

INTELLIGENCE IN RECENT PUBLIC LITERATURE

(Editor's Note: The following is primarily a review of the book, and does not purport to examine the possibility or extent of Soviet involvement in Agee's actions, from the start or at an early stage.)

INSIDE THE COMPANY: CIA DIARY. By Philip Agee. (Penguin Books, 1975.)

Philip Agee's 600-page story of his career and views as a junior and middle-level case officer in Quito, Montevideo, and Mexico City will anger all those who have worked for the Central Intelligence Agency because he is its first real defector in the classic sense of the word. Though it is unlikely that he could be successfully prosecuted in a cold or at least cooling war, in a hotter context Agee would fall into the area which the Constitution, speaking of enemies in time of war, defines as "giving them aid and comfort." In any case *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* will certainly give aid and comfort to any one looking for concrete and heretofore classified information about some aspects of the Clandestine Service. Unlike previous information about CIA operations made available by Victor Marchetti and others who have claimed to have had the best interests of the country at heart, this book aims, Mr. Agee says, to get "useful information on the CIA to revolutionary organizations that could use it."

Agee begins with an account of his recruitment in 1959 and his training in the Career Trainee program. His 50-page recitation of the instruction he received is an accurate description of the intelligence community, the CIA structure, and the doctrines, tradecraft, and terms of the Clandestine Service. He then devotes 216 pages to his tour of duty in the Embassy in Quito, 1960-1963, almost as many pages to Montevideo, 1964-1966, and 64 pages to his final tour in Mexico City, 1966-1968. He introduces each of his three tours with the headquarters appreciation of the local operating climate, a description of the political parties, and, except for Mexico, the CIA's objectives in the area (the Related Mission Directives). His most thorough revelation of sensitive information is given in his accurate descriptions of each station's operations under identifying cryptonym.

After establishing this very complete background, Agee publishes what appear to be chronological diary entries which describe his operations and their progress, other station operations, and new operational initiatives as they developed. However, whatever factual information may have been contained in his actual diary, the entries now have been expanded to include the historical, political and economic contexts of his operations as he now views those contexts since leaving the Agency. Thus, what we have in this book is not a diary of the period, but an account of that period interpreted after four years of subsequent research, and evaluated by very different ideas and attitudes than those he held at the time. Agee makes no attempt to conceal his methods of composition, but what he presents in the form and rhetoric of his restructured recollections is a "diary" that sounds more authoritative, comprehensive, and intelligible than any diary actually kept by a professional in similar circumstances could possibly have been.

Agee's personal story as he now sets it forth is that, upon joining the Agency as a "patriot dedicated to the preservation of my country and our way of life," he readily accepted the policy that some covert extension of the national effort to counter

Communist expansion was desirable in order to allow political forces to evolve a better society. He finished his three and one half years in Quito in tune with the station program. He wanted to resign by the end of his Montevideo assignment, however, because—he says—he arrived slowly at the conclusion that the U.S. role in Latin America, while superficially well intended, perpetuated injustice rather than reducing it. In Mexico City his increasing dissent amounts to defection. After resigning from the Agency in Mexico City, he cast about for other employment. His need to earn a living became acute, and the writing of this book appears to have been a solution to that problem. In the last and briefest part of the book he shares some of his new economic views on Latin America and describes some of his steps and problems between 1970 and 1974 in preparing and publishing his "diary."

The effect of the publication of the classified information in his book is clearest in its damaging impact on CIA's activities and persons with whom it dealt in Ecuador, Uruguay, and Mexico. Those whose interests lie in identifying and neutralizing U.S. covert action will find it useful, especially the alphabetized Appendix of 429 names and descriptions of "CIA Employees, Agents, Collaborators and Organizations," largely in Latin America. He does not discuss specific projects or identify agents in other geographic areas, though some of the text could be used to identify operations outside Latin America, such as CIA's international security cooperation, Labor, Division D, and UN operations. His description of the Clandestine Service's *modus operandi* is valid outside Latin America, and Agee is said to be working on a larger project describing CIA activities all over the world. I would assume that he has prepared a long extension of the Appendix name list, with the new title of "Probable and possible CIA employees, Agents, Collaborators and organizations," and that such a list would be extremely useful to other intelligence organizations. However, I would judge that most Latin readers will perceive his revelations in context with the Soviet and other nations' activities and within the concrete realities of their own continuing struggles, and that they will express no broad new surge of moral revulsion against the U.S. The book's main achievement is to provide the Communists and extreme Left with specific knowledge of CIA's Latin American operations and insight into CIA *modus operandi* in order to permit them to counter U.S. and particular CIA actions. As such, it will doubtless make the required reading list of the KGB mid-career course. The book will, of course, disillusion some U.S. readers and will doubtless be used to support some "causes." It may also, however, educate the broader public beneficially on the subject of secret intelligence.

The book will affect the CIA as a severe body blow does any living organism: some parts obviously will be affected more than others, but the health of the whole is bound to suffer. A considerable number of CIA personnel must be diverted from their normal duties to undertake the meticulous and time-consuming task of repairing the damage done to its Latin American program, and to see what can be done to help those injured by the author's revelations.

Agee's knowledge of local personalities and history is impressive. I have no great quarrel with his reporting and analysis of events, though I remain uneasy as to the extent of the bias introduced into his recollections from 1970-1974 by his research in institutions in Mexico City, Havana, Paris and London, as well as by his strong, but not ultimately clear, attitudes and feelings about his own past or the world about him. Nor do I fault his concern (shared by the U.S. Government) for the unequal distribution of income in Latin America, a point he returns to frequently. I can even stay with him as he claims that U.S. policies do not always deal fully with injustices.

Apart from a subtle pervasive imbalance in judgment stemming from the fact he writes his book long after his conversion, other problems arise because his economic analysis is stereotypically Marxist. He gives undue emphasis to the reporting of violence. He is over-impressed with the possible impact of CIA operations on public affairs. Out of the factual material he provides, someone else might have written a critique of the Alliance for Progress which might have favorable influence on U.S. policy. With only hints as to the depth of his dissatisfaction, however, he sets forth on page 503 a fantasied letter to the Director, in which he says, "Our (the U.S.) only alternatives are to continue to support injustice or withdraw and let the cards fall by themselves . . . it is clear that the only real solutions are those advocated by the Communists and others of the extreme left . . ."

Rather than "withdraw and let the cards fall by themselves," he takes an emotional leap, committing his personal energy to use the knowledge he has come to possess against the value structure he has been part of. However, he is not really interested in telling us much about this. His account in the last part from his defection to the publishing of his book is sanitized and as devoid of the names of those he dealt with as the earlier parts are full of them. That he omits part of his story is patent. One assumes that when he visited Havana he received editorial assistance from the Cubans and Soviets, but how much is, of course, not clear.

This book will not be of as much interest to Agee's former colleagues in the Agency as he might imagine. Agee gives no professional account of operations, *per se*, judgments in the inception of operations, agent motivations, or the effectiveness of different operations. Nor does he consider or speculate about CIA thinking and judgment at operational echelons higher than his junior level. He provides little insight into his relations with colleagues and agents, nor is he candid enough about his tergiversation to be thought-provoking. Such additions, larded with a little humor, would have made it the best-yet story of life as a case officer. As for the themes which would surely attract serious writers on this topic, he sheds no fresh light on human behavior, international relations or the role of intelligence in a democracy. Nor does he give us any good reading on our paramount interest—why (and how), after becoming disenchanted with his work, does a case officer fully aware of Soviet history and practice, take the course of acknowledged betrayal?

Agee appears personally to have been compatible with his colleagues as a case officer, to have competed well with his peers, and to have held a conventional political outlook. He observed in an alleged diary entry dated 1968 that he feels "unsure about finding satisfactory work inside the same system rejected long ago as a university student." Yet after college he appears to have stayed in the system, joining the CIA for patriotic reasons, involving himself in sophisticated political operations, and as he puts it, becoming one of capitalism's secret police. In Mexico in 1971 he reports a further change in his political views (page 564) saying, "The key to adopting increasingly radical views has been my fuller comprehension of the class divisions of capitalistic society based on property . . . that class identity comes before nationality. . . ." This time he decides to take action ". . . to name all the names and organizations connected with CIA operations . . . to convey them to revolutionary organizations that could use it to defend themselves better." He expresses neither pleasure nor concern that this step carries with it his rejection of his colleagues and country. He certainly emerges as a person with shallow attachments.

In addition to rejecting the political system he had been a part of, Agee earlier had rejected going into his family business, had left law school after three months,

and left his wife and later his girl friend. He says in January 1971 "I begin again after a year of great disappointment and sense of failure. My hopes for a new start and future in Mexico were clouded with the failure of my marriage plans, and I am unsure of my direction. The reasons are a complex series of mistakes, perhaps even unrealistic hopes from the beginning, but with results too damaging to overcome." Whether one's hopes are realistic or unrealistic, the pain and anger caused by recurring disappointments are intense and pervasive, yet he is inarticulate about his deep sense of personal injury. He gropes to express his values associated with defection in these words:

"There is a contradiction in what I am doing but I don't have much choice given the plans we have and our need for income. One has to take the realistic view: in order to fulfill responsibilities you have to compromise with the system knowing full well that the system doesn't work for everybody. This means everybody has to get what he can within decency's limits—which can be stretched when needed to assure a little more security. What I have to do now is get mine, inside the system and forget I ever worked for the CIA. No, there's no use trying to change the system. What happened at the Plaza of the Three Cultures is happening all over the world to people trying to change the system. Life is too short and has too many delights that might be missed. At thirty-three I've got half a life time to enjoy them."

He gives up any pretension to idealism. Is this not the mercenary saying "Because I find there is no use in trying to change an iniquitous system, I shall become iniquitous myself in order to obtain the satisfactions I desire"? Like other adolescents of the 1960s who have vented their impatient and frustrated idealism in destructive acts, Agee, out of touch with his deeper feelings, vents his rage and displays a towering arrogance. By virtue of the trust placed in him, he damages more than himself.