The (Really) Quiet

Richard McGarragh

same year—by paying his own way to Europe and with some entree provided by W. W. Hawkins, an executive of the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain and the affiliated United Press—Dick Helms landed a job with the UP in London, then went on to Berlin.

There, the foreign press corps and members of the Western diplomatic establishments made a congenial group. If they had not been congenial by inclination, they would have become so by necessity.

"We didn't exactly have free social circulation," one of them recalled scantily, "you have to remember that Hitler, in his June 30, 1934, proclamation, had declared that any German consorting with foreign correspondents and embassy personnel could be presumed to be doing it for 'reasons of national security.'"

In 1936 Berlin, Helms—fluent in French and German—began making his mark. He interviewed, among others, ice-skating star Sonja Henie and Adolf Hitler. He worked and partied and enjoyed the excitement of time and place; and suddenly, in the fall of 1937, he realized it was time to go back to Depression-ridden America, to Indianapolis. He had his house there, and he went to meet the most menial of advertising jobs at the old Scripps-Howard paper, The Indianapolis Times—now defunct—in a dingy office on Maryland Street. "He was selling chicken advertising...a few lines of classified...small stuff..."

The Unknown Midwest

Dick Helms had been "no stranger to Europe, where he had first chosen to work, but was a stranger to the American Middle West. Born in Pennsylvania in 1913 and educated at Carleton Academy in Orange, phony side and better avoided as an antagonist, she has conducted art classes for aphasic youngsters at Children's Hospital in Washington, and she sculpts (and exhibits) with distinction, infusing stone with rare humor.

She met Dick Helms on the day of her divorce from Frank Shields, the Barbados king. As Shields' wife she had presided over an estate (now a country club) in Martinsville, Indiana, where she raised and showed horses, traveled to Churchill Downs and Europe. She says she was "a slowpoke" for her husband in that she was never being permitted to see much of her children.

When her lawyer, an old friend, told her as they left the divorce court that there was a young man in Indianapolis he wanted her to meet, she replied, "Oh, no! Not out of the frying pan into the fire." Nevertheless, she met Helms at dinner that night.

She later said, "I thought Dick had the potential of any person I had ever met." They married the following year. Both of the Helms were Europe-oriented, Julia being a second-generation American. Her father, a naturalized German sometimes referred to as the "architect of Indianapolis journalism." He had been a successful society photographer. Dick Helms was third-generation American. This may account for the fact that the "Boulder Easterner" among his auteur spies, disproportionately weighted with old Grotonians in the World War II espionage agency, the Office of Strategic Services—never quite accepted, him as his own, although his immediate background was quite different from theirs. Those of the group who stayed in clandestine work came, however, to consider him a good bridge between themselves and the relatively plebian "Prudent Professionalism," as Stewart Alsop has called them. Helms' maternal grandfather was a Gates McGarragh, a banker and important financial figure in New York who served from 1920 to 1933 in Basel, Switzerland, as president of the Bank for International Settlements, a precursor of the World Bank. Helms' paternal grandparents were German Lutheran immigrants. One of Dick's brothers, Rowland, was a grain merchant in Geneva, Switzerland; another, Gates, an engineer of a New York printing firm; and a sister, Mrs. Clinton Van Hawn, married a physician in Cooperstown, New York. Richard was the eldest child of what appears to have been a happy family.

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Quiet American

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(j) in the Navy in July 1942 and, 30 hours after his and Julia's son was born, left for naval training at Harvard. Julia followed, but says that for the next six years she hardly saw him. In the winter of 1943 he served in New York and helped to publicize the Navy Relief Soc- iety, hobnobbing with the important persons who sponsored its big social benefits and balls. In 1944 he was as- signed to the OSS and performed desk jobs in New York and Washington be- fore going to the European front, England, France, and, after the war, Germany. Following his initiation into clandestine work, Dick Helms never looked back.

At war's end, he remained, as a civilian, with the OSS's successor organizations: the Strategic Services-

they were the Defense Department's far-larger, code-cracking National Security Agency; the Defense Intelligence Agency, which incorporates the branches of military intelligence; the State Department's Intelligence and Research Service; the Atomic Energy Commission's intelligence unit and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. A former aide to the OSS's Lyndon Johnson said, "There was enormous infiltration among these groups. It was a major operation to coordinate the fruits of their services—to the extent that they were coordinated... A lot was at stake in these weekly meetings—not just esti- mates of the damage done by bombing in North Vietnam... Helms' job was to get a consensus from the meetings. He had plenty to think about, plenty to worry about. It was a very complicated job. It was a triumph for a man to be able to stay in it a while. I give full marks for being able to sit on top of it."

The Shop and the Chief

W hen Wearing the other of his two hats, Helms mastered the vast amount of important functions of the CIA, which has been said to be "filled with young men whose fathers didn't trust them with the family busi- ness." In 1947, at the time Helms was chief, half of CIA's corps of analysts possessed advanced degrees, 30 per cent of their doctorates and, according to Adm. Raborn, the agency's "easily and adequately staff a university." Speaking of a hundred languages and dialects, they compose a cosmopolitan, cartogra- phers, psychiatrists, agronomists, chemists, anthropologists and foresters; their activities included maintaining listening posts and operating broadcasting facilities, airlines, space satellites, publishing houses, philanthropic founda- tions, and training bases for insurgent or counterinsurgent forces. As has since become evident, the CIA's insurgent activities amounted to a good deal more than that. It admitted recruiting, training, equipping, paying, supplying and advising as many as 30,000-man fighting force of "irregulars" (many from Thailand)—the chief offensive troops in the "secret war" in Laos. The admis- sion caused Arkansas Sen. William Fulbright to say, "The CIA has become another Defense Department."

A former CIA man in clandestine operations says of Dick Helms: "He's cautious. I've known him not to want some of these things done, but if they have to be done he'd rather have them done within the CIA... Like any good

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were "alive," there are varying reports: One is that Herman Helms made a fortune in the stock market of the 1920s; another that he lost it there; still another is that there was McGarr.

One woman who knew the family in Europe described the Helms
as "comfortable," but said: "Money? Well, they certainly weren't plucked with it." Of their youth in America Gates Helms says, "It was all that South Orange implies: conventional upper-middle class, well educated, well traveled, interested in good schools and sports, and with a social life centered around the country club." To this day, country-club life is essential to Richard Helms.

Helms' Second Family

T R E E M O N T H S after Helms' divorce from Julia became final in September 1959, and a year and a half after they parted, Helms married for the second time—and for the second time he married a divorcee with children of her own: Cynthia Ratcliffe McKelvie. The McKelvies and Helms had been cordial friends; seeing a lot of each other. Dr. Allan McKelvie was an orthopedic surgeon, red-haired, British-born Cynthia McKelvie Helms, 50, is good-looking but, as an acquaintance says, "no glamour girl.

In Washington, Richard and Cynthia Helms lived in a two-bedroom apartment in a high-rise building and, said Mrs. Helms while her husband still directed the CIA, they invariably returned to it. If they had been out, she added, 11:15, as Helms was apt to receive phone calls at any time of night. "He's got to be in a fit state to make a decision; it's always a crisis."

Into Clandestine Work

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He had, in his own phrase and in one of his rare self-directed comments, "worked his way through the system," becoming the first intelligence professional to become intelligence chief. (By profession, Allen Dulles was a lawyer.) To the ranks this was as stimulating as the appointment of a career diplomat to the Court of St. James would be to the New York Times State Department.

It was the second time that the promotion of Richard Helms had ruffled the future of the intelligence agency: The previous time was when he was named chief of plans, following the downward slide of the Bay of Pigs affair that Helms had opposed and from which he had disassociated himself.

Because 'It's Secret'?

Throughout his rise, Helms was on the operations side of the CIA. There are indications that his wife Julia had little patience with what she later called "the James Bond stuff" and resented Helms' turning away from journalism: "I'll buy you a paper," she had tossed out at one time.

Over the years she tried to read the spy stories of which he was fond, but quit finally and in disgust by throwing the stack into the wastebasket what is probably the best of the lot, John Le Carre's "The Spy Who Came In From the Cold." It was reported to The New York Times State Helms and his present wife read spy stories aloud to each other.

To those unaffected by it, the opiate of the operations is unappealing as is the opiate of mountain climbing. A sampling of remarks aimed at explaining the lure of the job in the incident of the Bay of Pigs, sex and nobody got hurt except the bad guys ... "It excited a romantic pull ... It was doing something of responsibility with the attendant excitement of danger and reward and without being held to the narrow responsibilities of a puritan life. ... You are a band of brothers." Stewart Alsop has said of his clandestine operations in Washington: "It was romantic, sexy and nobody got hurt except the bad guys." "It excited a romantic pull ... It was doing something of responsibility with the attendant excitement of danger and reward and without being held to the narrow responsibilities of a puritan life. ... You are a band of brothers." Stewart Alsop has said of his clandestine operations in Washington: "It was romantic, sexy and nobody got hurt except the bad guys."

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And so on.

Not all intelligence work seems so exciting. Kenneth Downs, a Washington publicist and onetime OSS officer, says: "Nine-tenths of the work is reading foreign-language papers and journals." Washington, the other tenth is espionage, and it yields far less intelligence, it's a lousy job, too, because it is based on betrayal of trust.

In his dual role as CIA chief and chairman of the U.S. Intelligence Board, under the old intelligence setup, Richard Helms was just "Mr. Intelligence": He wore two hats. As board chairman, he presided over six intelligence-gathering agencies that were independent and competing fields. In addition to the CIA, which in principle was paramount among them, he doesn't approve up to a point, then he carries his orders." John Muary said: "He is less adventurous than his predecessor as chief of plans. With Dick in charge we might not have had the Bay of Pigs, but neither would we have had a strategic satellite."

Not to Make Policy

SPEAKING FOR HIMSELF, Helms wrote at the time of his confirmation to make policy and that he, as the President's principal intelligence advisor, would not use his role to do so. He had been known to say before his rise, "I'm sorry, Mr. President, but that's a policy matter and policy is not my field." In the intelligence establishments exert undue influence on policy because "America's high government officials do not adequately monitor secret operations," Ranson said that former Secretary of State Dean Acheson ad

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