

Chief of C.I.A.'s Latin Operations Quits To Defend Agency Before the Public

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By LINDA CHARLTON
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WASHINGTON, May 9—For 25 years David A. Phillips has been, by trade, a spy, and, although he might protest the label—he would call himself a clandestine employe of the Central Intelligence Agency—he does not apologize for the occupation.

"There's no question in my mind that I have spent the last quarter of a century being useful," he said in an interview.

But there are questions in many other minds, questions raised by allegations that the agency has conducted top-level spying operations abroad in violation of its charter. Questions that have now spread to the C.I.A.'s personnel stationed abroad.

And so David Phillips, a 50-year-old chief of Latin American operations, has stepped down for the last time as station chief in a Latin American country. He has resigned yesterday to take a self-assigned job as head of the agency. In his words, he wants to explain the C.I.A. and the intelligence establishment and the role that it has in an American society.

Group Organized

To do this he has organized the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers, and says about 160 of the 400 persons he has sent letters to have already joined, paying a \$10 fee. Its role, he said, is to make speakers available at no cost beyond an onset to any one who wants to listen.

Mr. Phillips, who says his income dropped from \$36,000 to \$16,000 at retirement, already has a couple of speeches in New York City scheduled for next week.

He seems likely to be a good speaker, for even in an informal interview over drinks he talked in what sounded at first almost like prepared statements, careful in syntax, excellent in diction and inflection, the sentences complete.

It turned out that he was once an actor—an incompetent actor, he said humbly—before a stint as a World War II bombardier and, briefly, as editor of an English-language paper in Chile called The South Pacific Mail.

"It was there," he said, "that I was first approached by United States intelligence to cooperate." By 1950, he said, he was working fulltime for the agency—but posing either as a Foreign Service officer or a businessman.

He said he had chosen Chile as a place to work from an encyclopedia "because it said you could ski in the Andes in the morning and swim in the Pacific in the afternoon, when

This is possible, but it is arduous."

He lived in Chile for more than six and a half years, and was running the agency's Latin-American operations at the time that the Marxist government of President Salvador Allende Gossens was violently overthrown—allegedly with the active encouragement of the agency.

Tomorrow Mr. Phillips plans a news conference to talk about what the C.I.A. actually did do in Chile, he said, as opposed to what it is rumored to have done. He would say nothing more until, then, nothing beyond a statement that "we were indeed preserving some sectors of Chilean society." He would not explain.

But the "freedom to talk" about it is perhaps the basic reason for his resignation, he says. He wants to "help dispel the myth that the C.I.A. is composed of unprincipled people interfering in the lives of other people around the world."

Mr. Phillips, who denied that he is receiving support other than moral from the agency or any of his colleagues there, is obviously not planning to disclose anything that the agency wants kept secret. Besides, he said, there are "good secrets, bad secrets and nonsecrets." There are also some entirely personal and domestic reasons for his decision to speak up for the C.I.A., beyond his conviction that the agency is being defamed and, perhaps, destroyed, he said.

There was, he recalled, the moment when he had to tell one of his teen-age children—she and his wife, both married before, have seven children between them—that "father, after all, had not been a foreign service officer or a businessman but an intelligence officer."

"But That's Dirty"

This was the fifth time he had done this, he said, and in the past it had been a "pleasant experience." But he said, "The reaction this time was, 'But that's dirty.' My reaction to that was that it's just a part of the current misconception about C.I.A. period."

He said his decision to get out of the agency to "defend and explain" it also was based on a feeling that the agency was the victim of a "time lag."

"The activities that were deemed necessary and indeed were popular previously are no longer so," he explained. What sort of activities? "Such as sustaining democratic institutions in Europe in the post-war era." He would not elaborate, but gave another example: "helping friends to maintain themselves." *During the time in the nineteen-sixties

soring the export of violent revolution? in Latin America. Again, no details.

Mr. Phillips believes that the agency will be found "not guilty of having established a pattern which threatens the civil liberties of Americans" when the Congressional investigations of the C.I.A. are completed, and for that reason he believes that Congress is "the absolute salvation of the C.I.A."

Beyond that, there is another question being asked in some quarters these days: Should this country have such an agency? This is not a question for him to answer, Mr. Phillips said. But when he gave an answer:

"The world has been a tough place from the beginning. I know, after spending my adult life abroad, that it continues to be a tough place filled with dark alleys. Some of the nation's work has had to be performed in these byways."

What is the nation's work, then? "Aaah—a sign of acknowledgement. An important part of this nation's work is to guarantee its survival."

So it is survival that makes the C.I.A. necessary? "Absolutely."

Are there some things a nation should not do to survive? "You are asking me a question that others should answer."

Earlier, after internal turmoil that was visible in his face, Mr. Phillips had agreed to let himself be quoted in acknowledging. The question of whether any country needs or should have an intelligence organization such as C.I.A. is a valid subject for argument."

* Compare with language used by Colby - WXPost 8 Apr 75.