

A CIA Dilemma Over Philip Agee



Jack Anderson

TOP CIA officials are debating whether to bring legal action against Philip Agee, whose book about his life in the CIA has caused havoc.

Agee listed everyone who had worked with him in the CIA in Latin America. He also added names provided, he said, by "a small group of Mexican comrades whom I trained to follow the comings and goings of CIA people before I left Mexico City."

It has cost the CIA "several million dollars," according to inside sources, to transfer the agents who had been fingered and to protect its operations in Latin America.

★ ★ ★

THE CIA, however, couldn't protect all the local people whom Agee listed as CIA "collaborators." Among them were many who had only routine dealings with the CIA in such legitimate activities as drug control, antihijacking techniques and antiterrorist operations.

A number of them have been harassed with threatening phone calls. One reported that his daughter's life had been threatened and the wall in front of his home had been defaced.

In Uruguay, a taxi driver whose name appeared in Agee's book stopped at a traffic light. Another car pulled alongside him, and an assailant emptied a pistol at the taxi. The driver miraculously escaped injury.

CIA officials doubt whether they can bring legal charges against Agee as long as he stays out of the country, say our

sources. Agee told us by transatlantic telephone that he hopes to return home, but that he will wait until he gets the green light from his legal adviser.

He is represented by Melvin Wulf, an American Civil Liberties Union attorney, who said he will withhold his advice until he talks to the Justice Department and learns its intentions.

"The only action they could bring against Agee," Wulf told us, "would be an espionage charge, and that would be a fruitless prosecution."

★ ★ ★

INDEED, this may be precisely what the CIA has in mind. Our own CIA sources say that Agee has been kept under surveillance and that he has been spotted in the company of Cuban intelligence agents in both Paris and London. Agee doesn't deny this. And he said meaningfully: "I support the Cuban revolution."

He emphasized, however, that he had never been debriefed by either the Soviet KGB or Cuban DGI intelligence. But on his own initiative, he told us, he had gone to insurgent leaders and had informed them of his CIA activities against them.

"I am for the liberation movements," he said.

But the question remains: Is Philip Agee an idealist who soured on the CIA and seeks only social change? Or is he a turncoat who defected to the Communists?

(Written with Les Whitten)