

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

24 August 1978

011048

HSCA Interview of David Atlee Phillips at HSCA offices, 8/23/78, 1:20 to 4:35 P.M., by Dan Hardway, Charles Berk, and Gaeton Fonzi.

Mr. Phillips was reminded that the CIA omnibus release letter still applied to our discussions and that he should feel free to answer our questions in spite of any secrecy oath that he may have executed during his employment with the CIA. He was asked if he remembered and understood the letter and if he wanted to review the letter again. Mr. Phillips stated that he remembered the letter and did not think it necessary to see the letter again.

Mr. Phillips was asked about his activities in Mexico that related to his job as Chief of Covert Action in the Mexico City Station from 1961 to 1963. Mr. Phillips was asked how many persons were in his propaganda shop in Mexico City. He said that it was manned only by himself, a case officer under his direction and a secretary. He later added that there was also one other case officer under his direction who worked under deep cover outside of the Embassy. Mr. Phillips stated that from 1961 to 1963 he ran only about 6 or 7 operations or projects. He added that there would have also been many "ad hoc" actions. Under questioning, he stated that it is possible that he was responsible for as many as 14 to 17 ongoing operations and 3 to 6 developmental stage operations. Most of these operations were directed at the Cuban target and "the great percentage of them had an anti-Cuban or anti-Soviet bias."

Mr. Phillips was asked about the handling of agents. He stated that he himself handled "very very few" agents. "Usually I met with someone who was working deep cover and they in turn would handle several agents." Mr. Phillips did recall handling one agent personally, a radio-TV broadcaster. He also said that he would often meet with other agents even

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though he was not handling them on a day to day basis. He stated that at all times he had at least one **deep cover** officer working **outside of the Embassy** and that, sometimes, he had two such officers.

Mr. Phillips stated that he did have access, and did use in some of his propaganda activities, agents who were located outside of Mexico. Mr. Phillips also stated that he did use a few assets that he had developed prior to his transfer to Mexico City; he specifically recalled a man named SAYAS who had been a newspaperman in Cuba and went to work in Mexico City. He said that while he had been a propaganda officer for the JMARC operation he had used assets that he had developed during his prior tour of duty in Havana. Mr. Phillips said that such assets were usually handled by him personally during the Bay of Pigs.

Mr. Phillips stated that during the Bay of Pigs operation he travelled to Miami "fairly frequently; every 6 weeks, 3 weeks, 5 weeks." He stated that responsibility for propaganda operations were divided between him and his subordinate in Miami, William Kent. When asked to explain that division Mr. Phillips stated:

Kent reported to my shop in Washington. He had day-to-day contact with the groups we were supporting down there, the student group and the doctors or whatever, and the people involved in Radio Swan.

Phillips stated that Radio Swan was run out of Miami, **through the mechanism of the Gibraltar Steamship Company.** He did say that he was in contact with the agent who ran Radio Swan. He said that he felt uncomfortable naming that agent and suggested we ask the Agency for his identity.

Mr. Phillips stated that when he traveled to Miami he often went to see the people he knew from Havana, including those he was running as agents himself. He would also, on occasion, meet with agents whom

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American businessman in Havana.

Mr. Phillips stated that he "probably" did have some contacts with someone or some persons associated with the Moa Bay Mining Company, but he did not recall any specific names. He also "must have" had some contact with Freeport Sulphur people. "I was fairly socially active at the time and the name of the company is familiar to me."

Mr. Phillips said that he did not have many public relations clients during that time. He could recall only the man who owned Ambar Motors and the El Mundo newspaper. He also traded for free French lessons at the Berlitz School although he can not recall exactly what kind of public relations work he did in return.

Phillips did not recall the name Darnell.

He said that he did know Wayne Smith, political attache at the American Embassy, very well. He remembered him as a big guy because they were in a little theatre group together and in one play Phillips had to throw Smith out of a window.

Phillips said that he did not know Roberto Vale.

Phillips was asked about the procedure of traveling out of the country on covert operations. He said he always traveled out under his true name and with his legitimate passport. He

would have other documentation on him for use with his alias when he arrived in the country. He said that's the way it was always done by every agent as far as he knew unless it was a "very sensitive operation." He knew of no specific sensitive operation in which a phoney passport was issued by the agency.

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"I don't know how that mechanism worked," he said. He added  
that he had never had a phoney passport.

Mr. Phillips said that he had met McClendon (Gordon) once when they were in college. He said that he had not seen him again until September of 1976 when he attended a Retired Intelligence Officers meeting. Later McClendon had called him and reminded him of an incident mentioned in Nightwatch involving a school day's episode and McClendon told him that he was the kid who picked him up in his car. As far as Phillips can recall, he never had any contact with McClendon during the intervening years. He never met McClendon at any time during 1963 in Dallas.

Phillips stated that he has no familiarity with the Catherwood Foundation or Cummins Caterwood or E. Wharton Shober. He was not specifically familiar with the Foundation's Cuban Aid Relief operation in Miami.

Phillips said that the debriefing centers in Miami were under the aegis of the CIA but the Agency only got the product from them, they were actually run by another agency. He said that they may have been ran by military intelligence. He said that he had never met any of the supervisory personnel who ran those centers.

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