

MEMORANDUM

August 5, 1997

To: T. Jeremy Gunn
From: Michelle Combs
Subject: Yuriy Ivanovich Nosenko

I have prepared this memorandum at your request for the upcoming meeting where the Board will be briefed on issues related to the Soviet defector, Yuriy Nosenko.

Summary and Recommendation

The information on Yuriy Ivanovich Nosenko contained in the CIA Sequestered Collection microfilm consists of approximately 3500 pages of interviews, transcripts, memos, and reports. Of the total, approximately 1200 have been released to the public as open in full or with only minor redactions. Of the 1200 released pages, roughly 800 contain information directly relevant to Lee Harvey Oswald and the Kennedy assassination.

After my review of the Nosenko records and our discussion of the issues, it is our judgment that the remaining 2300 pages are unrelated to the assassination of President Kennedy and we recommend that they be processed as "NBR." These NBR records consist of such items as general family and professional contact information, Soviet intelligence methodology and operations, and Soviet navy information dating to Nosenko's early career in Soviet Naval Intelligence. I suggest that we review carefully these 2300 records to ensure that there is no assassination-related material, and, to the extent this is correct, we should process them as "NBRs."

Background on Nosenko

KGB Lieutenant Colonel Yuriy Ivanovich Nosenko first secretly contacted the CIA in Geneva in June 1962. One and a half years later on February 4, 1964, he defected to the United States for what he said were ideological reasons. His case became the single most difficult counterintelligence case in the Agency's history to date. Nosenko's information on the assassination of President Kennedy made his bona fides of more importance than simply a means to determine his true identity or whether he was the prototype of a KGB disinformation plot against Western intelligence agencies.

The conflict over Nosenko began two and a half years prior to his actual defection, in December

1961, when Anatoliy Golitsyn, a KGB defector, predicted that the KGB would dispatch false defectors after him to discredit him and confuse Western intelligence agencies as part of a massive disinformation campaign. Golitsyn, who had described a darkly intentioned monolithic Russian master deception plan and Soviet intelligence agencies of brutal efficiency, claimed that Nosenko was the most important of these fake defectors and that any Soviet sources who came later and supported Nosenko's bona fides would also be false. Golitsyn was wholly believed by Counterintelligence Chief James Angleton, who shared Golitsyn's world view. Golitsyn argued that any CIA officers who believed Nosenko should be considered as moles themselves.

Nosenko's first four meetings with the CIA in Geneva in June 1962 produced an intelligence bonanza and the two CIA officers (George Kisevalter and Peter Bagley) who met with him believed he had conclusively proved his bona fides. During his debriefings in 1964, Nosenko provided detailed information about Lee Harvey Oswald's stay in the USSR which, he said, had come across his desk routinely as the deputy chief of the Second Chief Directorate (SCD) department responsible for watching American visitors in the USSR.

With Golitsyn arguing against Nosenko's bona fides, plans were made in March 1964, to imprison Nosenko and begin hostile interrogations to find any shifts in his information. On April 2, Deputy Director for Plans Richard Helms and Soviet Division Chief David Murphy met with the Deputy U.S. Attorney General and obtained legal approval from the Justice Department to imprison Nosenko so that he could not communicate with his supposed KGB controllers. On April 4, he was imprisoned in an attic room in a CIA safe house near Washington. Nosenko was kept in solitary confinement, subjected to physical and mental torture, and submitted to hostile interrogations from April 4, 1964 to October 27, 1967 first at the safe house and then in a specially built cement house in Virginia. Despite over three years of severe treatment, Nosenko's original story remained unchanged, no "confession" was forthcoming, and no evidence was produced indicating he was, as Golitsyn still claimed, a fake defector.

On August 8, 1968, Nosenko was polygraphed for the third time by an Office of Security specialist. During the examination, Nosenko was asked whether he had told the truth about Oswald and the Kennedy assassination; the polygraph operator found only positive responses to the questions. Security Officer Bruce Solie submitted a comprehensive report in October 1968 which evaluated all of Nosenko's information, to date, and concluded that he was what and who he had claimed to be all along. After a review of his case by the Soviet Division, Nosenko was finally released from CIA custody on March 1, 1969 and employed as an independent consultant by the CIA.

In the 35 years since Nosenko first approached the CIA in Geneva, no prima facie evidence has ever

emerged to prove that he was a KGB provocation and subsequent defectors have affirmed him as a bona fide defector. He has identified many hundreds of Soviet intelligence officers, provided a considerable quantity of useful information on the organization, doctrine and methods of the KGB, and conducted numerous special studies on Soviet subjects. Today, Nosenko is seventy years old, recently retired as a contractor from the CIA, an American citizen, married, and living quietly in the Sunbelt.