

Author of anti-CIA book wrote glowing letter at resignation

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WASHINGTON — Philip B. F. Agee, the former intelligence officer who has published a diary exposing clandestine activities of the Central Intelligence Agency, expressed a much friendlier attitude toward the CIA when he resigned from it.

"I will continue to hold in high regard the importance of the agency's activities in the interest of the security of the United States," Agee wrote in 1968 when he resigned after 12 years in the CIA. "I am hopeful that as

my personal crisis subsides I can be of use to agency programs in years to come."

Since then, Agee has embraced a leftist viewpoint of American foreign policy and his book, "Inside the Compagny: CIA Diary," exposes scores of names and operations in Latin America. He served in Ecuador, Uruguay and Mexico.

Agee's book has been published in England and Canada. His agent, Scott Meredith, is still negotiating for an American publisher. The CIA reportedly was

forced to transfer many of its Western Hemisphere Division officers when it learned that Agee's book exposed their names.

In his letter of resignation, Agee sounded as though he would honor the CIA's oath of secrecy, required of all employees, when he wrote: "Although personal circumstances incompatible at this time with the best interests of the agency have precipitated this resignation, I also wish to make clear that I understand security priorities."

Copies of Agee's letter have been circulated by the CIA to members of oversight committees on Capitol Hill. Reached in Lisbon, Portugal, Agee confirmed its authenticity, but said it did not express his true feelings about the CIA at the time of his resignation.

"I did day good things about the agency because my plan then was to stay in Mexico City in business," Agee said. "I did not want to give the agency any inclination to believe that I had

resigned for any political reasons. Relations were so close then between the agency and the Mexican government they could have forced me out of the country."

Agee, who now lives in England, said his personal problems included a divorce and increasing distaste for the CIA's role in Latin America, but his political viewpoint moved gradually toward socialism over a period of years after his resignation, as he recounts in his book.

After several unsuccessful years in business, he moved to Paris to work on the book and visited Cuba several times for research on Latin American political unrest during the 1960s.

CIA Director Colby told a House Subcommittee last month that he is determined to try to prevent publication of Agee's book in the United States.

The CIA won an injunction against a book published in the United States by another ex-CIA officer, resulting in

the deletion of some material. That book is "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence" by Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks.

Colby said Agee's revelations already have caused harassment of CIA operatives and "I do not think I can stand idly by" and allow Agee to "profit further if I can restrain him."

Agee says that he hopes to return to the United States once the book is published here. Colby has said that if Agee's revelations of classified material were intended to harm the United States it is possible that he could be prosecuted.

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