

C.I.A. Tried in 50's to Recruit Times Man

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 30—The Central Intelligence Agency attempted in the early 1950's to recruit a reporter for the New York Times as an undercover operative abroad, according to C.I.A. documents obtained by the Times.

Wayne Phillips the reporter, who is now a public relations official at the New York Stock Exchange, recalled in an interview that he was first approached in 1952 by Richard S. Suter, a C.I.A. representative, while working for The Times in New York and attending the Russian Institute at Columbia University.

Mr. Phillips said he never worked for the agency. But in conversations with Mr. Suter, he said, the agent told him the agency could arrange for the Times to assign him to Moscow, an assignment Mr. Phillips wanted, if he agreed to be "helpful" to the agency there.

When he expressed reservations about the propriety of such a dual relationship, Mr. Phillips recalled, he was assured by Mr. Suter that the C.I.A. had "a working arrangement" with Arthur Hays Sulzberger, then published of The Times, in which other reporters working abroad had been placed on the agency's payroll.

Didn't Tell Times

Mr. Phillips said he never told any Times official about the approach, and the agency itself has so far declined any comment on the matter. Turner Catledge, who was managing editor of The Times in 1952, said in an interview that he had never heard of any such arrangement by Mr. Sulzberger or anyone else and did not believe one existed.

Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, the present Times publisher, said today, "I never heard of The Times being approached either in my capacity as publisher or as the son of the late Mr. Sulzberger."

In 1973, after reports that the C.I.A. had utilized American journalists, The Times inquired whether any Times personnel

were involved with the agency and William E. Colby, then Director of Central Intelligence, said they were not.

The Times obtained the C.I.A. documents confirming an approach to Mr. Phillips from the former reporter, who left the paper in 1961 to join the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency. Mr. Phillips said he had obtained them from the C.I.A. by taking action under the Freedom of Information Act.

He said that his discussion with the agency, which the documents show were intended to develop him as a clandestine "asset" for use in an unidentified foreign country, were abruptly broken off in the summer of 1953, after he wrote a letter to the late Allen W. Dulles, then Director of Central Intelligence, asking about Mr. Suter's bona fides.

'In the Front Door'

A few days later, Mr. Phillips recalled, he received a telephone call from "a very disturbed" Mr. Suter, who told him that he had "gone in the front door" by writing to Mr. Dulles "when they were trying to get me in the back door, and there could be no further discussions."

Mr. Phillips said he was subsequently visited at the Times office in New York by a man with C.I.A. credentials who said he had been authorized to tell him that the approach by Mr. Suter had been a legitimate one, made on the agency's behalf.

Emanuel R. Freedman, who was The Times's foreign editor in 1953, is now deceased, as is Mr. Suter. But Mr. Catledge said in a telephone interview from his home in New Orleans that he had never been told of Mr. Phillips's experience, that he did not think the C.I.A. had ever entered into the arrangement with The Times that Mr. Phillips described, that he would have viewed it as "foreign to our purpose" and that, had he ever learned that it existed, he "would have broken it up."

Mr. Catledge recalled that on several occasions he was approached by representatives

of government agencies, probably including the C.I.A. with requests that he supply Times credentials to individuals going abroad for other purposes. But he said that he had rebuffed every request.

One former correspondent for the Times recalled that, just before being sent abroad in the late 1940's, he was advised by Arthur Hays Sulzberger that he might be approached by the C.I.A. with a request for assistance after arriving at his new post.

The former correspondent, who asked that his name not be used, said that the discussion took place at the initiative of Mr. Sulzberger, who told him that he was not "under any obligation" to agree to any agency request and that the publisher himself would be "happier" if he refused to cooperate.

"But he left it sort of up to me," the man said. "The message was if I really wanted to do that, O.K., but he didn't think it appropriate for a Times correspondent."