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Letters

The dictates of diplomacy

Jeff Stein was kind enough to send me a copy of the cover story he wrote about me ("Mystery Man of American Diplomacy," August 29). In his accompanying note, he offered to interview me or to allow me space to comment upon his article. As he pointed out in the article itself, I normally refrain from interviews and seldom comment on stories. I do so not because I am particularly opposed to publicity about me. Indeed, during the five years from 1976 to 1981, as a private citizen, I wrote a book, *Silent Missions*, not *Secret* as Mr. Stein's research suggests. Not a single US secret is contained in the book. It was published in six languages. I traveled widely and appeared on national and international television and radio programs — hardly the activities of a shy or reclusive man. I shun publicity because the nature of my duties as Ambassador-at-Large requires me to move discreetly and inconspicuously in quiet pursuit of our country's foreign policy. Publicity undermines my ability to do this.

Nevertheless, I feel compelled to respond to some of the allegations contained in the Stein story because they call into question my personal integrity during my tenure as Deputy and Acting Director of the CIA. I feel strongly that the American people must have confidence in the integrity of their public servants and that to allow Mr. Stein's allegations to go unchallenged is to shake that confidence.

The first allegation relates to an old matter: Watergate. Mr. Stein, like others, continues to play the "who-knew-what-when" game that has always left even the most informed observers befuddled. I do not intend to rehash the matter here. I would simply like to stress that when it became clear to me that no CIA assets were endangered by an FBI investigation, I refused, as Deputy Director, on behalf of the CIA, to have any involvement whatsoever in the matter. When John Dean first asked me to stop the FBI investigation for the Mexico money, I thought perhaps that clandestine meetings with Castro, simi-

lar to those I had conducted in Paris with the Vietnamese and Chinese, were in progress. When I learned otherwise, I refused to restrain the FBI probe in any way. Indeed, I threatened to resign if ordered to do otherwise. John Dean has acknowledged this refusal in his own testimony before Congress. The delay caused to the FBI, while I checked our sources in Mexico, resulted in no substantial impairment to the investigation.

With respect to the overall Watergate matter, I can only say that every step I took at that time was scrutinized in numerous and endless public hearings. Nevertheless, I remained in office until 1976, four years after the break-in occurred. In 1974, Director of the CIA James R. Schlesinger, a man respected for his integrity, intelligence, and sophistication, awarded me the Distinguished Intelligence Medal for showing "the highest qualities of moral integrity and rigid adherence to his constitutional responsibilities despite a number of severe pressures to lead him to a contrary position." Mr. Schlesinger is not known as a man who passes out encomia freely. When I retired, moreover, President Gerald Ford, another man respected for his straightforwardness, awarded me the National Security Medal, only twenty of which had ever before been given. Mr. Stein's impressive research apparently failed to discover these two awards, although both are mentioned in *Silent Missions*, from which he quotes extensively.

With respect to Mr. Stein's allegations about the senseless murder of Orlando Letelier, I repeat here what I told the FBI and the Justice Department in 1976: I knew nothing whatsoever of the matter.

As Deputy Director of the CIA, I met with most heads of foreign intelligence services when they visited Wash-

ington. Because I speak eight languages, some felt it important that I convey to these men in their own languages the commitment of the United States, and particularly of the American intelligence community, to continue the struggle against our enemies even in times of great domestic turmoil for us.

Never in any of the meetings with Colonel Contreras, the head of Chilean Intelligence, did the subject of Orlando Letelier or Chilean passports ever arise. Anyone who thinks otherwise is mistaken. The last time I saw Contreras was over a year before Letelier was murdered. My trip to Paraguay, just before I retired in July, had nothing to do with Chile or passports or Letelier. I am still, however, not at liberty to discuss the nature of my trip.

After I retired from the CIA, I had nothing to do with Chile or Paraguay. I had never even heard of Ambassador Landau's cables until August 1976, when the CIA brought them to my attention. I answered that I knew nothing about passports for any Chileans. Furthermore, I explained that I had no reason to become involved with official US business with Chile or Paraguay because I was, then, a private citizen. No mention, moreover, was ever made of Orlando Letelier.

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