

April 10, 1956

INTERDEPARTMENTAL ESCAPEE COMMITTEE
PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF FACTS SURROUNDING THE RETURN
OF FIVE SOVIET DEFECTORS TO THE USSR ON APRIL 7, 1956



Although the five Soviet defectors who left the U. S. for the USSR on April 7 were not technically under its direct purview, the Interdepartmental Escapee Committee concurred in the desirability of reviewing all pertinent facts in the situation in the light of OCB interest in the Soviet campaign against the emigration. Members of the Committee supplied the following preliminary data which have been assembled by the OCB Staff Representative and not cleared in draft with the members.

1. About three months ago the Soviet Ambassador approached the Department of State requesting permission to interview the Tuapse defectors. A letter was obtained from each defector in question to the effect that he did not wish to talk to the Soviet representatives. State turned down the Soviet Embassy's request some four weeks ago.

2. Justice member reported that the Soviet UN delegate had started contacting the defectors about a month ago. State was so informed by the FBI. Justice member further reported that the five individuals left the UN Friday afternoon in the company of identified Soviet diplomatic personnel. Reports were also produced to the effect that two of the defectors had been contacted earlier by Soviet personnel or agents while at their place of employment in New Jersey.

3. On the afternoon of Friday, April 6, a USEP officer informed Assistant Commissioner Devaney of I and NS concerning reports from the Church World Service that the five defectors were about to return

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to the Soviet Union. Information was exchanged with CIA and passed to the New York office of I and NS. Deputy Under Secretary Murphy and the Commissioner of Immigration agreed that the defectors should be questioned at the airport. General Swing instructed the New York officers of I and NS to question the defectors before they boarded the plane and to see that no force was employed against them. Late Saturday morning, April 7, the five defectors arrived at the airport accompanied by about 15 Soviet diplomatic personnel including the Soviet Delegate to the UN. In the absence of instructions to the contrary and in response to insistence by the Soviet Delegate, the immigration officers interrogated the defectors individually in the presence of the Soviet Delegate and another Russian who claimed to be their counsel. A CIA representative was also present at the interviews which took place in the Station Master's office. Each defector answered specific questions that no pressure had been used against him. All interviews were in the Russian language, although three of the subjects can speak English.

4. A 6th former member of the Tuapse crew was questioned at 2:00 A.M. on the morning of April 10. He said that he had been approached by Soviet representatives several times at public places and at home and that he had received a number of letters from the Soviet Union. He said he had no knowledge of coercion and that he had told the Soviet agents that he would not return to the USSR.

5. Representatives of USEP relayed reports of Church World Service: There was no indication one week before the departure that the defectors were malcontent or had any intention to leave the U.S. While these defectors were not ordinary USEP cases, they were turned over to the

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Program in Taipei. They were brought to the U. S. and resettled in the New York area, primarily to be near the headquarters of the Church World Service, the contracting voluntary agency. They were visited each week by CWS personnel and they were informed that they could phone CWS for help at any time. USEP provided adequate assistance, including English language training, employment, medical service, and continuous counselling. Short of isolating these individuals from the public, it appears that everything possible was done to provide for their well-being. Between the time of their arrival in New York in October 1955 and their departure, the U.S. provided material assistance of about \$1,000 each. It was suggested that New York was probably an undesirable place to resettle such individuals.

6. USEP representatives summarized reports from Mr. Van Hoogstraten of the Church World Service as follows:

Up to one week before the departure the defectors were adamant against returning to the USSR. On April 4 the defectors were seen entering the offices of the Soviet UN Delegation. On April 6 one defector came to the office of CWS and talked to the Soviet UN Delegation by phone incoherently. He then told CWS that five were returning to the USSR. On April 7 Van Hoogstraten went to the airport where he saw the five defectors arrive with "15 or 20 Soviet thugs." All appeared markedly changed. All refused to recognize Van Hoogstraten who identified one of the "20 Soviet thugs" as a man who had attended classes for new immigrants at a New York University with the defectors. The representative of CWS reported that all five had close relatives in the USSR. He expressed the view that the Soviet operation was organized to minute

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details and that tape recordings may have been used to convey information for purposes of coercion.

7. It was recalled that these people defected originally to the Government of Republic of China and were held incommunicado in Taiwan for almost a year.

8. It was reported that officials of Church World Service and possibly other private organizations are critical of the handling of the situation by the U. S. Government and that they may make further public utterances on the subject.

9. The view was expressed that some form of pressure was probably used by Soviet agents. The Soviet UN delegation was active in the situation and may have acted improperly. Members of the Committee representing agencies most concerned were asked to continue to collect the facts of the case. It was suggested that the OCB may wish to address itself to the question of what may be done in the future to prevent similar occurrences.

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