

Interview with Richard Helms

by J. Kenneth McDonald

29 September 1982

Mr. Helms' office at K Street, NW, Washington, DC

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Interview with Ambassador Richard Helms
Director of Central Intelligence, July 1966 - February 1973
Date: 29 September 1982
Place: Mr. Helms's office - K Street, N.W., Washington, DC
Interviewer: J. Kenneth McDonald, CIA History Staff

Tape 1, Side 1

A. As I said, I was having breakfast this morning just by chance with the Vice President and for a few moments we discussed the role of the Director of Central Intelligence in the scheme of things in any administration. I recall that John McCone used to feel that he wore two hats. One was as head of the intelligence community and the other was as an adviser in a personal sense to the President on policy matters and on a variety of matters, not only intelligence matters. In other words, anything that he felt that he could make a contribution on. When I became Director I did not pursue that theory nor do I really believe in that theory. I felt that it was the Director's job to stick to intelligence, to what the intelligence community thought. That if I as Director had a view which deviated from the view of my intelligence associates, I had every right to express that view to the President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, but to label it as my view and why I felt differently than my associates. I did not feel I should have a second hat in which I made policy recommendations in the context of the administration's foreign or domestic policy. I feel this way because I think that it is important, particularly with respect to

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foreign information, that [there be] one man in the government who is looking at the facts, sticking to the facts and trying to see to it, and I put this in my own words, that the "game stays honest," (and you want to put that in quotes).

I am relatively certain why I used to be invited to the Tuesday luncheons that President Johnson had. Those Tuesday luncheons were nothing but a device that he invented for getting around the table those people that he wanted around the table to talk high policy, (a) because they were the people that could contribute; (b) they wouldn't leak on him (and he was very concerned about leaks to newspapers, particularly about Vietnamese affairs, which were so big in that time); and, (c) this was the way he could get away from certain people that he did not want to invite, who if he had a National Security Council meeting would have to be allowed to be there, or a cabinet meeting, whatever the case might be. So every Tuesday lunch had an invitation attached to it. In other words, there was no standing guest list. After all, you can't insist that a President ask certain people to his luncheon table that he doesn't want or that [merely] think they have the right to be there. In any event, I felt my role there was as I said, "to keep the game honest." Now what do I mean by that? The Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, in different ways have policies they are pursuing, policies they are attempting to push, policies they are attempting to encourage. And very often they exaggerate, they tilt, they slant the information in

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order to support the particular policy or point of view they are espousing at the time. And the President ought to have one fellow there who knows the facts and who says, "Well no, that isn't the way it is," "I mean you know they didn't say exactly that," or "There aren't that many people on the battle line," or this or that or the other thing, which gives the President then an opportunity to draw back and say to himself, "Well, I just wonder if this policy is going as well as they say it is."

Now I grant you that this is not the kind of a role that leads to your being the top man in a popularity contest. Presidents don't like their policies being shot down by the facts, but a good President obviously is interested in knowing what these facts are, so I think I played a real role for President Johnson in this respect. Obviously, under President Nixon I continued the same thing, but the give and take was not in the same context and it was done in a different way, in writing and so forth, but I never made any policy recommendations. As Kissinger makes clear in his first volume, Nixon was very distrustful of the Director of CIA because he was getting himself into policy, he felt, in the past. And he was distrustful of me to begin with. But as time went on it was quite clear I wasn't attempting to influence the policy mechanism, so I think he came off that issue. But at least there is my point of view, and there is my feeling that a Director should be giving the President the best facts he has about the situation and let the President and

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certain others make policy recommendations. Everybody doesn't have to be a policy-maker in every administration, it seems to me, and there is room for a guy who sticks with the facts and sticks to the consensus of the intelligence people. So now you go ahead with your questions. I just thought this was a relevant point.

Q: That's very much so, and that's along the line I was going to pursue later. If I could ask now, it seems to me that this is a role which in an obvious way goes with having a professional as DCI. As for the other role, not that McCone was political in any pejorative sense, but since he was not an intelligence professional he could feel that he had . . .

A: He was a Republican . . .

Q: He was Republican and he had other experience that he could feel was relevant to the President. But I wonder how far this role depends upon the source of the DCI. If I could ask, how did Mr. Bush feel about this? When he was appointed, of course, he had been chairman of the Republican National Committee and so on. I'm not sure it's fair to say he was . . .

A: I can tell you that this morning he agreed with me--he thought that was the proper role. Obviously we were talking a little bit about Bill Casey and the number of things that he gets involved in--and his "other hat" routine. And I think it was Bush's honest feeling. I don't think that he goes around saying this, but he at least said to me across the table, "I agree with you, I think that's the proper role for the

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Director." I don't think the Director needs to get himself involved in price supports on Iowa agriculture, etc., etc., etc. Whether George would go quite as far as I go, I don't know. But I think he would be more on my side than on the side of John McCone, described as I have described him.

Now I agree with you that this does have something to do with the source from whence the Director comes, and what his base is and so forth. And I must honestly say to you that in the Rockefeller Commission Report I genuinely resented the implication of the recommendation in that report that for a Director to be effective he had to have a political base. I don't think that recommendation makes any sense. And I think if Nelson Rockefeller or any of those other people on the commission had thought about that seriously, they would have realized that they didn't have to like me--I mean there was nothing personal about this--but that what they were in effect saying was that you can't stand up to the President unless you've got a large political base, because otherwise he won't listen to you, or you haven't got the guts to do it. And that was the part of it I resented, because I stood up to Nixon, I stood up to Johnson, and if anybody can tell me any time when I failed to do so I'd appreciate knowing it. And I think that report was written by the staff, and I think a lot of it was not looked at very carefully by the committee members. That fellow, Belin, or whatever his name was, B-E-L-I-N, who was the staff director of the Rockefeller Commission

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Report, and some of the fellows that worked with him on there were politically minded, and I just don't think Nelson Rockefeller and the rest of them paid proper attention to exactly what the implications of these things were. But leaving all that aside, it's just baloney that you have to have a personal fortune or a big political base to have the guts to stand up to a President, and so I never felt that I was disadvantaged by this. They didn't have to put the arm on me that I can ever recollect, either Johnson or Nixon. And when I opposed them, sure, sometimes they got angry and you know we'd have a tussle, but I think that this idea that it helps you in that situation to have some kind of a political base or financial fortune so that you're not afraid to lose your job is really sort of infantile.

Q: I think it is. In fact, perhaps we should put the question the other way around. I think the question is how far is the man who is in the DCI job principally because of his political base vulnerable? How effective can he be?

A: Frankly I think it increases his vulnerability. If I had a long suit, it was quite frankly that I had support in the Congress and both houses from both sides of the aisle. They knew me to be out of politics. They'd known me before, and I believe they trusted me. I think you can go up there and ask those fellows who were chairmen of those committees and they will say, "Yes, we accepted him." In fact people like Fulbright, who didn't agree with me about many things, did admit that I

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was absolutely straightforward and helpful in my testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee, for example. So that was a fellow who would normally be hostile who was speaking up well for my impartiality. And I had lots of support in Congress. There was a time--I don't know whether this is in the papers of the Agency or not, but it is an interesting point--at one juncture President Johnson, I don't know who was advising him, I don't know who snuck up behind him, I don't know who influenced him, but he told me one day he was going to take away the money from Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty that the Agency was putting up year after year in addition to [that provided by] the fund raisers. I was perplexed. I said "What in the world are you doing that for?" He said, "Oh, I think we don't need those things. I've been advised that they're counterproductive and they're interfering with our relations with the East," and so forth. "Well," I said, "Mr. President, this plain isn't true. We can make a very good case for the contribution of these radios," and so forth. And finally in exasperation he said, "All right, look here. If you can go up to Capitol Hill and get the money for those radios without my help--and I'm not going to support you and I want you to tell those congressmen you don't have my support--then you can have the money." So I mean that's a pretty sour ball to be handed, because normally an executive, when you're asking for money, you've got the backing of the President and the Bureau of the Budget, and so forth, and at least you're playing a hand

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they've authorized you to play. In this case I wasn't authorized to use that. I went in to the appropriations chairmen and the minority appropriations people in the House and Senate, I talked over the whole business with them, I pointed out the President was not backing me, that I thought these radios were important, and so forth--and I got the money. Now, I don't think you would do those things if you're so political that the minority people say, "Well, not with me!" and it took the votes of certainly a Republican and a Democrat to get the money. At least that. So I think there are some cockeyed ideas about this business of who can be Director and who can't be Director.

Q: Would it be fair to say, sir, that the essence of this, the essential quality, is to have the confidence of the President, and that the . . .

A: Well that's absolutely basic, I mean that's requirement number one. If you don't have the confidence of the President you shouldn't have the job. In other words, I felt that while Johnson had appointed me even though I was not not terribly well known to him, I was at least a known quantity around town, and that until I demonstrated that I did not deserve his confidence, I had his confidence. And after all, everybody in the executive branch is an appointee at the top level. And how can the President know everybody personally? He can't--so he has got to have a trust in them until they demonstrate to the contrary that they're not trustworthy. And Johnson always backed me. He backed me against the press, against congressmen and so forth. So I think I earned it. I

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think I demonstrated to him, even when we had a fight, that I was at least honest about my point of view and I stood up to him, I didn't take a lot of back talk from him. We had a couple of shouting matches early in the administration, and after we got those out of our system we got along very smoothly thereafter. But I think he discovered that I was not a patsy, and that I was going to tell him the truth as I saw it. And even when he didn't like it, he would sort of grunt and say, "Well all right, if that's what you feel."

So the confidence of the President is absolutely basic. Then you've got to have the confidence of the Congress, and you should have it on both sides of the aisle if you possibly can. And the more of that you have, the better off you are, particularly in the works of the Agency where the whole establishment is never going to get briefed, they're never going to know what is going on. That's a hazard you run, but there is nothing you can do about it. I remember trying, at one point during President Johnson's administration, to broaden my contacts on Capitol Hill outside of the committees that I reported to, because I thought these people don't know about the Agency. They would have a better feeling about it if they knew a little bit more about what was going on. And Senator Russell, who at that time was the chairman of the combined Appropriations and Armed Services Committee that ran the affairs of the CIA in the Senate, said, "I don't want you wandering around Capitol Hill. Now we've got this thing set up, and if you want

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my support then you just report to this committee and you just confine your reports to our committee," so forth. That gave me no choice, because Senator Richard Russell was so powerful that if he'd withdrawn his support we would have had no support, since a lot of the Senate would have gone right along with him. So it's difficult, but now that you've got, for the first time in history, a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and a House Select Committee on Intelligence, you've got the right kind of statutory and congressional underpinning. There isn't any reason why relations with the Congress shouldn't be kept on a reasonably even keel. We never had that before.

Q: No, that's true. I think there seems to be a general feeling in the Agency that this is a great advance to have this . . .

A: No question about it.

Q: . . . in a formal, systematic way. Well, on the business of confidence, I asked some questions of Mr. Schlesinger when I talked with him about this and about the sort of qualities a DCI needs. His opinion is very much like yours, that people have to have confidence in your honesty and in your professional competence. If they have that, you can operate. If you lack either of those, especially the honesty . . .

A: Oh no, I mean that lying to congressmen is just a very bad idea indeed. It's going to get you nowhere. Sometimes telling the truth gets you in trouble because they don't like it and they want to make something out of it, but if you lose your integrity with them you've lost everything,

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because after all, what else are you trading in? You're not trading in money, you're not trading in paper, you're not trading in anything. You're not doing much for them, and as a matter of fact, in many respects you're a hazard for them politically. They hate to be hand-in-hand with some clandestine operation. So that's part of the trouble the Agency has had in the past, that the Senate didn't want to know about these things. They weren't dying to know, they didn't want to know.

I've had many of them say, "Oh, do you have to tell me that?" [laughter]

Q: I should mention we have a new historian who joined us a month or so ago and I put him to work organizing a prospectus for a study of the Agency's relations with Congress from the founding of the Agency, which I think will be useful.

A: Very useful and, as a matter of fact, it will be very revealing because you will find that some of the troubles that the Agency got into were as the result of congressional desires, screw-ups in Congress, lack of attention to the Agency matters, the competition between senators and antagonism between senators which kept them from holding hearings because Stennis didn't want Symington to be there, and so forth--things of this kind. You will find that it plays quite a role, and if the fellow wants to come and talk to me sometime I'll be glad to spend an hour with him because a lot of this I do remember.

Q: Oh, that would be grand. That would be very helpful because he would like to do that.

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A: The fellows that know the most about it are Pforzheimer and John Warner, Jack Maury--they're the ones that really know about our relations with the Congress, but I've got some embroidery, if you like, which might be useful.

Q: He'll probably be talking with those people but it would be very helpful to have some of your comments. I should mention before--how's your time, sir?

A: No, I'm all right.

Q: I thought I'd mention some of these things that John Bross may have passed on to you. Dick Lehmann is undertaking the study of Mr. Colby's period as DCI, a comparable study to this. I'm working on the Schlesinger study, so we have these three underway now.

A: Schlesinger was there for such a brief time that at least you don't have too onerous of a chore.

Q: That's right--it's short but . . .

A: He made this views fairly clear.

Q: It's a short but lively six months that he was there. I wanted to ask you a few questions this morning. A bit on the background of the period before your becoming DCI, partly for my own benefit. A lot of this wouldn't appear in the study itself, but is just to give me some background. I wanted to ask you about some of the people, some of your colleagues, and some of the people in Congress and the Executive side.

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A: How long does this machine run, do you know?

Q: It runs 45 minutes. It has a beeper at the end so it should make a nasty noise when it comes to the end.

A: You've only been here 20 minutes so it can't possibly . . .

Q: It should be good for 25 more. I read through the David Frost transcripts that you gave the Agency. Those are very interesting and I could see he had a man in the other room, I guess, watching the time, who keeps appearing now and again. Frost says, "How are we?" and this voice appears . . .

A: Oh, this was done in a hotel room here and it was very fancy color. They had a whole room full of equipment, and people modulating the equipment and so forth, so that this was a very expensive production. I don't know whether you've looked at the tape I sent . . .

Q: No, I know that we have the tape, I know that you gave the tape, but . . .

A: You might enjoy looking at ten minutes of it or so sometime just to see what was going on there . . .

Q: That would be fun. Yes, we have it but I haven't organized to do that; but I have read the transcripts which are very interesting. Starting back in your school days, I've been curious how you happened to study at Le Rosey and Freiburg before you went off to Williams.

A: Well, my father in early 1929 decided to resign from the position that he had with the Aluminum Company of America, and to take the whole

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family to Europe for a year, on the theory that it would be a good educational experience for his four children. He was very anxious that we learn a foreign language, and French seemed to be the sensible foreign language to take, at least when seen from the vantage point of the 1920's. So it was [out of] his desire to aid our educational process that he decided to do this for a year. Well, that was how I happened to go to Le Rosey, but by the time that year was over the crash had come, and the possibility of his getting a job either with his old company or with some other company was pretty remote at that particular time. So we returned to Europe again, and this time we went to Germany. Now the reason for settling in Freiburg was that it was relatively close to Switzerland. It was in that year that my grandfather, Gates McGarrah, who was a banker in New York, was made the first President of The Bank for International Settlements, which was just being founded in Basel. So that put us near my mother's mother and father, and made a nice family arrangement. It also gave us an opportunity to go to a German school and learn some German, so that's how all that happened.

Q: That's interesting--Freiburg's a lovely place.

A: I never graduated from a school in the United States. I had no school diploma, so the only way I could get into college was to take the College Boards because--you're too young to remember this--but in those days you could get into college by getting 15 points on the College

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Boards taken over a period of time--so many points for this exam, that exam and the other thing. When you got 15 you qualified for college. So two years in a row I took the College Boards in Geneva, Switzerland, and got the 15 points I needed to get into Williams.

Q: Why did you happen to go to Williams?

A: Well the reason I went to Williams was simple enough. The older brothers of a great friend of mine as a kid went to Williams, and they used to tell me about it. It sounded marvelous, terrific, and so actually I went there sight unseen. I had never been to Williamstown when I went there.

Q: You've never regretted it?

A: No, I never have. As a matter of fact so many members of my family have gone there since--it's funny. Both my brothers went there, their sons went there, my sister's sons went there. I mean there has been a long galaxy of Helmses ever since.

Q: What did you major in?

A: I had a joint major of English and history. Another fellow and I, a doctor--as a matter of fact he became a famous surgeon named Henry Swan of Denver, Colorado--and I decided to take a course in American literature and American history together. I mean two courses, but we persuaded the faculty. This was in the days before this kind of thing was routine--it was very unusual. You were either an English major or a history major or political science major--but we wanted to combine the

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two and we persuaded the faculty to go along with us. Williams had an honors work program where you had one professor and you studied a certain subject with him the whole year. Those were the glories of a small college and a big enough faculty. So in the junior year we took American history course and then we took American literature with one teacher--the two of us. We met for an hour a week, he gave assignments, and then the next year, as I recall it, we took a course in English literature [telephone interruption]. Then in the senior year we did something comparable. I've forgotten exactly how we structured it, but it was the same kind of arrangement and I enjoyed it. So that was my major. And Swan, who graduated first in his class at the Harvard Medical School subsequently, did this because he was a bright guy and he figured this was his one chance to learn something about the humanities. So he just took the minimum pre-medical courses and specialized in these others. As far as I was concerned, I didn't know what I was going to be doing, so I went along with it. We were both good students so it wasn't too much of a problem.

Q: Was James Phinney Baxter president?

A: No, for three years of my undergraduate life Harry A. Garfield, the son of the President of the United States, was the President of Williams, then Tyler Dennett. My senior year Dennett was President, and he remained two years after that. Then James Phinney Baxter came. But I knew James Phinney Baxter because he was the alumni president of the

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honorary society called "Gargoyle," and I was the undergraduate president of the honorary society, so we became acquainted in that context. He was then head of Adams House.

Q: Harvard--a great man.

A: No doubt about it. And he was the one, you know, that started off the research and analysis branch of OSS.

Q: That's right. I did know that.

A: He was Langer's predecessor.

Q: Ah yes, he wrote, just before this time, that really landmark work on the introduction of the steel battleship. I can't remember the exact title, but it's a great book.

A: Oh, he's a first rate fellow, Baxter, no doubt about it.

Q: You then took up journalism?

Helms - Tape 1 Side 2

A: Yes, I then got a job with the United Press. I was hired in London, and I was in London two or three months and then I couldn't get a work permit. It was the depths of the depression and even the United Press couldn't get me a work permit through the British government. So I was transferred to their Berlin bureau. I spent the rest of my time with the United Press at the Berlin bureau, and I had a fascinating time. Lord, I attended the Reichstag the day Hitler announced the occupation of the Rhineland. I saw both Olympic Games in 1936, both winter and

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summer. I was at lunch with Hitler in the fall of 1936 at Nuremburg. And, you know, for a young fellow aged 23 I had quite an experience.

Q: Yes, now that's marvelous. I've read some of your comments on this. This is an amazing way to start a journalistic career. Well, the media has given the Agency a hard time in recent years. Was this experience in journalism of any help in getting empathy with their . . .

A: Oh, I thought it did. When I became Deputy Director and Director I used to have frequent lunches, breakfasts, so forth, with individual newspaper men. I could see their point of view and what their problem was, and so forth. It didn't help with my problems except to give me an understanding of what their interests were, what their tactics were likely to be, why they felt the way they did. I could accommodate to that, I thought, and I don't think that during the time I was Director I got a bad press. I mean if you look back over it, I don't think the Agency was being pummeled very much by the newspapers of that period. It was later that the troubles began.

Q: Yes, that's true. There's a little spate in '67, the Ramparts . . .

A: That was the explosion about the National Students' Association. But that rather subsided, and one of the reasons that subsided as quickly as it did was that both Richard Russell and Robert Kennedy, within a week's time, spoke up and said that they'd both known about the support of the National Students' Association. So on both the conservative and liberal side the thing sort of went out to sea. I mean there wasn't very much

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to complain about anymore. So then it was not too bad. It went along relatively quietly after that. Of course, in connection with it there was some exposure of other proprietaries of the Agency. And I remember one day the [Washington] Post came up with a kind of a diagram showing all these various tie-ins, but it didn't seem to lead to a lot of anti-Agency criticism. In other words it sort of went overboard and was finished. It obviously was sad, because a lot of these proprietaries were very useful, but it led in turn to that commission that President Johnson set up, chaired by Nicholas Katzenbach, with John Gardner and and me as the two members. [The issue was] what we were going to do about these proprietaries and what we were going to do about these support organizations. The Katzenbach Committee made a report, and after that [criticism] really subsided, I think, for quite some time. That Katzenbach report is available--it's easy to find. I think one of the reasons the commission was set up that way, somebody told me, I don't know how accurately,--or maybe I read it in Cord Meyers' book, Facing Reality--but when Johnson set up that commission he said to somebody, "Helms and Gardner will never agree about a thing, so Katzenbach can sit there and wisely listen to it and make some sense out of it." Well, actually, what was odd about that arrangement was that Gardner and I had shared an office together in the OSS, and we'd been friends ever since. So there was no antagonism there. I think there was one little flare-up over a difference of opinion about what would

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happen if you did "X" or if you did "Y", otherwise we are still friendly to this day.

Q: Was Mr. Gardner Secretary of HEW at that time?

A: Oh no, no. The time that we're talking about was--wait a minute--honestly I don't want to--all I know was that he was not in the government at the time. Now I can't remember whether it was before he was Secretary of HEW or after he was Secretary of HEW. [Note: Mr. Gardner was in fact Secretary of HEW when he served on the Katzenbach Committee.]

Q: I'm obviously fuzzy on that too.

Well, you were a journalist at the time of appeasement before the Second World War. One of the allegations that's often made about the intervention in Vietnam is that so many of the people who were, like you, of that generation that had grown up in a time of appeasement in the late 30's thought that they had learned a lesson of history, and wanted to draw a line in Vietnam on the analogy of drawing a line against Hitler. How much justice do you think there is in that kind of. . .

A: Well, I suppose that a case can be made of that kind, but it seems to me that it is a circumstantial case. I never recall these things ever being mentioned in all the debates about Vietnam. And certainly, as far as I personally was concerned, I didn't feel that one was necessarily relevant--I mean, sure, you learned a lesson from Hitler and you learned

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a lesson from Chamberlain's appeasement policy, but to turn that around and think that the situation in Vietnam was necessarily analogous I think really strains credulity a bit. The problem in Vietnam was different. Did you want that part of the world taken over by the so-called Communist forces? And Vietnam, in the person of Diem at that time was asking for help from the free world to keep Communists from taking over South Vietnam. It was a perfectly reasonable request it seemed to most of us. Now George Ball, arguing against the Vietnamese war, argued this in an entirely different way. It had very little to do with appeasement or non-appeasement, or anti-communism or pro-communism. It had to do with the effects this was having and was likely to have, and whether you could fight this war effectively or not.

Q: That makes sense. Well, let's see. In your experience in OSS in the Second World War, how was it that you happened to get into OSS?

A: Well, I was a lieutenant (j.g.) in the Navy at the time--I guess I was a lieutenant (j.g.) still--and I was serving in anti-submarine warfare at the Eastern Sea Frontier in New York. And one day--we worked a strange schedule in the Eastern Sea Frontier--we worked two days from eight to four, we worked two days from four to midnight, we worked two days from midnight to eight o'clock in the morning, and then we got two days off. During one of these days off when I was out in my home in Orange, New Jersey, I got a telephone call from the man in charge, the captain, a four-striper in charge of the whole anti-submarine warfare operation,

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and he wanted to see me, and he wanted to see me right away. So I jumped on the train and went in to see him. And he said "What's the meaning of this?" and he threw me a dispatch across the table, which was detaching me from the Eastern Sea Frontier and assigning me to an address in Washington which the Navy knew to be the Office of Strategic Services--I've forgotten exactly what the rubric was. He said, "Why do you want to leave this command?" I said, "Look, Captain Stapler, I don't want to leave the command. I haven't said anything. I haven't indicated that I wanted to leave." "Well, don't lie to me," he said. "Well," I said, "I don't even know that I want to take this assignment." "Well," he said, "that isn't going to be your choice. That's going to be my choice. The Navy's going to decide whether you're going to take the assignment or not." In any event, I was detached and I came down to Washington. I went around to report to the OSS to the man who had put this into the mill, who turned out to be a lieutenant commander whose name was Kenneth Hinks, H-I-N-K-S. Kenneth Hinks had been a friend of my aunt's. But in any event, he immediately told me the story of how I was in the OSS. He had been trying to get a man who was in the office of public relations of the U.S. Navy to be assigned to his planning staff of the OSS. He tried every device that he knew to get him and he had been turned down by the Navy constantly. So he decided to try and draw a profile of the man he wanted, figuring that this profile would only fit that fellow, and that if he sent it over to

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Navy personnel the cards would come out and this would be the fellow that was assigned. Well the cards came out all right, but they came out with three other fellows. One of whom was, I believe, in New Guinea, one was in North Africa and the third was in New York. So it was obvious that the one in New York was the one that was going to be tagged--former newspaper experience, speak French, speak German, you know, that kind of stuff. So that was how I got to the OSS.

Now I knew about the OSS--I had known prior to that about it--because my former boss in the United Press in Berlin, Frederick Oechsner, was in charge of MO, or Morale Operations, in the OSS. He had come to New York at one time while I was in the Navy there and had told me about the OSS, and asked me if I would like to join. I was reasonably content with what I was doing in the Navy and the OSS didn't mean anything particularly to me one way or the other. So I didn't say, yes, I want to volunteer because there was nothing more attractive than that. I thought I was doing a pretty important job in 1942, with ships going down and submarine warfare, you know, every day. My God--they were just being cleaned out of the oceans! So anyway, I was finally assigned, and I was one of the few people that went to the OSS in military uniform who was assigned there. From then on I just went from one thing to another. I was in the planning staff for a time--that's where I shared my office with John Gardner. Then I went to work for Ferdinand Meyer, who was the SI of OSS working on penetration of

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Germany--he had a kind of one-man desk and I went as his assistant.

Then I went into the Scandinavian Central-European Branch and from there I then went overseas. So that was the way I went along. And then I stayed in afterwards, in SSU, CIG.

Q: CIG, and never looked back . . .

A: Never looked back. That's right--enjoyed it all.

Q: The OSS, from everything that I've heard and read, must have been an incredible place, with the talent that they had.

A: You know, it's an interesting thing about the OSS. If you look it straight in the eye you have remarkable talent, but the things it contributed were really not all that large in the scale of things. There were an awful lot of brainy people running around, and there were a lot of able people and so forth, but General Donovan was not a great organizer. He was a charismatic personality, if you like, and people liked to work for him, but if you really look honestly at what the OSS contributed to the winning of World War II, it really isn't all that much. I think probably the element of OSS that made the most consistent contribution was the research and analysis branch, where all of these academicians were brought together and expatriates, people of that kind; expatriates--I don't mean expatriates, I mean refugees, emigres and so forth from Europe, that area. It was a very brainy bunch who really did some remarkable studies on various aspects of the economy of Europe and so on, which really did contribute to the war effort. But I think most

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of the "derring-do" of the OSS reads better in books than it does if you were a general wondering about how you're going to win the war.

Q: A lot of romance, then?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes--it's a major industry. One of the accusations that was made, particularly around about your time, was that CIA, coming out of OSS as its progenitor, that CIA by that time was dominated by a sort of OSS "old boy" net. What do you think of it?

A: Well I think that that is a rather unattractive way to describe the fact that the CIA leaned on the experience gained by a group of men who had worked in the OSS. That's the way I would phrase that. Also, I think that it did bring along with it a certain cast of mind. For example, when I came back from Iran after all the . . . [end of side 1]

Helms, Tape 1, Side 2

. . . I was just going to say that I was invited to go to Harvard to spend the evening with a panel, the name of which I have now forgotten--it can be determined if it's of any interest to you, we can get the composition of the panel, and so forth. But it was a group studying ethics in government, and there were people from the departments of religion, political science, and law. The wife of Derek Bok, who has written a book on lying, she was there, and Barney Frank, who was then--I don't know--in politics in Boston, was there and so forth. They took me over the coals about my testimony before the

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Senate--the testimony which led to so much difficulty later on. And I simply went through, very carefully and clearly, what had happened, why I did what I did, the fact that I didn't seem to have any options; and I went into my background in the OSS and so forth. Well, this is relevant to this point here because there was feeling on the part of a lot of people that we in the Agency, in the earlier days particularly, got into some rough stuff. Well, if you had been brought up to fight the Germans--and this was regarded as almost a holy war against Nazism--and were taught close combat the way we were taught at the OSS schools, where there were no holds barred and you did the meanest thing to kill that other guy that you could think of--if you were brought up in that tradition and then along come the Russians who seemed to be a pretty rough lot too, and who were also selling a form of ideology that we don't like, you would expect us to fight them pretty hard in the gutters of the world, if you like; and this is what we did. Well, an American generation that was all in favor of flowers, brotherly love and all the rest of it, didn't appreciate that very much, and that is one of the reasons I think the Agency was criticized for what it had done in those years. But to us it was a perfectly natural thing to do--if you've got to fight a guy, you fight him, and you fight to win, you don't fight to lose. There are no good losers. Losers are dead people. So to that extent I think the OSS influence is probably with all of us. You know you're not in there to lose.

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Q: Well, I think that the Second World War is still a sort of touchstone for many of us--it's still the war, the one that one thinks of. It makes one sort of nostalgic sometimes, the unity and so on at that time.

A: Right.

Q: That reminds me though, that early in the second war somebody stopped Churchill--in fact it was an American officer, a naval officer. He said that something Churchill had said in a recent speech didn't seem to jibe with what he knew to be true. Churchill drew himself up and said, "Sir, I've lied many times for my country in the past and I expect to lie for it many more times in the future." [Laughter] The sort of candor only Churchill could get away with, I think.

So you never really considered leaving the intelligence business once you . . . ?

A: No. I was very interested in it. I even looked at my re-employment rights for the Scripps-Howard newspapers, and could have had my job back after the war, of course, but I just decided that was no competitor for the interest I found in intelligence. I was fascinated by it and, even in those dark days in the SSU [Strategic Services Unit] when we didn't know whether we were ever going to be picked up by anybody or had any future at all, it still seemed to me to be a very worthwhile enterprise, and I believe it to be to this day. In fact, in the modern context of 1982, if we have got to improve the quality of the intelligence, we've got to improve the range of the intelligence, the net that we throw out

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because, after all, in the years right after the war the United States was the predominant, preeminent power in the world. Our gross national product and so forth was tremendous, and we had vast assets. We had a big edge in nuclear weapons and therefore it was really a question of where you would put the money and how you would lean on some foreign country to do what you wanted them to do. Now, that's all frittered away. We don't have such a big block on the board anymore. In fact, I was reading a speech that Kissinger gave the other day to the Georgetown Center [for Strategic and International Studies] in which he points out that the United States resources are a much smaller percentage of the world today than they were back in those times. So, our diplomacy is having a tougher time and we are, in other words, playing a diplomatic hand with the other, the European countries, who have been playing it ever since World War II. When we were so preeminent we didn't have to worry much. Now we've got to play a tougher diplomatic hand and the question is, do we have the capacity to do it? The underpinning for that has got to be a much wider net and much better intelligence on a whole host of things like oil production, grain production, and God knows what all.

Q: Well, that's one of the questions I wanted to ask, about the change in the nature of the intelligence business since the cold war period when we had this preeminence, and when the Agency had unquestioned public support, again coming out of that Second World War sort of unity. It

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seems to me your term as DCI was just at the turning point. I think the real turn came just after.

A: I think that's probably true--that the Vietnamese war unquestionably broke down the foreign policy consensus that had obtained in this country pretty much since the days of Senator Vandenberg. That split wasn't necessarily a Democratic-Republican split, it was a split in American society--for the war, against the war. And that unhinged the whole idea of a sort of a consensus--political consensus--in support of foreign policy. This obviously had its immediate effect on the affairs of the Agency, and I think it was one of the reasons that the Congressional investigations of 1975, and so forth, were permitted to go on. Everybody said, "Well, you know, what are those fellows up to?" "What have they been doing?" "Why this, why that?" "Look at this Vietnamese policy. How did we get into that?" So there were a lot of people that were against the war who also figured that this was part of the apparatus which supported it. I don't have any doubt that that helped. How the hearings were handled and how my successors went about these things is not for me to talk about, or whether some of the damage that was done to the Agency could have been obviated if President Ford had shown more courage and more spunk with respect to the Congressional investigations, I don't know; but he certainly didn't get much support from my associate, William Colby. So, anyway... But you are right that it was in the 70's, and I think actually if you sort of try to put this

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down in time, the deluge, if you like, had been held back until after I had left. I think it was after Watergate that the dam finally broke.

Q: Well I think it was that combination of the breakdown in confidence, especially . . .

A: Across the board . . .

Q: Across the board. But your period--if one starts with your period as DDCI under Admiral Raborn, from April '65 to the end of your term as DCI in the beginning of January '73--coincides almost precisely with the period from the American buildup in the spring of '65 to the end of the Vietnam War. So you really--it was your watch that had the whole war.

A: That's right.

Q: And although the war divided the country, as you say, more and more sharply, from what you've said and from what I recollect from what I've read, I have the impression that the Agency was not under fire itself from the public in that period even though the government itself . . .

A: No--no, the Agency was not, that's why I was trying to say that after--that during that period the Agency was not under fire. In '67 along came the National Student Association [revelations] which caused that flare-up, but then as we have described earlier, that flare-up sort of settled down again and things went on and the lid really came off later, after I had departed.

Q: Did you have any feelings of the pressure, of tension building up in this way?

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A: Oh yes, I had. As a matter of fact, Jim Critchfield not all that long ago said, "You know, I remember very well going into your office late one afternoon and your looking out the window and saying, 'Well, all those people going home now, they don't know how good they've had it. There's trouble ahead and there isn't any question that things are going to be a lot tougher from a budget standpoint personnel, criticism, and so forth.'" So I could feel that building up.

Q: Jack Smith is dealing with the whole numbers business of Sam Adams and the CBS report, and so on. I think--I've not read it--but I think he deals with it quite well.

A: I'm sure he does because he is certainly familiar with it.

Q: But were there other problems--not thinking of the specific issue of the count on Vietnam--but were there other problems of people within the Agency, themselves, becoming disillusioned with American foreign policy, and therefore questioning their role within the Agency?

A: Turn that off just one second.

Q: Certainly. [unrecorded passage]

A: The only other matter that I recall where there was significant dissent within the Agency was over operation CHAOS, and I've never been terribly clear on this because it was Tom Karamessines who seemed to have most of this, such as it was, to deal with. But I believe there were some younger officers in the Agency, some of the JOTs, the ones just coming aboard, who [questioned] certain aspects of the effort to collect

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information about the foreign intelligence intrusions into American political life, American anti-war groups, and so forth. I remember his mentioning this to me at one time--it was a management sort of grouping that got together evenings to talk these things over--young people, middle-level, senior people, and so forth. And I believe this thing was handled pretty much within the context of this. It was explained to them why President Johnson, and then later President Nixon, were intensely interested in knowing whether the Cubans or the Russians or anybody was putting money into the antiwar movement, because of all of the trouble it was causing, all the demonstrations, and so on. And it was a pretty hot issue, but that's the only other thing I recall. And that never exploded, as far as I know, into anything like the Adams business.

Q: No, no. Well, I don't think it's ever been a real problem, but I was curious about whether there had been any tension on that. In this period before you became DDCI--let's see, you became DDP in '62--is there a time when you began to feel that your career might have the possibility of taking you to the top? I'm just curious about what your aspirations were, or what . . .

A: Well, I don't--I can't honestly say that. I know that when Frank Wisner, whose deputy I had been for seven years, left, I was hoping, obviously, to get that job. And when Dick Bissell was put in there I was naturally disappointed, but I was interested in the work, I had lots

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to do and I realized that Bissell was the kind of fellow who concentrated on pretty much one thing at a time. So there was a whole organization to run here and I went on running it. When I got to be DDP, I didn't have any sensation of going to the top particularly. I thought I was pretty much at the top when I was DDP. So the fact that I got promoted above that came rather as a surprise to me.

Q: In the year that you worked as DDCI for Admiral Raborn, how did that work out? The general opinion seems to be that Admiral Raborn was less than successful as DCI. What kind of burden, what was your relationship to him and how did you find . . .

A: Well, I had a good relationship with Admiral Raborn. After all, I saw to it. We were appointed at the same time, and the same ceremony--not ceremony, but the same announcement at the LBJ Ranch. We were told by President Johnson to work together. The reason President Johnson made the appointment, he told me quite candidly, was, he said, "You aren't very well known around town and Admiral Raborn is well known. He has a fine relationship with the Congress, because he's the one that built the Polaris submarine." [Raborn] had great success with the Congress over that, and therefore [Johnson] didn't want to take a step of appointing a total unknown. "Now you get yourself known around town," [Johnson told me] "and you work with him. You run the Agency, and he'll be the fellow who, you know, can sort of take care of the Agency with the public and with the Congress." And I think that's what Admiral Raborn tried to

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do. I think one of his actual problems, as it turned out, was with the Congress, because he was so convinced that he knew the congressmen so well--he had gotten along with them so well on the Polaris--that he just didn't have to prepare, he could just go down and testify. Well, it turned out that he wasn't all that sharp about some of the issues that he was testifying on. And it wasn't very long before a couple of those senators got on to this fact and they became very critical of him. I think they told Johnson, "This guy comes up, he can't even pronounce the place names in China and Russia," and so forth. Then on top of that, I think that Admiral Raborn didn't like being criticized--so the whole thing didn't turn out very satisfactorily for him. I think President Johnson was kind of sorry about that. I think he said, "You know, my Lord, I had no intention of hurting you when I put you in the job," etc., but I think even Johnson realized he didn't take a hold of it very well, and he seemed to have his arms around the fact that he didn't work at that kind of thing very much. Admiral Raborn felt that he knew all that--"Oh, I'll get along with them, I know how to deal with that," and so forth. In fact he didn't know how to deal with it. So my relationship with Raborn was fine, but I think later when he left there may have been a little sourness that I tried to get his job. Well, I didn't try to get his job. I was told what to do by the President and I was doing my best to do it--to support him, to run the Agency and do the things that I should be doing. So I didn't--I never cut him up with the

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newspaper people, I never supported these theories that he didn't know one thing from another, and so forth. But, anyway, I think he was glad to leave in many respects.

Q: It was obviously a difficult time for him.

A: There's one interesting footnote--makes dull history sometimes more interesting reading. At first when President Johnson called me to the White House to tell me he was going to make me Deputy Director, what he had in mind, and about Admiral Raborn, and where he was going to make the announcement and all the rest of the things that went along with it, he said that I wasn't to tell anybody I was going to get the appointment until it was announced. He also said that Admiral Raborn is only there for a certain length of time, he's a retired admiral, and so forth, then--I don't know whether he actually said, "I'll make you Director," or--but in any event, he held up the possibility that I would be made Director.

Well, lo and behold, one Saturday morning, I got a telephone call at the house and it was a government official (as a matter of fact there is no reason why it should be a secret, it was John Macy, who at that time was in charge of the Civil Service Commission), and he said "I thought you'd be interested to know that the President's having a press conference later this morning and he's going to announce your appointment as Director." And I said, "You have to be joking." He said, "No, I'm not joking. But look, don't tell anybody I called, and

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if he doesn't hold a press conference or if he doesn't announce it, forget you ever heard it from me. I don't want to get fired--I'm just trying to help you out, to tip you off." Lo and behold, he did announce it that morning. He took great pleasure in sandwiching it in between a couple of other rather dull announcements. But he had never told me that he was going to do it. I had heard it from a newspaper man who called up and said, "What's your reaction?" Between the one time and the other, although I'd seen him a lot of times, he never called me up, he never had anybody consult me--he just announced it.

Q: Just announced it. Well, it was nice though that you were . . .

A: Then when I called him up and thanked him, he said, "Well you weren't surprised were you? After all, I told you I was going to do this a long time ago."

Q: I would like to pursue the Vietnam War a bit--its impact on the Agency's own operations--mission, structure, the allocation of resources.

A: Well, I was surprised to read not very many years ago--I guess during Admiral Turner's time with the Agency--that the Vietnamese War caused a big increase of personnel in the organization and that the cut-backs in personnel which he ordered and carried out were really to take care of that bulge. Whereas my distinct impression, living through that period, had been that we had "robbed Peter to pay Paul." In other words, we had robbed other parts of the organization to staff up the Vietnamese effort and therefore had been lean in other places in order to do this. We had

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consistently lowered the total number of people in the Agency during the time that I was Director. In other words, there was no bulge in the total personnel of the DDP or of the Agency. It was simply that we made do with what we had and even so, actually reduced the total complement of the Agency, I think if you'll examine the actual figures you'll find that to be the case. So, where Turner got the idea that this had caused some kind of a bulge, I don't know. But obviously, there was a heavy preoccupation about how many people we should commit to Vietnam, what our activities there should be, and how we could best support the American effort. During that period--both during President Johnson's administration and President Nixon's administration--there was no sense in telling them that you were "robbing Peter to pay Paul." They regarded Vietnam as the most important thing they had on their platter, said so, and said there was nothing else that makes any difference. Vietnam is everything. You fellows get in there and help and support it, and so forth. There wasn't any ambiguity about this. So to the extent that it was the key priority, foreign policy priority, of the Agency, of the country at the time, it affected Agency work and operations, obviously. It was such a preoccupation with the administration that I had George Carver in charge of a small staff as a special assistant, because I realized that I had to have one very competent, experienced fellow, experienced in Vietnam particularly, to handle this on a 24-hour a day basis. There was no way that I as

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Director could do the other things that I had to do and still spend full time on Vietnam. They expected a full time operation on Vietnam at the White House, and that was one way to achieve it. I think it worked very successfully, actually. Carver was a very bright and able intelligence officer who worked diligently, and I think the Agency contribution was a good one. And, if you, or Jack, or anybody want to talk about that aspect of life, Carver is right here in town and is easy to get at.

Q: He has an office next to Mr. Schlesinger. I've met him, but I've not talked to him yet.

A: Well, you'll find him very articulate. He has a good memory. He's young enough to remember a lot of things that I don't remember. Be my guest--I mean I have every confidence in Carver and I think he'll give it to you the way he saw it.

Q: I shall certainly talk to him. What was the other side of the coin as you say, particularly with the "robbing Peter to pay Paul?" What effect did this have on everything else in the Agency?

A: Well, it simply meant that we dedicated less manpower to certain other questions. But one of the most difficult things to demonstrate in intelligence work is that if you had two more fellows working on target "A," would you have had much more success on target "A." This is hard to demonstrate. So we just have to leave it at that. I don't think you can get very much nutritious material out of that.

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Q: In fact I think the Agency is just one example, because the services have certainly made the complaint that they fought the war out, or took it out, of their hide. And the country did, certainly. The war was fought without really going on to a war time basis. At every level it was a war . . .

A: That's right. I mean Secretary McNamara used to say, and he believed it I think, that you could have guns and butter with our economy, and you didn't have to worry about it. Well, I think he's turned out to be wrong. But that was the way he felt about it, and that was the way the war was fought.

Q: That's right. This assumption is consistent with the war in general. One thing that I've heard from one of your successors is that the DDI, the analysts in DDI, because of their close ties with universities were infected by the feeling within the university--the general intellectual academic community--of opposition to the war. As time wore on this made them vulnerable to exaggerated hopes for detente, for a change in the cold war, for a real qualitative change in the Soviet-American relationship.

A: I don't know how to answer that question. I have no doubt the connections with academia did affect their points of view, but [to find] how prevalent this was, and in how many cases it made a difference, I think you'd have to ask the fellows that worked in DDI in those days, because I don't have any particular feel for it. I do know that there

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was tendency on the part of the analysts to come up with studies that were quite at variance with what the military believed to be the case on some occasions. How much this was affected by the ideology or feelings about the war is awfully damned hard to know. I used to have fair difficulty with Secretary Laird, for example, who would say after reading some CIA report, "Are you fellows on the team or not? I mean, are you in favor of the country and its foreign policy, or aren't you?" And those are kind of hard charges to absorb. But as I said very early in our discussion, I don't think a Director is hired to win a popularity contest. He's going to be disliked for a lot of things. And I must say that I was rather upset when one report of the Church Committee in 1975 came out indicating that I had been influenced by political considerations in certain estimates, and so forth. This is sort of, I think, an illusion more than anything else, but I later saw Dick Lehman and Paul Walsh and both of them said, "I tried to convince that girl that this was not the case, that you were not influenced in this particular estimate by political pressures, and that you might have changed your position because of additional evidence which was adduced." This had something to do, I think, with the footprints of the MRV's at the time [confusion]...MIRV and so on. Well, I certainly listened to what the Secretary of Defense had to say about such matters, and various other people and the evidence, and sometimes I did--because they were my estimates--make changes or suggest that we put more

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emphasis here rather than there. Because, after all, it's not fair to think that the fellows making those estimates were God. I mean, they weren't necessarily right all the time, and just because they thought that this was the position you ought to take didn't make it the right position. Nor did you have to politicize the estimate in order to change the position because you saw some evidence that indicated that maybe you were taking too strong a stand on "X" and you should have been moving in the direction of "Y", and when you read back over those estimates they weren't right all the time. So those fellows have no claim to go to Congress or anyplace else and say we were always right and that guy was wrong, or vice versa. And I don't remember any occasion on which I was threatened by anybody in any administration, on these differences. I mean, sure, there were arguments. I'm sure there was finger pointing and all the rest of it, but I don't recall ever coming out with any estimate that I felt was cockeyed, and God knows it was hard enough to come up with what truth probably was. I believe that on another occasion I was charged with having thrown an estimate in the wastebasket that would have been very useful at the time, something having to do with Vietnam. I believe that the claim was [made for] an estimate having to do with one of the raids or something. I think maybe it was an estimate that had come along at a time when the decision had already been made to go into Cambodia or something, and there was no sense in sending it down, because you knew it wasn't going to have any

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effect. This may have been the case. But at least these were judgments any Director has to make; you're not always right, and you do the best you can. They certainly were not political judgments.

Q: No, that's the important thing, because the business is basically predicting the future; nobody has ever had a 100% record on that.

[laughter]

A: God didn't give us prescience.

Q: That's right. But the question of changing for political reasons is a serious charge and it is distressing.

A: Yes. And I know of no case of it.

Q: I wanted to ask about relations with the military. It's become very much of a current topic because of the CBS business. In general I assume that during the Vietnam War the relationship with the intelligence community--especially the military--was different. The relationship was not only more intense, but different. How were these relations, how did they work out, or how did they change?

A: Well, I don't recall that we were having any particular difficulty with the military during the Vietnamese War. There were certainly arguments, and there were certainly differences of view about the success of certain things that the military was undertaking, but I regard that as part of the proper tension that one has in an intelligence community when you have the military committed to achieving certain military objectives and civilians saying you're never going to do it. You're not

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going to be successful. I mean that was where this business of, "Aren't you on our team?" kept coming up. But those tensions I regard as proper tensions. And I did not feel that during that period we had antagonisms with the military. I thought they pretty much recognized the problems we had jointly, and we met in USIB [U.S. Intelligence Board] all the time around the table, and there were obviously disagreements about where the Russian military was going, and what the success of certain raids was going to be in Vietnam, or finally was. We had our share of mistakes. I mean one of the big mistakes that the analysts made was on Sihanoukville, the famous misestimate about the assistance that was going to the North Vietnamese through the port of Sihanoukville. The matrix was wrong and the economists were just plain wrong.

Q: This was the "bills of lading" business later?

A: Yes. Later we got the bills of lading and found out that the estimate was bad. And Nixon was very critical of that. But then, Nixon was critical of everything. One of the ironies of President Nixon's life is that he was critical of everybody else except himself and his immediate advisers, and they're the ones that really, in the end, turned out to be the dumbest of all. They had the worst judgment.

Q: That's right.

A: A significant irony, if you want to put it in one sentence. (laughter)

Q: Just to follow along the line of the military for a moment, you had, as was normal in the Agency, military DDCIs. How much voice did you have

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in their choice? How did this work out? I guess you had actually three--Taylor, Cushman and Walters. Taylor I know very little about. I know something, a bit more, about Cushman and Walters.

A: Well, you will recall that originally in the law it read that if the Director was a military man then the Deputy Director had to be a civilian. Now that obtained, and I think that it would be useful if you had one of the legal eagles of the Agency actually look up the original draft of the 1947 law about the Director and then how it was changed, because there was a change made in it, and the change made in it was that you couldn't have two military men in the top two positions. Originally you could have had; subsequently, you could not. Now the obverse did not have to be the case. There could have been two civilians, but it seemed politic, given the size of the Pentagon and the amount that the intelligence community has to rely on the military, to have a military man as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence because, after all, he is a "community" man, too. You're head of the Agency but you are also Chairman of the Community. So I was the one that felt that Admiral Taylor would make a good Deputy and was successful in getting President Johnson to appoint him. Cushman and Walters were picked by President Nixon and sent out as deputies. General Cushman had been Vice President Nixon's military aide when he was Vice President and was well and favorably known to him; subsequently he became Commandant of the Marine Corps. Walters had worked with Nixon in the Eisenhower

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Administration. Nixon got to know Walters when he was an interpreter for Eisenhower and various other people, and he thought well of him. So Nixon picked both of those people.

Q: So it was during LBJ's administration that you had Admiral Taylor, who was the man you . . .

A: Yes, as matter of fact, it was interesting. One day I was riding in a helicopter with President Johnson not long after Admiral Raborn and I were appointed, and I happened to talk about this aspect of the law and he said,--Johnson looked at me and said, "That's the first time I ever heard that. I thought I was getting two civilians when I put a retired Admiral and you in there. I didn't know if you counted as a military man." (laughter)

Q: All right. (laughter) Then the change with the DDCIs come with the administration of President Nixon, and a lot else changed, I gather, because your relationship with President Nixon was quite different from your relationship with President Johnson from what you have said.

A: Yes, they just operated differently. Every President has his own way of operating. And for boards and commissions and advisory groups to say that the relationship between a President and a Director of Central Intelligence ought to be as follows is one of the silliest things I know, because a President is going to do what he pleases and he's going to have his relationships the way he pleases. And therefore, I used to brief the National Security Council regularly in the Nixon

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administration, and I used to send personal memoranda to the President which Kissinger certainly sent on to him and so forth. But Nixon just didn't like to deal with people individually the way Johnson did. They're just different personalities. If you will examine the Nixon administration you will find out that there weren't many people that he dealt with personally. He liked to deal through his staff.

Q: Did you deal much through Erlichman or Haldeman? Or mainly Kissinger?

A: Entirely Kissinger and Haig. The only time that I dealt through Erlichman and Haldeman was when they called me about some matter that was in their province and they wanted my attention to it. So it was in that connection that Erlichman got in touch with me for those famous papers about the alleged assassination of foreign leaders that Nixon wanted to get his hands on. It was at that time that I got the papers together and then I told Erlichman that I wanted to talk to the President about it. Erlichman said o.k., so I went to the President. Erlichman was there but the President saw me and I said, "Now do you want these papers? Here are the problems and so forth." Nixon said, "[These things didn't] happen on your watch," etc. And Nixon gave me certain assurances that [while] he wanted the papers, he would not use them to damage the Agency or anything, he just wanted to inform himself, and so forth. So when people say that I didn't stand up to the President--he'd sent one of his principal advisers out to get the thing, had asked him to get it, and really didn't want to talk to me about it,

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but finally was obliged to--so I don't know how much more you stand up to a guy. He was my boss and he had every right to the papers. I think maybe five minutes more is about it.

Q: Well, actually, I want to ask some questions about other people with the Agency. One thing I do want to mention though, because Dianne Rankin, John McMahon's executive assistant, called just before I came over. McMahon's giving a speech on Friday to the Army Military Intelligence people who are having a large ball, and he is looking for some vignettes of military-CIA cooperation. I thought I would mention that in case you can think of any off-hand that would be suitable for that kind of thing.

A: I thought one of the most telling and effective, and as a matter of fact, dramatic, collaborations between civilian and military was prior to the Cuban missile crisis when that group of Agency and military intelligence people was meeting on the problems of Cuban refugees and Castro, and so forth. And that, based on the agent reports and refugee reports, [they] persuaded the military to run a U-2 flight over Cuba, and finally got the pictures of the missiles. It seems to me that there was real collaboration between the military and civilian.

Q: The first thing I thought of, was the Bay of Pigs, which is not one of the . . . [laughter]

A: No, this is a real one.

Q: Yes, thank you. Well, you've mentioned George Carver. Some of the people that are now senior in the Agency had important jobs when you

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were there as well. I know Chuck Briggs, the present Executive Director, was your Deputy Director for Plans, Policy and Budget, and so on. Since that job of Executive Director has just been set up again I thought I'd ask you about Lawrence White, the famous Colonel White, and your relationship with him. I gather from Jack Smith--from the piece he wrote, that you probably saw--that he was quite close to you.

A: Well, I think that describes it as eloquently as anything I could say. I'd just use that piece. I read it with care again the other day when it appeared in the CIRA newsletter, and it's absolutely accurate.

Q: Well, when they set up the Executive Director's post again, I think they clearly used Colonel White as the model for it.

A: Colonel White was there the longest. John Bross had it first, but he wasn't really at it all that long. White was really the one that made the job. And White was ideally suited for it because he was able--he was experienced in the Agency--to pick up a whole skein of things having to do with logistics and personnel and money and God knows what--the administration of the Agency--as well as planning and so forth, and budgetary matters, and bring them all to me in a way that nobody else could. It seemed to me that it was necessary to have somebody at that level who could worry about all those aspects of the Agency which aren't immediately under the Director's nose every day. And it was very useful to me. I don't think I could have operated without him.

Q: He must have done an excellent job.

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A: He did. He was very calm, judicious, a good organizer. No, he was absolutely first class. What was said in that piece that Jack Smith wrote was the way I felt about Red White. There was one typo in it, I think, someplace. Typos obviously, "on" instead of an "or", or something. That was in a statement I made extemporaneously at his retirement ceremony and I noticed as I read it in the CIRA thing that the typo is where I really meant "or," the typo says "on," and it reads all right with "on," but doesn't read very well, and I meant "or."

Q: Well, I see. That's a change of meaning.

A: If you have any trouble finding that little quotation, in Jack Smith's piece--I don't think you will, it's toward the end--but if you do, read it to me and I'll tell you where the "or" is. Just read it to me on the phone.

Q: In fact I have the CIRA.

A: That's where the typo is.

Q: Well, why don't I leave it at that.

A: Please come down again if you . . .

Q: Well, thank you. I shall. I'll call and talk to Agnes .

A: I'm going to go away for about three weeks in the middle of October. I hope to make a trip to China, just a tourist trip, so I won't be available then, but otherwise, anytime.

Q: Oh that's splendid--about three weeks in China? Grand.

A: Anytime, otherwise.

Q: Well, thank you.

End of 29 September interview.

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