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SUBJECT Dale Van Atta Interview

FRED FISKE: ...an interesting article in the current issue of The Washingtonian, "God and Man at the CIA."

And we're very pleased to have you back at our microphones, Dale.

DALE VAN ATTA: Thank you, Fred. It's good to be back.

FISKE: The question that you explore in this piece is how the CIA reconciles lying or murder or otherwise moral deviations from accepted practice with religion, and apparently successfully.

What got you interested in this? What raised the question in your mind?

VAN ATTA: Well, I've been covering the CIA for several years, Fred. And it was raised in my mind because I am, myself, religious; and it happened that I knew several people who were in the agency who were of the same religion. And it started me thinking about how they could deal with the kinds of things that were appropriate at the CIA or were done at the CIA years ago. And the more I pursued it, the more people that I asked, it turned out over the last two or three years that I asked every CIA person I ever came in contact with. I would always discuss one story and then just say, you know, "How do you deal with the ethical questions?" So it slowly developed and I built anecdotes and other things, and finally wrote the article.

FISKE: Had it occurred to these otherwise religious people -- I understand from your article, and I would have suspected it in any case, that the large majority of people who

work at the CIA are religious people.

VAN ATTA: Yes. That's surprised me. I didn't presume it would be so. But as it turned out, many of them started --the older ones started in the '50s when it was the Yale group and all the Ivy League colleges, Presbyterian WASPs, and some Catholics started coming in. They all joined because they believed in God and country.

So, we are now getting, in some ways, a second generation, the family members of some of those who started years ago. Most of them appear to be religious. Yes.

FISKE: Why should there be any inconsistency? You say that you're a religious person. Would you find it difficult to work for the CIA? We're talking about agents, I guess. Right?

VAN ATTA: Yes.

FISKE: The large majority of people who work at the CIA doing clerical work or analysis, and so on, aren't in any sort of dilemma.

VAN ATTA: No. You're right about that, Fred. I wouldn't have any difficulty working for the CIA today. But I would sure try to find out some of the things that they were doing. But maybe that's the nature of being a reporter.

If there are 15,000 employees out at Langley, 90 percent of them -- maybe not that high, but most of them are analysts who deal simply with raw intelligence, or administrators who shuffle things around. But the times when the ethical questions would come in would be those who oversee operations, what we used to call dirty tricks.

Since I'm young, the reason that I thought it might be an inconsistency is because my first memory of really thinking about the CIA was the '75 Church hearings and the, quote-unquote, shame of what was going on then. So that's why I thought it would be an inconsistency. But it was not.

FISKE: What would you find difficult to deal with if you were an undercover agent for the CIA?

VAN ATTA: That's a very personal question, Fred. I guess one of the reasons I wasn't -- I'm a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or the Mormon Church. Part of the precept -- Jack is also; my boss, Jack Anderson. We don't, as part of the religion, don't drink or smoke. Let's say I'm down in Latin America, where the best way to get close to a general is to do some heavy drinking with him, just as Hamilton

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Jordan did with the late President of Panama. It was a way to get along. I would find that difficult to do. I might be knocked on my socks after one drink, anyway, and be of no use to the CIA. So there'd be kinds of things like that.

And I thought, well, for the other religions, maybe there are other things, as well, that would become very difficult.

FISKE: Interestingly, you didn't mention assassinations, which would seem to me, you know, might be more troublesome for a great many people with strong moral convictions or standards. Or lying or using people in ways that they would not be used in if they knew what you were about, and so on.

VAN ATTA: The reason I didn't think assassinations is I think, in reality, what the CIA does today, while they may be stepping up some campaign I don't know about it, covering it as much as I have, I would find it a great surprise to find them trying to assassinate somebody now.

In any event, anyone that they would have in that kind of section, they call them the knuckle-draggers, and it would be a very specialized group of a half a dozen or a dozen people. So the people who would -- the question of morality would be raised about whether you kill someone not would be, again, a very small group of people.

I'm thinking now, generally, of what you were saying, the deceit and the other things. That would be very troublesome to me.

FISKE: Well, you say that you're a Mormon, and a religious Mormon. And I think, probably, as a group, Mormons are more religious than most people. More observant, shall I say.

You say in your article that there's a disproportionately high number of members of your church in the CIA doing the job that troubles you. Now...

VAN ATTA: It wouldn't trouble me to do -- all the people that I knew were usually analysts. So it wouldn't trouble me to be in that kind of a position. However, let's say...

FISKE: The people you know are analysts because the agents aren't identified.

VAN ATTA: You know, personally, I wouldn't...

FISKE: Right?

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VAN ATTA: Fred, you're very good. Yes, they aren't identified. They are -- but they don't have to go under pseudonyms. They may have to say, "I work for the government." And then people in this area, I don't push them on it.

FISKE: So it's likely that (A) some of the people you know who work at the CIA who say that they're analysts or do other jobs are in fact agents; or that you know some people, maybe people you meet in church, who may be agents who would never tell you that.

VAN ATTA: Yes. But I'd find out.

Well, you know...

FISKE: Have you discussed it?

VAN ATTA: I've never thought about that because I've never thought of working for the CIA, for many other reasons. I never wanted to work for the government. I will always be a reporter, and not like some revolving-door journalists. I will always be a reporter.

FISKE: But you wouldn't have any moral qualms for working another job.

VAN ATTA: No. And that's one of the problems I would have in working for anywhere in the government. Dealing with whistle-blowers, as I do, if I had to look the other way for very long, it would kill me. I mean it would just -- it would bother me no end. And I find many people in government, whether it's CIA or anything else -- let's say in 1976 you're working on the Angola desk and you're analyzing the intelligence that comes in. Well, you know -- you're not out there, but you know you're covertly supplying these guerrillas, and perhaps the CIA guy here has killed somebody here. Or, like in John Stockwell's book, one of your people has gone disguised as a Catholic priest. That would give me difficulty. I couldn't look the other way. I'd feel like that was wrong.

But I would have already agreed by that time to sign this oath of secrecy and other things that would have bound myself a hundred different ways not to complain. And now, today, I would know I couldn't even write a book about it later and that I could be prosecuted or put on a lie detector if I even raised a moral question.

If there was something that I felt is -- gets close to a terrible thing, it's this lie detector business. Anyway.

FISKE: My question is, have you discussed these qualms,

these difficulties that you have, as a religious person, with any of your coreligionists, some of whom work for the CIA?

VAN ATTA: Yeah, at different times. But very early on I had identified -- I was working on article for The Washingtonian; and because of that, it ended the discussion in a number of cases, as I was making them aware I might be quoting them. So, actually, it ended the discussion in almost every case, at least in the local church that I'm in.

But others that I discussed it with, with Mormons, Catholics, and others, had rarely thought about it. In fact, the person that I found that had thought about it the most, who I spent the most time with, was Bill Colby. And he was the most fascinating for that reason.

FISKE: Bill is a devout Catholic.

VAN ATTA: He's a very devout Catholic, very ardent, and a very moral man. And yet he presided over Operation Phoenix, which today still has that aroma of thousands of Viet Cong, innocent people being killed, put in tiger cages. He says he didn't know about that; and when they found out about that, those things were corrected.

He also said only a couple people who were in that program, who were down at that level and would have known that was going on, asked to be relieved of it because they found it immoral, even in a wartime situation, which is what that was.

FISKE: How does the CIA react to such a request?

VAN ATTA: I don't know. He said he responded well, that they were assigned somewhere else. But I was told by others that word gets out that you're a flaky person, that you're not to be trusted. So it's -- there's real peer-group pressure for that kind of thing.

FISKE: Incidentally, talking about Bill Colby, a piece of a tape of his appearance on my program a couple of years ago was used in the NBC television program First Camera last Sunday night. They did the story on Shadrin.

VAN ATTA: I'm sorry I missed it.

FISKE: Remember Shadrin?

VAN ATTA: Yes. Nicholas Shadrin.

FISKE: When Colby was on my program a couple of years ago and we got to the portion of the program when listeners call

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in, Mrs. Shadrin called in.

And Shadrin, for those of you people who remember of may have seen the program on Sunday night, was a Russian defector who went to work as a double agent with the CIA and disappeared in Vienna some years ago without trace, has never been heard from. And there's some suspicion that he may have been dealt with unfairly or imorally, if you will, by the CIA. And it was a...

VAN ATTA: What did he say on your show?

FISKE: Well, he hedged.

[Laughter]

FISKE: He said he knew nothing about it and, you know, and hedged somewhat. But it's interesting that they're put in such predicaments.

VAN ATTA: I must say, I have to be very frank here about my own job. On a number of occasions, I do not find it difficult at all to morally justify lying about sources. I will end people on wrong tracks. I will do anything to protect a source.

FISKE: Well, how do you differentiate?

VAN ATTA: I don't. That's why I don't like to sit there and judge. In the article, I don't try to sit there in judgment. I try to say, to raise the issue: Should they be thinking about ethics? Should they have, as one of their general counsels suggests, a code of ethics?

FISKE: Well, Dale, how can you regard having to lie, for example, when you're working with the CIA, when in fact you can build up some rationalization saying it's, you know, for the good for your country, or for mankind, or for peace, or whatever -- how can you find that morally reprehensible and still not --and find it morally acceptable for you to lie in the pursuit of your own work?

VAN ATTA: There's a different kind of lying here. I have never found it repugnant for the CIA to lie to protect someone's life. If they lie and say, "This person was not our agent," if they lie about the Iranian -- the first Iranian raid before it happens and tells a reporter it's not going to happen, I don't find that repugnant. So there's a different set of circumstances here.

If someone is asking me who one of my sources is, with the intend, despite the fact that he's raising something that he

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feels is morally objectionable, and that I would feel so too, if they ask me that for the purpose of prosecuting him and not correcting the problem that they're discussing, then, no, I don't have any compunction about that. If their intent is to harm the individual, which it usually is -- I mean they aren't trying to find out the names of my sources so they can put them on a pillar and praise them, despite what they say about whistle-blowers.

So, that's one of the ways that I justify it.

FISKE: I suppose...

VAN ATTA: It's a very dicey, very gray area.

FISKE: I suppose we can all twist and shape things to suit our purposes.

What I found very interesting in your article is that the CIA, itself, recognizes that some of their people may have religious conflicts in carrying out some of the jobs they're assigned to in the agency, and in fact finds biblical sanction for some of it.

VAN ATTA: Yes.

FISKE: That's fascinating.

VAN ATTA: You know, it's been so long. I've been doing this article for four years. Now I remember that what started me on it was that very thing. In one of their publications, "Studies in Intelligence," which is a -- two or three times a year they publish it, and it's a way for the CIA people, among themselves, to recognize themselves for scholarly work. And they usually put their real names on it. There was an article with biblical justification comparing two spying missions in the Bible. And I found it so fascinating, that's when I started thinking if this is going on inside -- and I had already known from several books and people I'd talked to that the basic speech when you join the CIA and went down to Camp Peary, you know, Williamsburg, and went through your training, the first speech was that this was an honorable profession, it was sanctioned by the Bible, in essence, and was perhaps the oldest profession, except one. Maybe not as honorable as the one.

FISKE: It's interesting that intelligence agents in practically every country where religion is a factor, leaving out, of course, our principal adversaries, probably tell their people the same thing. I always -- or frequently wonder about the fact that Germany lost two world wars, and in each case told their people, "God is with us."

VAN ATTA: Yes. It's a very -- if you read the article,

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I don't make any judgments, because I recognize ethics is a very gray area, and I'm not trying to sit there in judgment. I'm trying to say there should be active discussions.

What I did find is that there were not active discussions on it. And that's what Colby admitted. In fact, in his autobiography...

FISKE: Not active discussions in the CIA?

VAN ATTA: About ethics, about morality, whether something was right or wrong.

There tends to be -- and this is one of the things I'm most opposed to. There tends to be in the CIA the practice of becoming closest friends to people in the CIA and shutting out the community at large.

Colby said, prior to the Church hearings, that his wife saved him from embarrassing himself then. His wife insisted he go to church and that he meet with the community members, and he knew the way the public was thinking: that, indeed, along with Frank Church, they would feel it was a rogue elephant and morally repugnant to do these things. But only because he had been in the community.

For this reason -- one of the reasons is that if they want to talk about work, they can only talk about it with somebody who's cleared to hear it.

So, there are a lot of CIA parties. You don't have non-CIA people there. There tends to be, in too many cases, CIA members divorcing their spouses and remarrying someone they know in the CIA. They cannot tell their spouses the secrets. They cannot discuss it. They can't come home to a spouse, they would be violating their oath of secrecy to come home to a spouse and say, "Today the Director said we really ought to kill Castro. It's time. We've waited too long. It's time to kill him. This bothers me." If they did that, it would be a breach of their oath, and they could be prosecuted.

FISKE: Interestingly, policemen tend to associate with other policemen too. So -- and their work doesn't involve the same kind of secrecy. So it seems that there might...

VAN ATTA: Journalists with other journalists.

FISKE: There might be, you know, other factors at work there, you know.

VAN ATTA: Yes. I agree.

FISKE: Maybe similar personalities attracted to the work in the first place.

But I can understand why the CIA, in the interest of efficiency and a smooth-functioning organization, would not raise these moral questions. Why should you encourage your people to evaluate this sort of thing? The CIA resembles, in many ways, a military organization. You're given a job and you do it. You follow orders. And why would you put that sort of impediment in the way? Saying, you know, "This is an enormously important job to do, and think about. It may be right, it may be wrong."

VAN ATTA: It was a real disturbing thing to me at one point -- and it's not in the article -- to find that they had sponsored, funded a psychological testing program and fronted an organization -- it was a CIA organization, but they had put together this special test to give potential employees. And this test was to determine that very thing. What they wanted was a particular type of personality that could be somewhat molded; was creative, but would still follow orders; someone who could think, but would still follow orders. And it reminded me a great deal of the military.

So, the person, some people feel -- if you read Victor Marchetti's work -- a number of the CIA people have since become critics. It was a great dawning to them. Ralph McGee is becoming well-known now, who was a Catholic who felt it was fine to do everything that he did and he was proud of what he was doing. And he began to change and he started reading public works. He had only talked to other people in the CIA, and some of the things hadn't occurred to him. Now he is an ardent critic, an ardent critic.

FISKE: Does it seem reasonable to you that one of the reasons for which you would find a large number of devoutly religious people doing this sort of work is that in most religions people are taught to accept without questioning, without probing? All religions teach that. Religion is not supposed to be subject to analysis. You accept on faith. And it would seem to me that a person whose background and training encourages him to do that would probably find working for the CIA more easy and be a more effective agent.

VAN ATTA: There's a strong point to that. There's a very strong point to that. And what disturbs me about that, and disturbs me to the point that it is mentioned in the article, is that I find it much easier to place faith in God than faith in the CIA bureaucracy or the government.

FISKE: As an individual. However, the kind of person whose training, whose childhood, whose upbringing teaches him to

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accept, to respect authority and to give his all for that authority is likely to be a much better operative in that organization.

VAN ATTA: Except that a number of religions do have quite a history of opposing some government authority in different parts of their periods. So, I mean the separation of church and state.

Anyway, go ahead.

FISKE: Is that an issue in this? I suppose it does become -- in your article you speak about some instances in which they have attempted to use clergymen. Now, this becomes another area which would give some people -- it gives me some trouble.

VAN ATTA: It gives me great trouble. I don't think --again, I don't know the circumstances; so, again, I don't want to be placed in the position of judging. If one of our CIA agents can get out of a place alive by posing as a priest or something, I'm not going to sit here and say he shouldn't do it. To do something like that as a regular practice...

FISKE: I wouldn't have any problem with that.

VAN ATTA: But to do something like that as a regular practice does endanger the lives of regular priests. If it's well known that CIA poses as priests, then it makes all priests suspicious to revolutionaries and others.

FISKE: Well, to pose as a priest to save your life, I don't think would give anybody any trouble. It's almost like a downed flyer behind the enemy lines doing whatever is necessary to get out. But what about posing as a priest to gain information, to gain somebody's confidence? Is that done?

VAN ATTA: That is done. And one of the more fascinating circumstances I found was the regular bugging of several confessionals, several Catholic confessionals in Europe where leaders were known to go. It was considered a place where you could pick up a few things that you could use. I can't prove the CIA did it, but I believe it was done on contract to the CIA, that someone they contracted...

FISKE: But it was done?

VAN ATTA: Yes, it was done.

FISKE: Wow! How did the Vatican react to that? That would seem to be a very, very serious matter.

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VAN ATTA: The Vatican has a very close relationship with the CIA, and has for years. There was a long article in a liberal magazine, Mother Jones, detailing how many ties there were and how it was obvious for several Popes past that the CIA was considered to them a patriotic and a God-fearing thing to do. They have offered the Knight of Malta and other honors to CIA Directors who are Catholic. Only Colby turned it down.

FISKE: Colby did turn it down?

VAN ATTA: Yes.

FISKE: On what basis, what justification?

VAN ATTA: I don't know. I didn't ask him. I just found that out lately.

FISKE: I suspect that until very recently, the fact that the CIA could be seen to be fighting godless communism might give sanction to that.

VAN ATTA: And still does, in a sense. But as those who are Catholics now, the different sects are different, the different priests are different around the world. Witness Nicaragua. But then you find down in Latin America very ardent, very conservative priests who do not have any difficulty in talking to the CIA. Which is kind of a different thing.

I think what should probably happen in those instances, if they want to share that kind of information, they should know they are sharing it with America, and not be duped into sharing information about the country. And they should share it, probably, with State Department people, just regular -- there's some kind of onus when you do it with the CIA.

FISKE: Well, let's see what our listeners think about all of this.... We're talking to Dale Van Atta, the Jack Anderson associate whose name frequently appears in the column -- you really do get into the column a lot, don't you?

VAN ATTA: Yes.

FISKE: His article "God and Man at the CIA" is in the current issue of Washingtonian magazine....

Good evening.

WOMAN: Mr. Van Atta, everyone knows, I guess, that during the CIA-led Vietnam War, most of our heroin was coming from Southeast Asia. Last June, a Post article showed that most of heroin now comes from the Afghan-Pakistan border, where the

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six rebel tribes are based that the CIA supports. And I'd like to refer to an article of January '81 by Jack Anderson where he said you saw a secret DEA report that six rebel tribes the U.S. calls freedom fighters were actually opium farmers, and that's why they had been fighting against the Marxist government in Afghanistan for four years.

My question is, do you agree that this fact has been suppressed generally in our press since January '81? And in view of the facts which you saw in that report, do you believe that there's still a CIA-Mafia alliance, as there was in the '60s and '70s?

VAN ATTA: That's several questions there.

FISKE: None of which have to do with religion in the CIA.

VAN ATTA: Well, let me turn it into an interesting point

WOMAN: Bringing the heroin in is quite anti-religion.

VAN ATTA: The U.S. has a difficult time in choosing its friends. We learned that out during Carter's human rights days. And this is another moral question. As a CIA man, do you, if you are supporting a rightist regime, let's say in Latin America, do you stand by as they torture someone to get information you're going to use? Do you use opium farmers? Of course you do. I mean you ally yourself with the people. These days, we simply ally ourselves with people who are opposed to communism. The right or wrong of that is a whole 'nother show.

WOMAN: You don't believe that perhaps they're facilitating the heroin coming in here because that's 500 billion into U.S. banks and the CIA is the handmaiden of the U.S. economy as it is now constituted?

VAN ATTA: There have been long-term allegations the CIA helped drug traffic there, but they haven't been proven substantially.

FISKE: Good evening.

MAN: I was wondering why there's -- I've heard -- maybe you can confirm or deny this -- that there a preponderance of a certain faith, of Mormonism in the CIA. And maybe you could, if so, explain it. Or maybe, if not, explain why the rumor exists.

VAN ATTA: Fred raised that early in the show and said...

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MAN: I guess I missed it then. I'm sorry.

VAN ATTA: ...stated that it was -- as I found, there are a greater number of Mormons in the CIA than there are representative in the United States.

FISKE: Not preponderant, but disproportionate.

VAN ATTA: Yeah. Not preponderant. And not necessarily in high positions. That's where it gets very interesting, who are in the high positions.

MAN: I had heard this from a friend, that it ties in with their religion that heaven will come in the United States, but not call it as a theocracy. And they see that as a way to bring that about.

VAN ATTA: No, that's crazy. What it has more to do with is that most Mormons tend to be very patriotic and obey authority, the government authority. And more importantly, don't drink. They might not give away the secrets. But most importantly at all, many Mormons, male Mormons go on two-year missions in which they learn the language of a country and the culture. And these days, that's one of the greatest problems in America for the CIA and the whole government, is how many people are learning a foreign language they can then put in an embassy. That's a constant problem. That's why you'll probably see more Mormon ambassadors, too. We have several now -- because they know the language and the culture from the missions years ago.

FISKE: I think patriotism is a very strong suit among Mormons, too. And I think that may be a factor. It may be a way they see that. You know, it's service to the country.

VAN ATTA: It's a very strong factor. In fact, probably it would be fair to categorize, as other Mormons know, that most Mormons are conservative, tend to be conservative ideologically, and therefore support the efforts of the CIA to promote freedom abroad.

FISKE: Do you find most people in the CIA conservative?

VAN ATTA: It's an interesting question.

FISKE: It doesn't necessarily follow.

VAN ATTA: No, it doesn't. And the CIA used to be very liberal. It was known as a real liberal bastion in the government for many years, for many years. It is starting to swing more conservative, but it depends on the division that you're in. For instance, the Soviet Division, for years, has been a very

liberal division, oddly enough. And all conservative Presidents, going back 10 or 15 years, were never satisfied with the way the analysis was written. And some people are saying that's being changed today, under Meese, that they are getting more hard-line analyses.

The conservative bastion has always been, as one might naturally presume, the Defense Intelligence Agency. So it's usually the CIA's liberal analysis on some issue pitted against the DIA's conservative.

FISKE: I suppose that's relative, when you say liberal.

VAN ATTA: Yes.

FISKE: I wouldn't expect that the CIA would be liberal. Their mission really is to defend our values and so on, not to seek changes.

But it's interesting that you say that the CIA has been writing reports which some Presidents thought are too liberal and that they'd turned them hard-line. That disturbs me more than anything you have said. Because we would hope that our intelligence agencies would be staffed with the most competent people we could find and that they would write analyses and recommendations based upon their expertise and their findings, and not to suit the predilections or the preferences of any President.

VAN ATTA: Unfortunately, the history is that they quite often have, principally because they would like the President to read it. If the President begins to feel that he's getting better analy -- well, let me give you an example. Meese comes in -- Casey comes in in the morning -- I'm sorry -- Bill Casey, CIA Director, comes in in the morning and reads the Wall Street Journal, the op-ed page there. He reads several conservative publications, Human Events, whatever, and he starts clipping them and circling them, says, "Why doesn't the CIA have this story?" and that kind of thing.

So there tends to be that kind of thing from the top.

FISKE: He's like a managing editor, right?

VAN ATTA: Yes. And he does do that. He likes to know why -- how the CIA missed this story or that. And it's a slant to a story, is what it really is.

FISKE: That's terrible, really, though. What you're saying is that they're telling Presidents what Presidents want to hear, rather than providing them with objective information to use in making judgments.

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VAN ATTA: Yes. You know, you wouldn't want to say that across the board. There are a lot of competent analysts in the CIA who fight for that position. The problem is it gets to be a product that goes up to a Director, and it may be watered down by the time it gets up there.

I'd love to read, and have several times, what the analyst wrote first, and find that often far more accurate.

But for this reason, for years, Presidents and others tend to enjoy reading, quite often, the State Department's Intelligence and Research Bureau's reports more so than any others, because there is never -- it is that way there. There's no one ordering them to make it a particular way, or implying that you might not rise in position, those kind of things.

FISKE: We don't have to spend billions of dollars a year gathering intelligence if we're just going to send reports up that the President wants to hear. We can just have somebody sit here and write them.

VAN ATTA: I agree with you totally.

FISKE: Good evening.

MAN: I'd like to ask a couple of questions before getting to the main point of my call.

Number one, I gather that since you wrote about God and the CIA, you do believe in God, or in abstract morality, in any event.

VAN ATTA: Yes. But I was not trying to be judgmental. I was just trying to raise an...

MAN: But you do. Okay.

Number two, do you believe that communism, as an ideology, as a militantly atheist ideology, is deliberately trying to destroy the ideologies which are in competition with it: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam? Or do you think that they are out to destroy these other ideologies, to undermine them and to wipe them from the face of the earth? That's what they say they want to do, and I was wondering if you believe what they say they want to do.

VAN ATTA: Well, they seem to have a history of opposing churches or religion in their own countries. So -- but I am not sure the degree to which they target the Catholic Church or other churches, if that's what you're saying.

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MAN: Any church. My impression, I guess implicit in my question, is that they are trying to undermine any competing ideology. You know, Brezhnev said...

VAN ATTA: Certainly in their own country. Certainly all the dissidents prove that, particularly those that are of a variety of religions, the Jewish dissents and many others...

MAN: Yeah, not only in their own country, but in all of their colonies too. They're trying to do it in Cuba. They're trying to do it in Nicaragua. They're trying to do it -- they wish they could do it in Poland. The Christian, the Catholic ideology there is their main threat. It's their nemesis.

But anyway, let me get to another point.

VAN ATTA: It's a good reason to say that religions would naturally want to throw in with the CIA rather than the KGB, I'm sure.

MAN: Well, I should say so, because the KGB says about the creature called man something that the other -- that the religious ideologies, the Christians, the Judeo -- the Jewish ideology, and Islam says that man is a creature who is essentially spiritual on his way to God and to an abstract morality in the end. Dialectical materialism says of the creature called man that man is no more spiritual than a rock, and that therefore you can do with him what you would a rock. You can stomp on him, you can crush him, you can burn him, you can throw him into the Gulag or into a psychiatric prison, and it really doesn't matter.

As Brezhnev said in 1977, and Lenin said it before him and Khrushchev said it before him, and every one of them has said it, and as Andropov has said -- I don't know the exact quote -- but Brezhnev said in 1977 at the Communist Party conclave in that year, he said, "Anything is moral which furthers the construction of socialism," by which he meant Soviet Communism.

That is their standard. Whatever is useful is truth. And that's just the end of that.

But let me get to another point here.

FISKE: I take it you're asking this because you see why religious people would work in an organization like the CIA, seeing how important it was to combat that kind of thinking.

MAN: Well, I think that any liberal, any progressive ought to feel exactly that same way, because here is an ideology which says that we find mankind to be nothing but a material

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being, and we can do with him what we choose, because there is no God, no abstract morality, no ultimate good, or anything.

You know, Solzhenitsyn made a very interesting point about this. He said that the communist ideology, dialectical materialism, scientific socialism, whatever you want to call it, is trying to persuade people, human beings that there is no such thing as abstract good and morality, that -- in other words, the concepts of good and evil are relative, that they are totally within the power of the state to define. And he said that if you accept that, he says, then there's nothing left but the manipulation of one another. The law of the jungle shall prevail and we shall descend to the status of animals.

That is what communism has in mind when it says that man is no more material than a rock or a block of wood. And the word atheism kind of goes in one ear and out the other. It just doesn't mean anything to people anymore. And atheism, to the individual, like narcissism in an individual, is one thing, which you can understand as doubt and the failure of faith, and so forth. But militant atheism in the hands of a totalitarian police state is something else.

And I think that not only Catholics and Jews and Moslems and a person who cares anything for individual dignity and individualism has to just be -- ought to be scared to death of such an ideology. It's the same kind of ideology to me -- and maybe this was the question I was really getting to. Let me put it in terms of a question. Would your attitude about the CIA and its tactics and its modus operandi be the same today if the CIA were up against and fighting, in a desperate fashion, world fascism rather than world communism? Would that make any difference to you? And I ask that question in order to ask you another question implicit therein. Is there any difference? What's the difference between Stalinism and Andropovism and Hitlerism. Because in my impression, there's no difference. It's the Gestapo left and the Gestapo right, which are the same.

And to me, if we don't...

FISKE: Well, let's get an answer.

VAN ATTA: As I say, ethics and moralism is a very gray area. While the CIA is such a far cry from the KGB in Russia, I mean there's just no comparison at all.

What church and others have said since then is, at one point do we become like our enemies? In the business of a righteous cause, if you go back to Medieval times, the Inquisition and other things, in the business of a righteous cause, do we become as evil as our enemies along the way? And at what point should we stop?

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And that's what I'm saying: Continually examine that question. Don't ever set it aside. Don't ever say: It's okay to kill Andropov, or to kill 3000 people because it's going to save these people from communism. There must be someone saying: Is this right? Have we gone about it -- Colby talks about the end justifying the means, and you constantly have to reevaluate what is the level of means you need.

MAN: That's one extreme. And I guess we might call it an extreme. I wonder if it really is, in a sense.

But the other extreme is to say that there's no such thing as evil. Do you remember about six months ago the President made -- used the word evil in referring to the Soviet Union and to world communism? And my goodness, the liberal intellectual press jumped on him like glue. It was just incredible: How could he possibly say such thing, and what will the Soviet leaders think? And, oh, my goodness.

And people who had made an honorable profession out of labeling the ultra right evil, which it most certainly is, suddenly are all much alarmed when the President says that the ultra left, the Gestapo left, is equally evil.

FISKE: I don't think that the criticism had anything to do with questioning whether in fact they were evil. The questions were raised wondering whether in fact labeling them that could be constructive in attempting to solve some of our problems. Or would it in fact exacerbate our problems? That was the tenor of it.

MAN: That's always the question. Every time somebody opposes truth-in-labeling on the Soviets, somebody comes up and says, "Oh, my goodness. Will that upset those poor people?" and so forth.

Well, we have no hesitancy, and should never have had any hesitancy, to impose truth-in-labeling on Hitler and Mussolini and Idi Amin and those people.

FISKE: But let me point out to you that we went to war with Hitler and Mussolini, and we're attempting to find some way to coexist on this earth with the Soviets. And today the Secretary of State said that he would go -- he would do anything and, you know, go anywhere to meet with Mr. Gromyko again and attempt to solve our problems short of war. The world has changed and weaponry has changed.

Sir, we have a lot of people waiting. I sure appreciate your input.

Good evening.

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MAN: The discussion is very interesting tonight, especially for me. I'm involved in a research paper on the Guatemalan crisis, which does involve different religious tendencies.

But your discussion centering on lying of a personal nature by CIA agents is funny, because I believe that the Central American policy that we see escalating to the point of absolute insanity is based on fraud, which I think the CIA provides a lot of manufactured justification for.

And I also would like to clarify that the revolutions in Central America, though anti-communism is consistently and repeatedly utilized to gain support for America's policies there, is not really necessarily the only factor that has inspired the people of Central America to move into a revolutionary situation. The Vatican -- the Second Vatican Council in 1962, under Pope John XXIII, started something called the option for the poor, which was again reiterated in 1968 at the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference of Latin America at Medellin in Colombia. And apparently in 1969, a Rockefeller report expressed concern that the Catholic Church in Central America could no longer be trusted to be an agent or an arbiter for the power structure. And an awful lot of fundamentalist preachers went down to Central America and the introduction of the missionaries from North America had profound effects trying to reverse or contain the option for the poor.

FISKE: Essentially, your point is what?

MAN: Essentially, I think that anti-communism is a way in which the CIA, ergo the American government, manipulates people's phobias of being infected from the outside and gets them to act against their own will in terms of nuclear weapons and foreign policy.

And here's where I think the revolution in Central America got its inspiration. It's a document that starts in Congress on July 4th in 1776. And it says that, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. They're endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights."

FISKE: Okay. Listen, we have all read that one. Thank you.

MAN: I'd just like to encourage the caller before to try to pick up certain materials that I think would clarify a lot of points for him.

FISKE: Dale, would you like to react to what this caller has said?

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VAN ATTA: While he was saying that, for some reason, I was thinking about the way in El Salvador even the Reagan Administration has come to the point -- the CIA was very supportive down there, and others, with money and other things, of the right government, I mean conservative government, so-called. And yet they are now realizing again, and this is fairly new, they're now saying that the man who's most likely to lead all of them, D'Aubuisson, is connected to death squads which have killed many people.

This is an interesting change from years ago, even under the Carter Administration at times, down in Argentina when many disappeared there.

FISKE: Well, I think our caller before this one was quite right when he equated the extremists on both ends of the spectrum. You know, there's not a heck of a lot of difference in the extremists on the right or the extremists on the left.

We're talking to Dale Van Atta. His article "God and Man at the CIA" in the current issue of Washingtonian magazine.

You speak in the book about the CIA having had clergymen on their payroll. That's a dimension which might be questioned by a great many people.

VAN ATTA: Yes. There have also been journalists on their payroll at times, which disturbs me.

They have had a number of clergymen over the years. Some suggest hundreds. I believe during the Church Committee they said they found only 23 or 24 instances. They say that they will not do it again, and other people have proposed bills that would preclude them from doing it. The Director has made a statement, CIA Director, that they won't do it again. But he can decide when to waive that decision.

FISKE: What has been the attitude or the reaction of some of the church organizations to that?

VAN ATTA: Many of the church organizations have opposed it vehemently. In fact, I can't think of anyone who has supported it in any way. Not that most churches would not support occasionally sharing of information, you know, for patriotic reasons. But to be paid to do that is a whole different circumstance, and endangers missionaries and church people around the world. Americans particularly.

FISKE: And, of course, it involves church and state.

VAN ATTA: Yes.

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FISKE: You're on the air.

WOMAN: My comment is not really directly related to your guest. But you were talking about Mormons in the CIA. And when I look, you know, day after day, like in the press and in the media, which is one of the major factors in the forming of a society, I notice a great and a tremendous, an enormous number of Jewish names. And it just, you know, makes me wonder occasionally. And I was wondering if you could bring that up one night.

FISKE: Well, if somebody should write an article dealing with that, as Dale has dealing with religion and the CIA, I might well.

Thank you.

VAN ATTA: There's an interesting point on Jews in the CIA. If anyone has received the shortest shrift over the years, it's a number of brilliant Jewish analysts who never achieved high positions because there was always a suspicion they might leak to Mosad. And it was an outrageous charge. It was even whispered about when Max Hugel, as a way to try to get him to go, and it was an outrageous charge on him as well. We've lost a lot of good people that way.

FISKE: Of course, the fact that this woman sees Jewish names in bylines, for example, doesn't raise some of the same ethical or moral considerations that you're raising here.

VAN ATTA: No.

FISKE: You know, I don't see that there's any comparison there, although it might lead to a discussion in some other direction.

Good evening.

MAN: I really wish you had some kind of an anti-speech button there. Sometimes your callers insist on giving speeches.

I had a couple of short questions, I hope. Your guest mentioned that CIA had a relationship with the Vatican. Does it also have a relationship with the Mormon hierarchy?

Number two...

FISKE: Well, let's take...

VAN ATTA: I would not -- I've got to be careful about the Vatican.

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No. As far as I know, they have no relationship with the Mormon hierarchy, other than perhaps occasional contact, just as they would with the Vatican. There is no liaison officer that I'm aware of now with the Vatican, with the Mormons, with any church.

MAN: I see. You left that kind of unclear.

VAN ATTA: Yeah. I'm glad you allowed me to clarify it.

MAN: Number two, does the CIA or any of the other intelligence agencies of the United States recruit young Mormon men before they leave on their mission?

VAN ATTA: No. The Mormon Church has been very emphatic about that. To do so, to find out that anyone was spying for the CIA while 19 years old and serving on a foreign mission would be a terrible thing for all missionaries. And they state it is not happening. If they were ever to find out it would happen, there would be some very quick action.

MAN: Are they ever debriefed by the CIA or any other intelligence agency upon return?

VAN ATTA: Not that I'm aware of.

MAN: So that they are recruited when they have returned and [unintelligible] into American society.

VAN ATTA: Yes. There's a lot of recruitment in Utah and Colorado and in that area.

MAN: In the Mormon colleges?

VAN ATTA: Uh-huh. But these days, you know, I wouldn't say they focus on the Mormons. These days there've been a tremendous number of applications for the CIA. There's been a real resurgence among young people of every religion, and probably many people who are not religious at all are applying to work for the CIA. So there's a real change that way from '75 and the Church hearings.

FISKE: What do you think it's due to?

VAN ATTA: Perhaps Reagan saying he's going -- the suggestion that they're going to be allowed to do things again. A lot of it has to do with the fact that there are more openings. The CIA budget has gone up tremendously. From the time when Stansfield Turner, the Halloween massacre, 800 people, years ago, it's a going agency now.

FISKE: At the same time, until very recently, jobs were

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more difficult to come by.

VAN ATTA: Yes.

FISKE: So, you know, that could account for it.

VAN ATTA: That could account for a lot of things.

And now they actively advertise, both the CIA and the National Security Agency. They appear at job seminars. They have full-page newspaper ads: interesting fields, learn a language.

MAN: Are you aware of a disproportionate number of Mormons in any other intelligence agency?

VAN ATTA: No.

MAN: Have you looked into it at all?

VAN ATTA: No.

MAN: Okay.

Just one other question. I just -- an observation. And that is that your guest sounded curious that CIA people hang out together. But his own boss seems to like to hire Mormons.

VAN ATTA: Actually, I'm the only Mormon on the staff, and we have 18. Perhaps that's a disproportionate number.

MAN: I thought that -- well, the fellow who's now on TV. He used to be a Jack Anderson staff member.

VAN ATTA: No. Actually, I'm not aware of any staff member he's had before that was a Mormon, in the last ten years. I had known Jack as a personal friend for years before I came to work for him. I worked out in Salt Lake City and proved myself for many years as an investigative reporter. And he hired me on the staff. I can't remember any other Mormon that was hired there.

FISKE: Thank you, sir.

You're on 88.5-FM.

WOMAN: You know, speaking of religion and intelligence activities, I've always thought of intelligence activities as having nothing to do with religion. They're in the furtherance of the national interest. Now, it seems to me that you can't be both religious and a person who's devoted to something in the

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national interest at the same time, especially if you belong to the Christian religion, because we have the Bible, we have the ten commandments, we have strictures against lying, deceiving other people and pretending to be something that you're not.

And I mean I've always felt, myself, that we're only six percent of the world's population, and for us having the answer to what's right and what's wrong in this world, that would be very, very doubtful. For example, if you take a country like China, with one-quarter of the world's population, they probably know as much about right and wrong as we do, and a lot more. I mean why should God pick us, you know?

And I mean I've always met people in the CIA that I know and just despised them because they expect to get respect as nice people. And I've met a whole lot of them, and I mean one of the reasons they're so socially isolated is because other people won't have anything to do with them.

FISKE: Well, I rather disagree with that.

VAN ATTA: Yeah, I'd have to disagree with that vehemently. It's the vast majority -- I mean I can't think of a CIA person I've ever talked to that I've felt they were -- that I was more moral than they were, to tell you the truth.

WOMAN: Oh, I didn't feel that. The thing that I've always felt when I met them -- and I know this has been the case. I've lived abroad a great deal -- they weren't telling me the truth, they weren't telling other people the truth. They were doing things -- I mean I've always felt that a good moral life is based on good personal relations with the people that you just happen to encounter.

FISKE: Well, I would suspect that those people who are in the CIA lead good moral lives and tell the truth and they're not deceptive, except as it deals with their work and they feel some justification in that area.

WOMAN: But that's not true, Mr. Fiske.

FISKE: Well, okay. It's been my experience.

VAN ATTA: And that the American public supports them in doing that.

FISKE: Good evening.

MAN: ...Dale, I understand that most of the covert branch of the CIA are Roman Catholic zealots, including the present CIA Director, William Casey, and former head of the --

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chief spy, James Jesus Angleton; and that many other rich and powerful Roman Catholics, such as William and James Buckley and Richard Allen and Judge William Clark and General Vernon Walters and General Alexander Haig, U.N. Ambassador Kirkpatrick, are all active collaborators of the secret Roman Catholic organization called the Opus Dei.

VAN ATTA: No. This all gets very close to something I never wanted to get into, that there is a Catholic conspiracy, a Mormon conspiracy, a Jewish conspiracy. The CIA is made up of many, many different people.

MAN: Well, what do you know about the Opus Dei?

VAN ATTA: It's a different show.

FISKE: Thank you.

Good evening.

MAN: I have two quick points to make to Mr. Van Atta, and a question.

First of all, I think it's important to look -- when you look at the CIA, to kind of look at the organizational chart, where you have three directorates: the science and technology, the analytical, and the operations.

It seems to me most Americans would have no problem with the science and technology and the analytical branch of the CIA. It's the operations directorate group that is involved in funneling money to foreign forces, rebel forces, whatever.

And the second point is that this operations directorate and the philosophy, the ethics of this directorate is fundamentally opposite from our own democratic government.

VAN ATTA: Are you in the agency?

MAN: No, I'm not in the agency.

VAN ATTA: You know a great deal about it.

I always found it, actually, very fascinating how very few of those in the operations directorate rubbed elbows with those in the directorate of intelligence, science and technology, and administration, partly because what they're supposed to be doing is not supposed to be known by those other divisions. Occasionally, if they sit together at lunch in the cafeteria, one operations directorate guy may say, you know, "I was doing this," and the intelligence guy says, "I analyzed that. I thought that

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was a legitimate operation," or, "I thought it was an indigenous group that was fighting for this," and it turned out to be a CIA operation.

So, there's not a lot of close contact there all the time. It is different.

MAN: One question, Mr. Van Atta. What can you tell us about the domestic collection division of the CIA, the group that shakes down American businessmen who have contacts with Eastern European companies or Soviet Bloc, Soviet Union companies?

VAN ATTA: They do have a variety of stations in the United States. They're the only part of the CIA that can operate domestically. They do debrief businessmen. I haven't heard that they shook them down. In many cases, businessmen cooperate because they have already asked the CIA for information on that country, which the CIA gave them; which is like trading, which journalists do with the CIA if they can.

FISKE: I don't suppose we have time for any more calls.

Dale, thank you very much for coming.

VAN ATTA: Can I say one last quick thing?

FISKE: Sure. Yeah.

VAN ATTA: I really believe in the CIA, and I believe most of them are very good people. I believe we think that they -- that perhaps what I'm hoping is that they are better than I am.

FISKE: Well, I suppose in this day and age it's hard to believe that we could get along in the world without intelligence gathering. It's the sort of thing that -- the secrecy and so on -- is foreign to a great many of us, but we'd better make friends with it.

Good luck.

Dale Van Atta, "God and Man at the CIA," the title of his article.