

PUBLIC IMAGE OF CIA DISTORTED, WRITER SAYS

[Article by M.L.: "What the CIA Is"; Florence, Il Mondo, Italian, 17 May 1970, p 47]

Washington -- A few evenings before he was named director of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) in 1966, Richard McGarrah Helms, one of the most outstanding career officers of the American espionage service, was invited to dinner by the President of the United States. Democratic Senator Eugene McCarthy was among those invited. During dessert, McCarthy, who had heard of the imminent appointment of Helms, asked him about the French wine being served: "Do you think 1953 was a good year for this Chateau d'Yquem?" Helms said he knew nothing about it. Then the Senator pointed to some yellow roses on the table and asked Helms if he could identify the variety. Helms said he knew nothing about roses.

"Well, then," McCarthy said sarcastically turning to President Johnson, "James Bond would have been able to give better answers."

The episode was recalled several days later by Johnson himself when he nominated Helms as Chief of the American intelligence service. Johnson added that the anecdote did not decrease the esteem in which Helms was held