

Herbert Philbrick, 78, Dies; Spy Who 'Led Three Lives'

file 8/18/73
Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H.—Herbert Philbrick, 78, who chronicled his years of spying on the Communist Party for the FBI in the best-seller autobiography "I Led Three Lives," died Aug. 16 at his home in North Hampton. The cause of death was not reported.

As a top member of the New England chapter of the Communist Party, Mr. Philbrick fed the FBI information on the party's efforts in the United States. The name of his book was inspired by his separate, parallel lives as a family man working in advertising, an FBI spy and a Communist.

It was turned into a popular syndicated television series during the mid-1950s. The "Three Lives" television series has been called a product of the era of Communist-hunter Sen. Joseph McCarthy (R-Wis.).

It had a documentary appearance, with Mr. Philbrick's character narrating episodes, and opened with an announcer saying the program was the "fantastically true story of Herbert A. Philbrick, who for nine frightening years did lead three lives."

Mr. Philbrick served as a consultant to the show, which had the approval of the FBI. Former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover even reviewed the scripts. Communist schemes portrayed in the series included sabotage of vital industries, drug smug-

gling and the indoctrination of America's youth.

In recent years, Mr. Philbrick had served as president of a nonprofit educational organization and lectured occasionally. He also wrote a monthly news bulletin and kept up to date on Communist and totalitarian government actions. His lecture topics included "The Red Underground Today," "Christianity versus Communism" and "Communism and Youth."

In the 1940s, he joined the Massachusetts Youth Council, an organization he believed advocated peace. He later recognized the group as a front for Communists and went to the FBI.

At the FBI's request, he stayed in the organization, underwent indoctrination and special training and over a decade rose through its ranks. Mr. Philbrick once described himself as "one of the most hard-working Communists in New England."

His underground activity became known in the late 1940s, when he testified as a witness before the House Un-American Activities Committee. He was credited with giving information that led to arrests of the top 11 Communists in New England.

Mr. Philbrick moved to New Hampshire in the 1970s after living for many years in Washington and working for federal nuclear regulators.