

Journeys to Cold War Battles of Youth

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By Walter Pincus

Washington Post Staff Writer

What was it like to travel abroad as a "CIA-subsidized" youth?

In the summer of 1960, I flew from New York to Paris en route to an 8-day international youth conference to be held in Accra, Ghana. My ticket had been paid for by the Foundation for Youth and Student Affairs—an organi-

zation now cited as a conduit for CIA funds.

In Paris, I joined some 70 others, who ranged from college students to young government officials representing countries outside the Soviet Bloc. We boarded a chartered Air France Constellation which was to take us the rest of the way to Accra.

Among my fellow passengers was a cross-section of a social type little-

known back in the United States—the international youth and student world. Some were free-loaders, but many from Asia, Africa and Latin America were destined to play important political roles in the futures of their country.

The trip to Accra was my second exposure to this international youth world. A year earlier, on a whim, I attended the Communist-run Vienna

Recalled by a Former CIA Recruit

Youth Festival as a member of the American delegation. At the time I was a free-lance writer and my interest had been drawn by a Cambridge, Mass., group called The Independent Service.

It was encouraging people to go to Vienna to present a real—rather than pro-Communist—view of the United States to the other country delegations. At the time the U.S. Government told students to stay away from

Vienna. The Independent Service has also recently been named as a CIA-supported organization.

At Vienna I found the international youth world to be one of realpolitik.

The Communist delegations controlled key meetings called to discuss such matters as colonialism and civil rights, using them as forums to attack the West. I remember a rousing ovation given Paul Robeson after he de-

livered an impassioned speech about "18 million American Negroes in chains," and then watching as Robeson was presented by the Soviet delegation chief to important youth leaders from Asia and Africa.

To coordinate efforts of the anti-Communist Americans, the Independent Service set up a meeting place in downtown Vienna. There, each night,

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Ex-CIA Recruit Tells of Trips Abroad

a few of us would gather to discuss how another point of view could be presented.

Pamphlets describing the United States—such as one detailing the limited gains in civil rights — were supplied us by the Independent Service. We, in turn, smuggled them back into the Festival grounds to be distributed clandestinely to other delegations. The Communists themselves refused to permit anything other than their literature on the grounds.

Vienna impressed me and I wanted to keep in touch with many of the Americans and foreigners that I met there. I wrote an article about the Festival and volunteered to testify on the anti-American effort when the House Un-American Activities Committee launched an inquiry into the U.S. participation. That inquiry slowed down when a statement praising the effort by CIA Deputy Director Gen. Charles P. Cabell was placed in the Congressional Record.

Several months later, I was invited to the house of a young man I had met after returning from Vienna. We talked of the international youth field. He wanted to tell me about what this country was doing in this field and he wanted me to take some years off to join the effort.

He swore me to secrecy, disclosed he worked for CIA and explained in some detail the extent to which the agency was operating in this field.

Rather than ask for an immediate decision, he suggested that I attend the Accra conference the next summer. I was to be part of the American delegation.

The delegation included representatives of several types of American youth organizations—religious, social and political. No one openly questioned my presence among them. But I had been briefed in Washington on each of them. None was remotely aware of CIA's interest.

At Accra Airport we were met by the conference staff—among whom

was a person who had helped arrange my selection for the delegation. While waiting for our bags to be unloaded, the two of us watched as a ceremony took place between the then Congo Premier, Patrice Lumumba, and Ghana President Kwame Nkrumah. The two had just signed a pact uniting their armies and Lumumba was flying off to face the Belgians.

I asked a nearby Ghanaian officer what was happening and he handed me a typewritten paper bearing an X and a signature. It was the original copy of the treaty. Several minutes later, with Lumumba aboard his plane, the Ghanaian rushed up for the treaty. It was the closest I ever got to the orthodox CIA role. My partner smiled.

The conference was called to discuss world affairs and plan future regional meetings on specific subjects—agricultural reform, trade unionism, education. Each of the foreign delegations represented politically important youth organizations in their own countries.

My role was that of observer. I was to meet as many of the participants as possible. My companion was an expert in parliamentary procedure. He kept me posted on where I would learn the most and suggested I attend the world affairs seminar. Here I found I was, for the most part, more liberal in outlook than most of my colleagues on the American delegation. At no time, however, was I told what to say or what type of resolution should be suggested or passed.

During the conference a Soviet youth leader speaking English and French arrived to invite the various participants to attend an impending Moscow conference to plan the next world youth festival. He offered several delegates free plane tickets if they wanted them.

My friend suggested to the Russian a public debate about the festival in which I would participate since I had attended the one in Vienna. Upon learning this, the Russian denounced me as a government agent. From then

on he avoided me and left two days later, having passed out some of his plane tickets to Latin American and African delegates.

When the conference was over I accepted an invitation from the Guinean Youth Committee to travel to their country for a three-day visit. This was at a time when Guinea had broken from France and the United States had refused to offer any financial aid. In desperation, Guinea turned to the Communist bloc for assistance. I found on the three-day trip much support for the Communists, but in appreciation of Soviet aid, not ideology.

When I returned to Washington and, over lunch, discussed the trip with my CIA contact I stressed this impression of Guinea. I also turned down the job.

Three months later I received a call from a CIA friend who said an Indian youth leader I met in Accra wanted me to attend a major political meeting as an observer.

One of the Indian's colleagues had invited observers from Red China and the Soviet Union. He wanted someone from the United States to keep it neutral. Would I go? Transportation would be arranged with the Indians, my CIA acquaintance volunteered.

I agreed. The next day a plane ticket to New Delhi arrived by messenger. Shortly thereafter a cable came from my Indian friend tendering me an invitation and his thanks that I was coming.

I had no further discussions about the trip with anyone from CIA prior to leaving. At the conference were a representative of the Soviet Youth organization and two officers of a similar Yugoslav body. We had several friendly debates among ourselves and many bitter ones before the young Indians. The subjects were always the same: American support of "colonialism" and "enslavement" of the Negroes.

As in Accra, when my participation in the Vienna festival was disclosed, the Soviet began chiding me as a "government agent."