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Why they want to deport me

By Anthony Holden

PHILIP AGEE, the American writer on CIA activities, now believes he knows exactly why the Home Secretary intends to deport him from Britain.

On Tuesday morning he will begin to defend himself before Merlyn Rees's advisory panel of "three wise men" against charges whose substance he will not be told. Information reaching him from "friends in high places" suggests that Rees believes Agee is responsible for betraying Nato agents working for British intelligence in Poland.

Agee knows only that he is accused of activities "harmful to the security of the United Kingdom." He will tell the panel of his work as an anti-CIA campaigner, using the knowledge he gained as a CIA agent between 1936 and 1968 in various countries. But he will strenuously deny any suggestion that he intended to use his knowledge to damage British intelligence operations.

Much of the half-million-word dossier he will present to the panel, his blanket statement of innocence, will concern what can be called the Polish connection. It is a dramatic, complex spy story centring on an outstanding international sportsman. Much of the story, which began to surface in the West 18 months ago, was confirmed by *The Sunday Times* last week from independent sources.

If Agee's suspicions are correct, he is threatened with deportation for an episode he insists is a vengeful and expert smear job by his former colleagues in the CIA.

ON JANUARY 12 last year Murray Seeger, Los Angeles Times staff man in Bonn, wrote a story from Brussels about the exposure of a Nato spy ring in Poland. It was a strong story, which caught the international headlines because the agent said by have headed the ring was Jerzy Pawlowski, three times world fencing champion, 1968 Olympic gold medallist, and a well-known and popular figure in his homeland.

Seeger's story, which described his informants as "qualified western sources," blamed Agee for the rounding-up of Pawlowski and 120 other Nato agents in Poland — many of them also international sportsmen who frequently travelled to the West. Agee, Seeger wrote, had given the names to the KGB in 1971 while in Cuba, where he spent some time researching for his book

Diary. Agee had learned the names and met Pawlowski, the story went on, while working for the CIA in Mexico City during the 1968 Olympic Games.

The Los Angeles Times never printed the story. Nor did the Washington Post, which receives all Los Angeles Times stories by a wire service. The Guardian in London, which receives the same wire service, contacted Agee and used his denial for an article based on Seeger's piece.

Agee claimed then, and still maintains, that the information given to Seeger was a CIA-inspired smear, at a time when they were trying to discredit him. Only a short time earlier Richard Welch, CIA station chief in Athens, had been assassinated; his name had just been published in a "spook-spotting" article in the American magazine *Counter-spy*, and the agency blamed Agee — in so many words — for Welch's death.

Seeger stood by his story last week, saying that he had checked all the information carefully before writing it. He refused to name his sources, but insisted that they were "highly reliable." He would not comment on the suggestion that they had CIA connections. The Los Angeles Times's foreign editor, Bob Gibson, said he had decided not to use the story "because it needed further checking." Those further checks had never in the end been made, because of pressure of work, and the story "had just died the death."

Pawlowski was arrested in June 1975, and tried last March for "spying for one of the Nato countries." The trial was held in secret, but the Polish news agency, PAP, announced last April 9 that he had been jailed for 25 years, with loss of all civil rights for 10 years and confiscation of all his property. The report also said he had confessed to the charge.

Another report suggested that the Soviet Union had demanded Pawlowski's execution but that this had been resisted by the Polish armed forces. Pawlowski, then 43, was a lieutenant-colonel

in the Polish army, and his trial was reported to have caused "a crisis" in senior army circles.

Others — it is not known how many — were tried with Pawlowski and sentenced on the same charges. It is known that two other alleged spies avoided the trial. One, Witold Wjoda, another fencer (and winner of a 1972 Olympic gold medal) escaped arrest by fleeing to Italy. The second, Marek Bedinski, simply disappeared.

AGEE BELIEVES this episode to be crucial because of a remark attributed to the Home Secretary and passed on to him. He heard, from an intermediary that Rees told a senior politician he was deporting Agee "because he has betrayed two of our men behind the Iron Curtain." The Sunday Times last week contacted the politician, who said he could not reveal the contents of a private conversation with the Home Secretary. It is known, however, that Rees's remarks persuaded him to withdraw some angry questions he was proposing to ask in the House.

Agee denies in exhaustive detail any involvement in the Polish spy revelations. It is true that he was a CIA undercover agent assigned to the Mexico Olympics, but he claims never to have dealt with any Polish agents. He makes two other central points.

First, if he had given the information to the KGB while in Cuba in 1971, why was the spy ring not broken up until 1975?

Second, he had already told his CIA chiefs in Mexico City, before the Olympics, of his intention to resign. He was involved in a bitter dispute with his ex-wife over custody of their children, and she had threatened to expose him as a CIA agent to force him to back down. Meanwhile, he was well known around Mexico City as an officer at the US Embassy.

Given these three facts, all of which made him a considerable security risk, would the CIA have assigned him to deal with such prominent and sensitive agents at the games?

The details of the story have necessarily been condensed here. But behind it, Agee believes, lies the reason for his threatened deportation.

His first move on Tuesday morning, however, may well be to apply for an adjournment. Agee and his solicitor, Larry Grant, are still working on the formal preparation of their case, and are not sure it will be ready in time. Even if it is, they will suggest an adjournment for the advisory panel to digest it, and for witnesses whom Agee wishes to call to be summoned from abroad.

They are unlikely to win their adjournment. They have already been granted a postponement of

Agee will take his Brazilian wife and two sons with him to

not sure whether they will be allowed in.

Witnesses appearing on his behalf — who will include MPs such as Judith Hart and Stan Newens; Agee's publisher at Penguin, Neil Middleton; and the general secretary of the National Union of Journalists, Ken Morgan — have been asked to bring some form of identification "such as a passport or driving licence." Grant has replied to the Home Office that this is "an idea that many people find offensive."

The proceedings may not, however, even get that far. If Agee's and Grant's worst fears are confirmed, and most of their requests on Tuesday morning are denied, they will seriously consider walking out of the tribunal.

Among the items on Tuesday morning's agenda are: May we tape-record the proceedings? May we cross-examine witnesses? May we call as witnesses the intelligence officers who laid the charges before the Home Secretary? May we suggest that these proceedings should be allowed to continue beyond the two days allotted them? May we be entitled to know, at the end, what the panel recommends to the Home Secretary?

The answer to all these questions is likely to be negative. If so, Grant says he, as a lawyer, will feel compromised even by agreeing to take part in such proceedings. "Justice will not only not be done, it will be seen not to be done."

Press and public are not being admitted. But Agee is setting up a Press headquarters in the nearby Institute of Contemporary Arts, and will be heading straight there from each session to give a blow-by-blow account to journalists.

Mark Hosenball, the other American journalist threatened with deportation, will appear before the same tribunal — Sir Derek Hilton, president of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal; Sir Clifford Jarrett, chairman of the Tobacco Research Council; and Sir Richard Hayward, a member of the Post Office board — on January 18.

A Home Office spokesman yesterday "could not comment on" Agee's theory of why he is threatened with expulsion, and again refused to give any details of the charges against Agee.

~~SECRET NATO~~
P-Seeger, Murray