Must Not Take Sides'

"We can not and must not take sides," he said. "When there is debate over alternative policy options in the National Security Council, to which he is an adviser, 'I do not and must not line up with either side.'"

If he recommended one solution to a problem, those recommending another would suspect "that the intelligence presentation has been stacked to support my position, and the credibility of C.I.A. goes out the window," he said.

Mr. Helms, after asking that the nation believe that the agency's operations were compatible with democratic principles, said "I can assure you that what I have asked you to take on faith, the elected officials of the United States Government watch over extensively, intensively, and continuously."

He said the National Security Council, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, the Office of Management and Budget and four committees of Congress regularly reviewed the agency's operations, plans and organization.

Reporting Called Lazy

WASHINGTON, April 14 (AP) — Mr. Noyes, in his State of the Press address, told the convention that American newspapers were guilty of lazy and superficial reporting.

"No doubt the Pentagon easily makes suckers of the press, but no more easily than the New Left does," he said. He encouraged efforts to gain "a more sophisticated, a more serious perspective on our jobs."

In another development, members approved having the society "lead a move to secure a national shield law for newsmen," as a protection for the anonymity of news sources.

By voice vote, with a few scattered dissents, the conven-

tion went on record "protesting vigorously the treatment of C.I.A. by a Congressional subcommittee that issued a subpoena in connection with the controversy over the network's documentary on 'The Selling of the Pentagon.'"