

BOOK BLOWS COVER

CIA and Mexico: Close Association Leaves Red Faces

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MEXICO CITY—Both the United States and Mexican governments have been embarrassed recently by an accelerating series of revelations about the work of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in Mexico.

The revelations are far different from those about the CIA efforts in Chile to weaken the government of the late Salvador Allende. There has been no hint that the CIA is doing anything to hurt the government of President Luis Echeverria of Mexico and his ruling Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI). In fact, the stories stress that there has been close cooperation between the Mexican government and the CIA. That is what makes the revelations so embarrassing to Mexico.

Though it won't be listed on any public agenda, a discussion of changes in CIA personnel and perhaps operation stemming from the revelations will probably take up some of the time of President Echeverria and President Ford when they meet at the border towns of Nogales, Ariz., and Nogales, Sonora, next Monday.

The revelations have come from a former CIA agent in Mexico, Philip B. Agee, who is now living in London. Publishers in London and Paris plan to publish his book, "Inside the Company: a CIA Diary," in January. In advance of publication, Agee has been talking with newsmen about the work of the CIA in Mexico and the rest of Latin America. These interviews have made the

Please Turn to Page 13, Col. 1

Mexico Embarrassed by Its Ties With CIA

Continued from First Page
front pages of most Mexican newspapers.

In some ways, the revelations have been less startling than the Mexican reaction to them. They have provoked confusion in government statements, recriminations among politicians, accusations and counteraccusations, and a campaign by some Mexican journalists and politicians to blame a good deal of Mexico's troubles on the CIA.

In an interview in London in early October, Agee named 35 agents within the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City and two others outside. He said that Richard Sampson was the CIA station chief in Mexico and that Jonathan Hanke was his assistant. Both are classified officially as political officers of the embassy.

There were obvious errors on Agee's list. One man listed had left the embassy a few months ago. Another, Winston Scott, whom Agee identified as a former station chief now living in feigned retirement in Mexico, died a few years ago.

Despite this, most independent observers believe that the list is, in general, very accurate and up to date. The identity of most of the CIA agents within an embassy is usually an open secret, known both by other employees of the embassy and by outsiders, like American newsmen, who spend much time talking with embassy officials.

The publication of the list has put the Mexican government in a kind of quandary. It is doubtful that many of the names surprise Mexican officials. Most of the CIA employees listed were probably what are known in the diplomatic world as "revealed agents." That term describes CIA agents, usually working in an embassy, whom the U.S. government identifies to a friendly and cooperative government.

But the Mexican government does not want to be known as friendly and cooperative to the CIA. A few days after the

list was published, a Mexican delegation asked the Interparliamentary Union meeting in Tokyo to condemn the interference by intelligence agencies in the internal affairs of other countries. The Mexicans, however, cited the CIA in Chile, not Mexico, as an example.

So far, the Mexican government has not expelled any of those on the list. Asked about this at a news conference, President Echeverria, in a mild and somewhat confusing comment, said, "In regard to two or three of the people, we can never expel them from the country because they died some time ago. The others are officials of the American Embassy who worked there publicly in different offices.

"This man (Agee) was here in 1968," Echeverria went on, "and he had interests, who knows why, to make these declarations, and, curiously, he is very insistent about the subject. But there are dead people on the published list. I believe that it will soon be made more precise for me who is dead and who works in the American Embassy.

"This is the present situation. We are going to invite this man to Mexico to help us find them."

The reaction of the U.S. Embassy has been about what might be expected. When Agee's first revelations came, U.S. Ambassador Joseph John Jova told Mexican newsmen, "You have to realize that Agee is a bitter, fired ex-employee. That's why you should take these things with a grain of salt."

But once the list was published, the embassy switched to silence. Without denying the accuracy of the list, the embassy has refused to comment on it.

Assuming the list is generally accurate, it is obvious that the work of some CIA agents has been handicapped by the loss of cover. Few Mexicans will want to keep up friendships with those on the list. The CIA obviously needs to send at least a few new agents to Mexico now.

Watergate brought a prominence to the CIA operations in Mexico. Ac-

ording to the House Judiciary Committee, the aides of former President Richard M. Nixon tried in vain in 1972 to persuade the Federal Bureau of Investigation that its investigation of campaign money laundered in Mexico would hurt the CIA's operations there. The CIA, however, refused to support the White House on the contention. In the Senate Watergate Committee's investigation, Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) learned by accident that the CIA had disbanded a Washington public relations firm in 1972 because it feared that a former agent was going to reveal that the firm was acting as its cover in Mexico City. Watergate conspirator and former CIA agent E. Howard Hunt Jr. had once been identified as an employe of the firm, the Robert Mullen Co.

The former agent who worried the CIA was Agee. Agee, now 39, re-

signed from the CIA in 1969 after working for the agency for 12 years in Washington, Mexico, Ecuador and Uruguay. After his resignation, Agee visited Cuba three times.

In early July, a U.S. government source told newsmen in Washington that Agee had revealed CIA secrets to a Soviet secret agent in Havana. Agee denied this and said he had visited Cuba only to gather more material for his book. The U.S. source later withdrew the accusation but said, "The presumption is that he (Agee) was very forthcoming in Havana, and that Havana was very forthcoming with Moscow." In any case, the source said the CIA rearranged some of its Latin American operations after Agee's visits to Cuba.

In his many press interviews and leaks of his manuscript, Agee has described Mexico as an extremely important base of

operations for the CIA. "Because of the strategic importance of Mexico to the United States, its size and proximity, and the abundance of enemy (i.e., Communist) activities, the Mexico City (CIA) station is the largest in the hemisphere," Agee has said.

Agee has also characterized the relations between the CIA and the Mexican government as "exceptional," claiming that Mexican security forces collaborate closely with CIA agents. In fact, according to Agee, former President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz preferred meeting with station chief Winston Scott rather than U.S. Ambassador Fulton

Freeman in the late 1960s, causing conflict between the station chief and the ambassador. This conflict has been denied by Freeman, who is now president of the Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies in Monterey, Calif.

The close relationship between Scott and President Diaz Ordaz began, according to Agee, in the previous Mexican administration when Diaz Ordaz was secretary of the interior, the official in charge of Mexican security. Agee has also said that President Echeverria, when he was secretary of the interior in Diaz Ordaz' administration, worked with the CIA

station chief, but according to Agee this personal relationship with the CIA was broken when Echeverria took over the office of president in 1970.

This disclosure has so upset the Mexican government, Agee has said, that the Mexicans have tried to pressure his publishers to delete all references to Echeverria in the book.

Besides naming the American agents within the U.S. Embassy, Agee has said that at least 50 Mexican agents, working for the Americans, have infiltrated the Mexican government, the ruling party, and other Mexican organizations.

The Ministry of the In-

terior issued a statement saying, "The government of Mexico does not permit and will not permit activities in our territory by any foreign agency, no matter what its origin, that tries to interfere in our internal affairs." The ministry promised an investigation of Agee's charges.

Although the government has not expelled any American on Agee's list of CIA agents, some Mexicans have been using the publicity over Agee's disclosures to blame many of Mexico's troubles on the CIA.