

MEMORANDUM

August 5, 1997

To: Board

From: Michelle Combs

Subject: Yuriy Ivanovich 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. Wholly believed by Counterintelligence Chief Jim Angleton, Golitsyn also 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 conclusively proved his bona fides. Yet, when Angleton showed Nosenko's information to Golitsyn, Golitsyn pronounced him an instant fake. Thus, when Nosenko returned to Geneva determined to defect in January 1964, he encountered an already well developed Angleton-led controversy over his bona fides.

From 1962 to 1974 an internecine war over Nosenko's bona fides was conducted in the halls of the CIA. During his debriefings, 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

File 4.0.2 Nosenko
Combs e:\nosenko.wpd

Chief Directorate (SCD) department responsible for watching American visitors in the USSR. Since the question of Soviet complicity or innocence in the murder of an American president was paramount, Nosenko's truthfulness or lack of it became the central piece of evidence to prove or disprove the existence of a KGB "monster plot" or master plan to deceive and bring down the West. Following the "monster plot" theories of Golitsyn, Angleton led the campaign to discredit Nosenko.

The issue of Nosenko's bona fides also created a raging controversy between the FBI and the CIA. The FBI believed Nosenko and J. Edgar Hoover pressed for Nosenko's testimony before the Warren Commission but was outmaneuvered by the CIA. In October 1964, the decision was made not to allow Nosenko to testify.

Beginning in March 1964, plans were made to imprison Nosenko and start hostile interrogations. 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 at Camp Perry, Virginia. Despite his 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.

In 1965 [CHECK DATE], Peter Bagley wrote a 900-page study on the Nosenko case. A several months later, Soviet Division officer Leonard McCoy sent David Murphy and later Deputy DCI Helms a memorandum which evaluated Bagley's study and concluded that no fake defector had ever provided intelligence of such immense value as Nosenko. A third study was produced in 1966 by Inspector General Gordon Stewart which provisionally concluded that the case had been badly mishandled and that Nosenko was not a fake defector. An in-depth 1967 study by Security Officer Bruce Solie concluded that there were major and continual errors in the way Nosenko had been handled and interviewed, that the polygraph tests had been rigged in order to break Nosenko, and that the interrogations had been conducted in a war-time environment. Solie also concluded that the issue of Nosenko's bona fides remained unresolved and could only be resolved through patient questioning in a non-hostile environment. After Solie's report, responsibility for Nosenko was removed from the Soviet Division and turned over to the Office of Security. For the next eight months, Nosenko was interviewed by Solie and other Security officers who validated that Nosenko was who and what he had claimed to be all along.

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 a positive response to the question. Solie submitted his report in October 1968. After yet another 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.

No prima facie evidence has ever emerged to prove that Nosenko was a KGB provocation and subsequent defectors have affirmed him as a bona fide defector. He testified before the HSCA in 1975 [**Check Date**]. Today, Nosenko is seventy years old, a American citizen, married, and living quietly in the Sunbelt.