

A Look Over My Shoulder: A Life in the Central Intelligence Agency

Richard Helms, with William Hood. New York, NY: Random House, 2003. 452 pages.

Reviewed by Thomas M. Troy, Jr.

During his long career in intelligence, Richard Helms was no stranger to political and intelligence-related disputes. It is fitting, therefore, that he has left us a memoir that may only add to certain controversies. *A Look over My Shoulder*, his posthumously published book, is always interesting and frequently provocative, and it probably will provide scores, if not hundreds, of intelligence mavens and graduate school students topics for essays, theses, and dissertations.¹

A Look over My Shoulder is definitely not an exposé. Helms managed to write a 452-page memoir without revealing anything about intelligence operations or analyses that had not been declassified and previously released into the public domain.² Readers looking for “now it can be told” tales of intelligence derring-do will have to look elsewhere. Readers seeking to find out exactly why Mr. Helms succeeded in his career at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), ultimately serving as Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) from 1966-1973, will also have to look elsewhere. In maintaining silence about operational matters, “The Man Who Kept the Secrets”³ went to his death in 2002 leaving his memoir but keeping his version of “the faith.”

Helms has left us in essence a summary of the Cold War up to the mid-1970s and a book of opinions on selected topics—which, of course, is what a memoir is all about. He proves to be somewhat reticent about certain issues—the Watergate cover-up, for example—and he occasionally contradicts himself, but he is not shy about expressing his opinion concerning some very important issues that he faced during his long career. Helms also tells us what he thought about certain people with whom he worked or served, and it seems to me that he used his memoir to pay back some people. Sometimes he is humorous, but other times he comes across as vindictive and even petty in discussing former colleagues.

¹ For additional information on Helms's life and career, see David Robarge, “In Memory and Appreciation: Richard Helms—The Intelligence Professional Personified,” *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 46, No. 4, accessible at: <http://www.ucia.gov/csi/publications>.

² One possible exception: Mr. Helms makes it clear that the Central Intelligence Agency was deeply involved in the coup in Iran in 1953, and to my knowledge the Agency has never officially acknowledged its involvement.

³ The title of a book about Mr. Helms and the CIA written by Thomas Powers and published in 1979.

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In this review, I concentrate on only three topics that Helms addresses: the Watergate scandal; the Nosenko affair; and the influence wielded at CIA by the controversial James J. Angleton.

Watergate

A Look over My Shoulder begins with a brief discussion of one of the most controversial issues that Helms faced during his tenure as DCI: the burglary at the Watergate offices of the Democratic National Committee and subsequent cover up of the crime engineered by President Richard M. Nixon. It must have been very difficult for Helms even to think about this subject, and it is therefore not surprising that he is ambiguous in discussing it.

Helms recounts the now-infamous meeting at the White House on 23 June 1972, involving himself, Gen. Vernon Walters (then-Deputy Director of Central Intelligence), and Nixon's closest aides, H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman. Ehrlichman had summoned Helms and Walters, but Haldeman was the "heavy." Helms quotes Haldeman, the White House Chief of Staff: "It has been decided" that Gen. Walters should go to the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and tell him that "further investigation in Mexico could lead to the exposure of certain Agency assets and channels for handling money." (The FBI was tracing the money found with the Watergate burglars.) Helms says that he told Haldeman several times that the CIA was *not* involved with the burglary or the burglars and had nothing to fear about the FBI investigation, but Haldeman pressed on in "an even more serious, rather threatening tone...."⁴

After that meeting, Helms says, he "mentioned" to Walters that the CIA and the FBI had an agreement about intelligence work abroad and that if either agency found that lines had crossed, the other party was to be informed immediately. "I knew of no problem in Mexico. If the FBI sensed any conflict, it would be up to them to inform us."⁵ Two pages later, Helms ambiguously writes that "Walters delivered the message (to the FBI) and for a while we thought the matter had been put to rest." Readers who do not know much about the entire Watergate fiasco might ask *which* message did Walters deliver, the White House's or the one from Helms.

In fact, Walters delivered the White House message *and* the one from Helms. According to Walters, he told FBI director L. Patrick Gray that "while investigation of [the Watergate burglary] in Mexico had not yet touched Agency projects, continuation of it there might expose some assets. I reminded him of the agreement between the two agencies, as Helms had suggested."⁶ To compound the problem, a few days after Walters first saw the FBI about the matter, Mr. Helms wrote a memorandum that could be—and was—interpreted as evidence that the

⁴ Helms, p. 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶ Vernon Walters, *Silent Missions* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1978), p. 589.

CIA might actually have been involved in the Watergate burglary and was attempting to formulate a cover story, or at the least was seeking to stifle the FBI's investigation. Helms wrote to Walters:

*We still adhere to the request that they [the FBI] confine themselves to the personalities already arrested or directly under suspicion and that they desist from expanding this investigation into other areas which may well, eventually, run afoul of our operations.*⁷

Thus, the sad fact is that Helms and Walters (and through them, the CIA) *did* participate in the initial stages of the Watergate cover-up.⁸ Their participation was reluctant and presumably soul wrenching, but they did follow orders from the White House.

In his memoir, Helms recounts the next phase of this sordid tale. Presumably encouraged by their ability to enlist the leaders of the CIA, the White House staff asked the Agency to provide the funds to pay bail for the burglars! Helms is justifiably proud that he absolutely refused. Although he does not directly say so, it seems clear in retrospect that his refusal to provide further aid to the White House and Nixon on Watergate meant that his days as DCI were numbered. About six months later, Nixon fired him.

Helms returns to the Watergate scandal later in his memoir when he discusses the dilemma he faced (and any DCI would face) when “a president orders his DCI to step out-of-bounds.” If a President's directives cannot be deflected, Helms states, the DCI's “responses range from acceptance to outright refusal and presumably resignation.” He then says that when Nixon ordered his White House staff to “direct me (via Gen. Walters) to supply bail for the Watergate burglars and to deflect the FBI's investigation of the crime, I instructed Walters to refuse their demands. Rather than force my resignation, and presumably face the likely intense public curiosity about the reasons for my leaving, President Nixon backed away.”⁹ The quote unfortunately is a half-truth, and it raises the question: why did Helms not directly refuse the Nixon-Haldeman order of 23 June and force the issue? One must reluctantly conclude that Helms made a major mistake during the initial stage of the Watergate scandal and that he has suffered a case of “selective memory” in his memoir.

It seems to me somewhat tragic that even after 30 years Helms did not grasp the real meaning for the CIA of Watergate and the Agency's involvement in the attempted cover-up. Several times in *A Look over My Shoulder*, he complains (sometimes with

⁷ Emphasis added. The memorandum was dated 28 June 1972. It is part of the record of the hearings conducted by the US House of Representatives' Judiciary Committee that was considering the impeachment of President Nixon. The memorandum is quoted in Fred Emery, *Watergate* (New York, NY: Random House Times Books, 1994), p. 193.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.190-95. See also Thomas Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 261-62.

⁹ Helms, pp. 282-83.

justification) about how US Representatives and Senators “showboated” to boost their political careers or (gasp!) asked embarrassing questions about intelligence matters when they were not members of the “appropriate” Congressional committees. I believe Thomas Powers was absolutely correct in his analysis of the significance of the CIA’s unfortunate and reluctant involvement in the Watergate scandal. Writing in 1979, he said that Watergate “marks a violent break in Agency history, the first step in a process of exposure which has pretty much destroyed the unwritten charter established by Allen Dulles.” Watergate “undermined the consensus of trust in Washington which was a truer source of the Agency’s strength than its legal charter....” And Watergate “ended the long congressional acquiescence to the special intimacy between the CIA and the Presidency, an intimacy which allowed Presidents to use CIA as they might, beholden to no one so long as congressional oversight remained a kind of charade. Watergate, in short, made the CIA fair game.”¹⁰ Powers continues his analysis by saying that Helms tried to avoid the Watergate affair like cholera and to protect the CIA, and he points out that the only known victim of Watergate at the CIA was Helms himself. I would suspect that Helms shared Powers’s opinions, even though he avoids the issue of Watergate’s significance for the CIA in his memoir.

The Nosenko Affair

Helms devotes seven pages in his memoir to the infamous case of Soviet intelligence officer and defector Yuri Nosenko.¹¹ He calls the Nosenko case “the most frustrating operation in my experience,” and says that it plagued him as Deputy Director for Plans (DDP) and through most of his time as DCI. Although he acknowledges that “no case was more baffling,” his memoir only adds to the confusion about Nosenko—making no reference, for example, to Anatoli Golitsy, an highly influential defector who called Nosenko’s credentials into question. Helms also plays down the role assumed in the case by James J. Angleton, the chief of the Counterintelligence Staff. In addition, it appears that neither Helms, nor his collaborator, William Hood, nor any other researcher consulted two books by former officers of the Soviet intelligence service (KGB) that seemingly provide ample proof that Nosenko was a bona fide defector.¹²

Nosenko was a mid-level KGB officer who, while serving temporarily in Geneva in 1962, volunteered to work for the CIA as an agent in place. According to Helms, Nosenko named one American communications clerk whom the KGB had recruited and pinpointed the location of some 50 audio devices the KGB had planted in the US embassy in Moscow. Before he returned to Moscow, Nosenko specified that no attempt be made to contact him while he was in the USSR, that he did not want to defect, and that he would contact the CIA the next time he was abroad.

¹⁰ Powers, p. 258.

¹¹ The short chapter is titled “A Bone in the Throat,” an expression that Helms used to describe the Nosenko case when he testified on the Hill in 1978. US House of Representatives, Hearings, Select Committee on Assassinations, *Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1979), Volume IV, page 96. Hereafter I will cite this 12-volume publication as: Hearings, Select Committee on Assassination.

¹² The former KGB officers are Oleg Kalugin and Vasili Mitrokhin.

Helms says: "Even before the first rush of excitement subsided, doubts about Nosenko had developed." Some of the defector's information duplicated data supplied by "another KGB defector six months before Nosenko volunteered his services." In addition, "doubts about Nosenko's alleged career pattern and background flared."¹³ For reasons only he knew, Helms fails to mention the name of the earlier KGB defector. That person was Anatoli Golitsyn, characterized by a British writer as "one of the most intriguing, troublesome and, ultimately, the most damaging of packages ever to change hands in the East-West espionage game."¹⁴

Leading the doubters in the CIA about Nosenko were Angleton, case officer Tennett "Pete" Bagley, David Murphy, the chief of the Soviet Division, and, one assumes, Helms.

- Angleton doubted Nosenko because he believed Golitsyn, who had convinced him that he was an important defector and a veritable font of wisdom. He told Angleton that the KGB had a "mole" inside the CIA. Golitsyn "predicted" that the KGB would attempt to discredit him by sending false defectors who would deny and contradict what Golitsyn said and spread confusion and dissension within the CIA and other Western intelligence services. When Nosenko could not confirm Golitsyn's allegation about a "mole" and some other information, Angleton evidently accepted Golitsyn's warning and concluded that Nosenko was a KGB "plant."¹⁵
- "Pete" Bagley was one of the case officers who first met with Nosenko in Geneva. He later became chief of the counterintelligence branch and then deputy division chief in the Soviet Division. He admitted that the material from Golitsyn that Angleton showed him was what first caused his suspicions about Nosenko. Bagley's conviction that Nosenko was a KGB "plant" persisted at least through the early 1990s.¹⁶

Together, Angleton and Bagley presumably convinced Murphy and Helms that Nosenko was "dirty."

Had Nosenko remained in the Soviet Union and dropped off the CIA's scope, not much would have happened. After 19 months in Moscow, however, Nosenko returned to Geneva in January of 1964, asked to defect, and dropped a bombshell: He claimed that he had reviewed the entire KGB file on Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged lone assassin of President John F. Kennedy. Nosenko said that the KGB had found Oswald to be unstable and had declined to have anything to do with him. Helms points out that, the suspicions of some within the CIA about Nosenko notwithstanding, the Agency had no choice but to hustle Nosenko to Washington for extensive debriefing.

¹³ Helms, pp. 239-40.

¹⁴ Gordon Brook-Shepherd, *The Storm Birds: Soviet Postwar Defectors* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), p. 198.

¹⁵ David Wise, *Molehunt* (New York, NY: Random House, 1992), especially, pp. 65-80, 130-56. See also Tom Mangold, *Cold Warrior* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1991). Mangold is especially effective in devastating Golitsyn and Angleton.

¹⁶ Wise, p. 142.

Helms states that the CIA officers scrutinizing Nosenko could not reach a consensus as to the truth of his claims. "The counterintelligence specialists and some experienced operatives considered him to have been programmed to mislead us. Others tended to believe Nosenko...."¹⁷ Then-DDP Helms first told the Warren Commission (established to investigate the assassination of President Kennedy) that the Agency could not establish Nosenko's bona fides and warned the Commission not to use his information. The CIA proceeded to submit Nosenko to a "hostile interrogation."

At first, Nosenko was held in a 10-foot by 10-foot attic in a CIA safe house in the Washington area. Then the CIA moved him to a specially constructed building at a training site, where he was kept in solitary confinement and submitted to more interrogation. Helms points out that the office recommending that Nosenko be confined was the Soviet Division of the DDP. What Helms does not say in his memoir is that he approved both the hostile interrogation and the solitary confinement. He did somewhat reluctantly admit that he approved the decisions when he testified before the House Select Committee in 1978.¹⁸

Helms claims that Angleton "disagreed with the hostile interrogation and confinement of Nosenko. From the early months, Angleton's recommendation was that Nosenko be released, and his further activity monitored."¹⁹ "Pete" Bagley disputes Helms concerning Angleton's role in this matter.²⁰ But what Helms says makes sense. Since Angleton believed Nosenko was a KGB plant, he presumably reasoned that it was a waste of time, effort, and money to interrogate him.

According to Helms, conditions in the building housing Nosenko were "spartan, verging on harsh, but no more so than solitary confinement in a maximum security federal prison." One wonders about Helms's knowledge of maximum security prisons. No matter the extent of his knowledge, his statement does little or nothing to rebut the impression that the CIA basically abused Nosenko. When he testified in 1978, Helms was slightly more forthright; he said that the "fact that [Nosenko] may have been held too long was therefore deplorable, but nevertheless we were doing our best."²¹

Despite the solitary confinement and hostile interrogation, Nosenko never changed his story that he was a KGB officer who truly defected. The debate within the CIA about Nosenko raged for four years. Helms, who had become Deputy DCI, under DCI Adm. William Raborn, and then DCI in 1966, finally tried to bring a conclusion to the debate. In late 1967, he asked his deputy, Adm. Rufus Taylor, to make an independent study of the case.

Taylor used the Office of Security to re-examine the entire matter. In October 1968, he advised Helms that he was not convinced how the KGB would have bene-

¹⁷ Helms, p. 242.

¹⁸ Hearings, Select Committee on Assassinations, Vol. XII, p. 531.

¹⁹ Helms, p. 244.

²⁰ Wise, p. 143. See also Bagley's testimony before the House Select Committee. Bagley was identified as "Mr. D. C." Hearings, House Select Committee on Assassinations, Vol. XII, pp. 573-644.

²¹ Hearings, House Select Committee on Assassinations, Vol. IV, p. 31.

fited by sending Nosenko as a false defector. Taylor recommended that Nosenko be accepted as a legitimate defector and that the CIA “rehabilitate,” release, and resettle him. According to Helms, doubts remained “as strong as ever in some quarters....” Those “quarters” were in the Counterintelligence Staff, whose “representatives” continued to question whether Nosenko’s authenticity had been conclusively proven. Other senior officers, however, believed that Nosenko should be accepted and that he had important services to offer the CIA and should be retained under Agency contract. Helms agreed. In time, Nosenko received American citizenship, assumed a new identity, married, and pursued a new career in the United States.²²

All’s well that ends well? Not always. Helms was obviously reluctant to discuss the Nosenko case, for he omitted the essential parts—Golitsyn’s allegations and Angleton’s acceptance of those allegations. He also makes no mention of Angleton (and Bagley) using Golitsyn to provide questions to be put to Nosenko and to check on Nosenko’s answers—to act, in effect, as a counsel to the prosecution.²³

In 1978, Helms rather testily told the House Select Committee that although he had decided 10 years previously to rehabilitate and resettle Nosenko (and give him a contract), he had never decided on Nosenko’s bona fides.²⁴ In 1989, Helms told author Tom Mangold that “I still haven’t the faintest idea if Nosenko is bona fide.”²⁵ Perhaps Helms handles the Nosenko case as if it were a live hand grenade in *A Look Over My Shoulder* because until the day he died he still hadn’t decided. If so, one can only regret the indecision.

It is understandable that Helms would not refer to the perhaps embarrassing accounts of the Nosenko case written by David Wise and Tom Mangold. It is not understandable why Helms and others involved in the preparation of *A Look Over My Shoulder* did not refer to the books written by Oleg Kalugin and Vasili Mitrokhin.

In 1994, Kalugin’s memoir of his 32-year service in the KGB was published as *The First Directorate*. Kalugin discusses Nosenko briefly several times. He states clearly that he and the KGB considered Nosenko to be a true defector.²⁶ He writes that while he was serving in Washington in the late-1960s and early-1970s the KGB received an order to “carry out the death sentence that Nosenko had received from a Soviet court.” This “wet job” was never fulfilled because the KGB could not find Nosenko. He notes that KGB chief Yuri Andropov was still talking about assassinating Nosenko years later.²⁷

²² Helms, p. 244.

²³ See the testimony by John Hart, Hearings, Select Committee on Assassination, Vol. II, pp. 494-95. Hart had been directed by then-DCI Stansfield Turner to review the Nosenko case in 1977. Bagley also testified that Golitsyn submitted questions for and comments about Nosenko, and that the CIA used Golitsyn to check on Nosenko’s statements. *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, pp. 577-78.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 34.

²⁵ Mangold, p. 160.

²⁶ Oleg Kalugin, *The First Directorate* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), pp. 59-60.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94, 239.

In 1999, Vasili Mitrokhin, greatly aided by British scholar Christopher Andrew, produced *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*.²⁸ Mitrokhin, who had worked in the First Chief Directorate of the KGB until 1984, defected to the British in 1992. He brought with him thousands of documents and notes. Some of these concerned Nosenko, including a psychological profile prepared by the KGB that “explained” why Nosenko defected: Nosenko “lusted for power,” it said, and suffered from “careerism.”²⁹ Another document indicated that the KGB planned to have an “illegal” assassinate Nosenko if the latter visited the World Fair in Montreal in 1967.³⁰

Oleg Gordievsky, another prominent agent-in-place for the British who later defected from the KGB, has also stated that Nosenko was truly a defector.³¹

Perhaps Kalugin, Mitrokhin, and Gordievsky are involved in a vast disinformation campaign by the KGB and its successor organizations, but one wonders: to what end? If one accepts the information provided by these three former KGB officers as true, then the KGB considered Nosenko an important defector, a Soviet court sentenced him to death, and the KGB instructed its officers on several occasions to attempt to kill him. Doesn't this establish Nosenko's bona fides?

James Angleton

In a chapter entitled “Beyond X-2,”³² Helms continues his defense of James Angleton. One reason for his stand appears to be that “much of what has been published is unfair to Angleton, to the various DCI's for whom he worked, to the Agency, and to history.”³³ Helms obviously took criticism of Angleton personally—as well he should have, since Helms was Angleton's most important patron and boss. Another reason for the *apologia*—and here one must just accept Helms's word—is that for many years Angleton did perform very well: first, with the OSS, and later, with the CIA. A third and important reason is that Helms valued Angleton “as a colleague and a friend.”³⁴

Helms acknowledges that one of Angleton's “dominant traits was an obsessive approach to things that interested him,” and that “Jim went overboard from time to time.”³⁵ As an example of “going overboard,” Helms cites Angleton's unique view, maintained for years, that the Sino-Soviet split was a mirage created by Soviet experts through deception and disinformation. Helms evidently thought this was an example of boys just being boys: “I let him push this view and

²⁸ Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield* (New York: Basic Books, 1999)

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 186, and footnote 58 on p. 609.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 368, and footnote 66 on p. 631. Golitsyn was also to be assassinated.

³¹ Mangold, p. 204.

³² The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) designated its counterintelligence units as “X-2.” Both Helms and Angleton served with distinction in the OSS.

³³ Helms, p. 274. Emphasis added.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

arranged for him to express it to experts, including Henry Kissinger.” When Angleton could not find anybody else to support his view, Helms “instructed him to knock it off....” What Helms does not say is that Golitsyn also peddled this view of a “phony” Sino-Soviet split and either inspired or reinforced Angleton’s view. Helms also does not mention that Angleton—supported by Helms—was making life more difficult than it had to be for the CIA’s analysts who were attempting to convince skeptics that there indeed was a Sino-Soviet split.³⁶ Finally, Helms does not admit that Angleton never did “knock it off;” Angleton maintained his thesis until the day he died.

Helms also absolves Angleton from any responsibility for the MHCHAOS operation in the late-1960s and early-1970s, which was designed to discover whether foreign governments had instigated or were involved in fomenting the political unrest in the United States, especially the anti-Vietnam War protests. Helms says that the unit that ran the MHCHAOS operation was a mere “appendage” of Angleton’s Counterintelligence Staff and that the unit reported to him directly and not through Angleton. Other authors dispute Helms’s version and claim that Angleton played a major role in the operation.³⁷

Whatever the truth, Helms takes responsibility for MHCHAOS’s excesses. He admits in something of an “accidents will happen” fashion that the Agency violated its charter by infiltrating and reporting on the activity of groups of American citizens who were protesting the policies of Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. For Helms, it was the “devil made me do it.” He writes of the situation: “...without the President’s insistence, CIA would never have instigated or reported on anything touching on domestic political violence.”³⁸ I think that this assessment accurately describes how Helms felt at the time: he was caught between a rock and another rock. His account of this demoralizing episode again raises a question: Why did Helms not at least threaten to resign when President Johnson ordered him and the CIA to violate the Agency’s charter?

Acknowledging that Angleton had his faults, Helms notes that his counterintelligence chief became “too isolated late in his career” and “overvalued some sources....” But he never mentions who these “sources” were. Nor does he make the connection between Angleton’s faults and the great “molehunt” that began in 1962 and lasted for years. In fact, Helms spends less than two pages in describing this shattering episode—the most disheartening and dismaying pages in his entire book.³⁹

In what one can only consider a masterpiece of obfuscation, Helms writes of Angleton’s “alleged role in ruining the careers of various Agency officers with unfounded

³⁶ The skeptics did not necessarily accept the Golitsyn-Angleton thesis; they admitted that the Soviets and the Chinese were having problems, but they did not agree with the notion that the two communist behemoths were fundamentally at odds with one another. See, for instance, Harold Ford, “Calling the Sino-Soviet Split,” *Studies In Intelligence* (Unclassified Edition, Winter 1998-99), pp. 57-71.

³⁷ See Wise and Mangold.

³⁸ Helms, p. 282.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 283-84.

suspicions of their loyalty.” To review briefly: Golitsyn convinced Angleton that the KGB had penetrated the CIA and that there was a “mole” whose real name began with a “K” and was Slavic in origin. Angleton, who actually turned over to Golitsyn the personnel files of Agency staff employees, then began a years-long process of finding the “mole.”⁴⁰ Angleton could never prove that any of the people he considered to be the “mole” were in fact disloyal, but their careers were ruined. Helms obviously did not consider Angleton to be the root of the problem in the 1960s, and he evidently went to his death without changing his mind. He writes of these people with ruined careers:

*In the end, I had no choice but to accept a decision that said each was innocent, but that the innocence could not be proved. This is the reverse of the verdict occasionally given in British law courts—“guilty but not proved.”*⁴¹

Helms then contradicts his previous statement about Angleton playing an “alleged role” by writing that the Office of Security and the Counterintelligence Staff “collaborated closely,” with the CI Staff playing an advisory role. He is honorable enough to acknowledge that the “final decision was mine alone.”

Continuing his defense of Angleton, Helms denies “as patently false” the charge that Angleton’s suspicions brought the Agency’s Soviet operations to a halt in the last few years of his career. According to Helms, defectors were accepted and new operations went forward. His minimal account, however, so contradicts what many others have stated and written that it begs for some proof. Unfortunately, Helms provides absolutely no details to substantiate his assertion. Helms admits, on page 284, that he should have insisted that Angleton step aside. If only he had done so and spared the Agency one of its darkest times. The ironic and obviously unintended result of the determined defense of James Angleton is that Helms sullies *his* reputation.

In Sum

Some longtime public servants never write personal accounts of their careers, and one is left to wonder what they really thought. Others write memoirs that are so bland that one wonders why they bothered. Richard Helms served in one of the most important jobs in the US government during one of the most controversial periods in US history. We are all fortunate that he left us a memoir that both entertains and stimulates. In a broad sense, *A Look Over My Shoulder* is also a type of morality play. Today’s intelligence professionals should read it and heed its lessons.

⁴⁰ See Wise and Mangold.

⁴¹ Helms, p. 283. Emphasis added.