

MEMORANDUM

January 22, 1996

To: T. Jeremy Gunn
cc: Mary McAuliffe

From: Robert J. Skwirot

Subject: Questions for Richard Helms

As you requested, I am submitting the following suggestions for questions which might be asked of Richard Helms:

- Helms: "I think there's a tradition that the CIA is a silent service, and it's a good one. I think the silence ought to begin with me." (Ranelegh 614) If we wish to have a productive interview with Mr. Helms, we must hope that this characteristic attitude of the former DCI has or can be changed. With this in mind, we might ask Mr. Helms what he thinks about the current trend toward openness in the CIA. Though a critical response by him would set a negative tone for the interview, his position would be clear to us. Further, a reference to the present CIA position would allow us, in the face of reticence by Helms, to promote a more forthcoming response by him, as we could remind him that many of the secrets which by his estimation needed to be kept twenty years ago are no longer secrets.
- Powers notes that on November 22, 1963 Helms was with DCI McCone and other senior CIA officials in a private dining room near the Director's office when news of the assassination was brought by McCone's assistant, Walter Elder. (Powers 392) What does Helms remember about this day? What did this high level group have to say about the tragedy? Was there documentation of it? Did these men talk about launching an investigation of the event or about offering assistance to other agencies in their inquiries?
- Anthony Summers wrote us this month about a document in the LBJ library which states that DCI McCone met 13 times with President Johnson between November 23 and December 5, 1963. The substance of these briefings was kept "in a safe at CIA to which only Mr. McCone has combination." We should ask Helms if he knew about these meetings and these files and if he can tell us anything about their content or what happened to the files.

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- Powers claims that Helms once heard President Johnson assert that Kennedy's murder was an act of retribution for the murder of Ngu Dinh Diem, the president of South Vietnam, on November 1, 1963.(Powers 137) Does Helms remember this conversation? If Johnson said this, did the CIA investigate that possibility?
- Helms stated that the CIA played a supporting role to the FBI and the Warren Commission in the investigation on the assassination. He also claimed that the CIA investigation was limited to foreign countries. Does he still insist on these points? What was the relationship between the CIA and the Warren Commission; in particular, what types of information did the CIA withhold from the Warren Commission?
- What does Helms remember about the nuts and bolts of the investigation. What was his responsibility in the investigation? What was his role in its set up and how closely did he follow it? What was Scelso's role in the investigation? Did Scelso have a free reign, or did he struggle against interference from Angleton? Why was the investigation passed to CI/SIG?
- Can Helms add anything to the Mexico City story ,for example concerning the other man in the photos, the tapes, or Winn Scott's documents? Also, did CIA stateside know about Oswald's Mexico City trip before the assassination? (See Newman 417-418)
- Concerning the Nosenko interrogation, does Helms still insist that he forbade the use of drugs on him? Can Helms shed any light on MKULTRA and any connection to the assassination story?
- What can Helms tell us about back-channel communications, particularly between stations and headquarters as well as in operations such CI, SAS, and JMWAVE?