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SLOBODA, LILLIAN

INTERVIEW

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Attachment to: CSCI-3/778,353

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1. Mrs. Lilian SLOBODA was interviewed in Halifax on 19 March 1963, by a member of the British Security Service.

2. Mrs. SLOBODA gives the impression of being a rather quiet, nervous and not very intelligent north country woman, ill-equipped to grapple with the upheaval of the past two years. At the outset I told her that I was not a police officer but a member of the War Office in London concerned with security matters and in this connection there were a few questions I wished to ask her. However, she was under no obligation to answer any questions or indeed to be interviewed at all, but should she agree to answer my questions then she should bear in mind that the contents of our interview must not be discussed with anyone else at any time. She said that she was quite prepared to be interviewed although she did not think that she had any information of value to us. I should mention here that at the beginning she was obviously very nervous and reticent, then for a period she seemed much more self-assured, and towards the end of the interview, when one or two rather delicate matters were raised she became somewhat distressed, flushed and uncertain of herself. Before recording what she had to say I feel bound to make the reservation that I do not believe she told me the whole truth and that I do not consider that she is quite so guileless as the impression she gave me at the beginning of the interview led me to believe. In brief, she may not be very intelligent, but she has lots of native cunning.

3. She supplied the following answers to the questions put by me on the basis of the questionnaire received from CIA.

A. Under what circumstances was she permitted to return to England? Does she plan to return to the U.S.S.R.?

Her object in returning to this country from the U.S.S.R. in March 1962 was to take a holiday which, she said, she felt she badly needed. It was obvious from what Mrs. SLOBODA had to say that she had found life in Lvov very difficult, largely because of her lack of Russian, and the fact that her husband's parents were living in the same apartment. After discussing the matter with her husband she first applied for an exit visa in August 1961 and she admitted that the Russian Intelligence Officer responsible for her husband's resettlement asked her more than once why she wished to leave her husband in Russia and return home to England. The resettlement officer implored her husband to bring pressure to bear on her on the grounds that her husband was now living in Russia and that it was up to her to knuckle down and become "acclimatised" and stay by his side rather than to return to the U.K. However, in the end her persistence won the day and after

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depositing her passport with the authorities in Lvov she received it back again in March 1962 with an exit visa stamped therein. She wished to take not only her small daughter but also her second son with her and on arrival in Moscow from Lvov by Aeroflot she visited the British Embassy to discuss the status of the son in question, Victor Edwin, born in 1956 in the U.S.A.

Her husband accompanied her to Moscow and made the arrangements for her departure; she did not mention any meetings with any U.S. officials in Moscow.

Before leaving Lvov she was presented with 50 roubles by the resettlement officer with which to buy a present for her mother in the U.K. and she was advised to contact the Soviet Embassy in London regarding arrangements for her return trip to Russia at the conclusion of her holiday; her passport was validated for ninety days. Mrs. SLOBODA, when interviewed on 19th March, said that she is now desirous of returning to the U.S.S.R. She indicated that whilst in this country she had taken stock of her position and felt duty bound to return to her children. She considered it unlikely that the Russians would be prepared to allow all three children to leave the U.S.S.R. and thus she felt that the only alternative was for her to return there. In this connection she had recently received a telegram from her husband saying that he was planning to despatch the eldest child, David, born in the U.K. in 1953, to Halifax, but she had sent a telegram in reply telling her husband to abandon this plan as she herself proposed to return to Russia in the near future. Mrs. SLOBODA was questioned about her motives for sending this telegram, seeing that her husband appeared to have made a decision to return the British born son to this country and bearing in mind that Mrs. SLOBODA herself had indicated her displeasure at the fact that this particular son (who was at boarding school and who now spoke fluent Russian) gave every appearance of growing away from the family and becoming a Young Communist. She averred that she was still very much in love with her husband. She did not seem to envisage any difficulty in obtaining the assistance of the Soviet Consulate in London to return to the U.S.S.R., and she expects the Consulate to provide her with the necessary passages when requested to do so; she added that she had received an assurance about the availability of free passages from 'Anton'.

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- B. Was she recruited by Soviet Bloc Intelligence? If so, what type of assignments, training, pay, methods of communication did she receive?

Mrs. SLOBODA denied that she was approached by Soviet Intelligence at any stage of her stay in the U.S.S.R., let alone recruited by them. On her arrival in the U.S.S.R. at Leningrad she was met by her husband who introduced her to the R.I.S. resettlement officer referred to above. This official arranged for her to stay a few days before making arrangements for her journey to Lvov. The name of the resettlement officer was given by Mrs. SLOBODA as 'Anton' and she said that he is between 45 and 50 years of age. She said that all the arrangements for her trip to Leningrad were made by the Soviet Consulate in London whom she had approached after receiving a letter from her husband in Russia. The Soviet Consul himself handled her affairs in a courteous and kind manner. The Russians paid all her expenses for the trip and in addition shipped her furniture. She maintained that on arrival at Leningrad she was subjected to no security interrogation or interview procedures by the Soviet authorities and that the only person connected with Soviet Intelligence whom she met during her stay in the U.S.S.R. was the Anton referred to above. Furthermore, she maintained that the R.I.S. had attached no conditions (involving intelligence activities in this country) to the granting of permission to return here.

- C. Before SLOBODA defected, did he reveal his intentions to anyone? Was his decision influenced by Communist literature, contacts with Soviet Bloc emigres, Soviet Bloc Intelligence agents, or by personal difficulties? With whom did SLOBODA associate prior to defection who may have influenced or arranged his defection?

Mrs. SLOBODA maintained that at no stage prior to his defection did her husband give her the slightest hint or indication of his plans to defect. On the day in question he went off to work dressed in civilian clothes in the normal way and quite simply, did not come back at the normal hour. Later however, he telephoned from East Berlin to inform his wife that he would not be home that night but would see her again soon and that in no circumstances was she to worry. A day or so prior to these events SLOBODA had received his army pay and had handed over the usual amount of housekeeping to his wife. A day or so after receiving the telephone call Mrs. SLOBODA received a postcard saying in effect "don't worry, I will write again soon", and she seemed to think that the postcard bore

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a Berlin postmark. She said his car was found abandoned near Cologne. Mrs. SLOBODA said she knew nothing about her husband having had any contact with any Russians in Germany at any time prior to his defection. She indicated that she had been closely questioned about this matter by the American authorities in Frankfurt when her husband's defection had been reported to them. She said that her husband worked as a "plain clothes" man in the U.S. Army Military Intelligence group based in Frankfurt. He never sought to discuss his work with her but he seemed to enjoy it and it used to involve a certain amount of travelling. Mrs. SLOBODA said that whilst relations between her and her husband were normal as at the time of his defection, there had been a number of disputes over money. It seemed that SLOBODA, contrary to army regulations, had taken to visiting night clubs and cabarets in Frankfurt and also to gambling. All this had led him to incurring substantial debts and in this connection Mrs. SLOBODA said that at the time her husband was in debt to the extent of \$4,000, a fact which he feared would in time reach the ears of the military authorities and result in him being court martialled. Mrs. SLOBODA hinted that she had had more than her share of financial worries whilst they were living in Germany. She said that life as a soldier's wife in the U.S.A. had been extremely pleasant and that both her husband and herself had more than once cursed the day when they had been posted to Germany. Mrs. SLOBODA said that she did not know why her husband decided to defect but agreed that his state of indebtedness had been playing on his mind for some time. (Incidentally Michael SLOBODA, brother of Vladimir, stated in October 1960 that he knew his brother to be heavily in debt due to gambling and that on one occasion Vladimir SLOBODA had remarked cryptically 'I don't want to go, but I must'.) Mrs. SLOBODA indicated that her husband had been out on gambling excursions for many months prior to his actual defection.

D. Details of her travel arrangements immediately prior to her departure from England for U.S.S.R., and details of her trip from England to ultimate destination in U.S.S.R.

See (A) above.

E. What Soviet Bloc-Intelligence and propaganda exploitation of SLOBODA and Mrs. SLOBODA were made? What type of questions; nature and extent of information did they furnish? How many and in what type of propaganda progress were they involved and what were their themes?

Mrs. SLOBODA said that during her time in the USSR her family

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were troubled by propaganda workers on one occasion only. A Soviet journalist sought to interview her to find out how she felt about living in the U.S.S.R.; in fact the reporter was handled by her husband.

F. What methods of indoctrination in the Communist ideology were used while she was in U.S.S.R.?

None.

G. What is her opinion of SLOBODA's present attitude towards Communism? What is SLOBODA's present mental attitude towards the United States?

Mrs. SLOBODA said that her husband did not discuss political matters with her but that he appeared to like his job as a translator/librarian at the Polytechnic Institute in Lvov. Additionally he appreciated living in close proximity to his own father and mother. The authorities had provided a three-roomed flat and SLOBODA's income was in excess of 300 roubles a month which was quite good by local standards. The eldest boy attended a boarding school and he now spoke fluent Russian and correspondingly, little English. In short, SLOBODA seemed quite content with his present lot but Mrs. SLOBODA said she did not know what her husband thought about the United States. She repeatedly asserted that her husband had not only been reticent about his plans to defect, but refrained from discussing any of his experiences in Soviet hands prior to her arrival at Leningrad. Mrs. SLOBODA did not seem to think that such reticence as between man and wife was at all unusual!

H. What is SLOBODA doing now to include employment, political activities, names and descriptions of persons with whom he is in contact?

See (G) above.

I. Is or was SLOBODA connected or associated in any way with Tadeusz LIPSKI? Did LIPSKI know about SLOBODA's defection plans?

At first Mrs. SLOBODA denied all knowledge of Tadeusz LIPSKI but later said she thought that he must have been the person responsible for encouraging her husband to consider joining the U.S. Army. Mrs. SLOBODA recalls that LIPSKI called on them in Frankfurt on his arrival in Germany. Mrs. SLOBODA said she thought LIPSKI was a Ukrainian who had been with her husband in the U.K. as a D.P. after the war. LIPSKI continued to see the SLOBODA family from time to time in Germany but was stationed in Berlin and not Frankfurt. She did not see LIPSKI after her husband's defection. She is therefore unable to say whether or not LIPSKI knew anything about her

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husband's plans in this connection.

- J. Where are the SLOBODA children in U.S.S.R. ? What school are they attending ? Are they being given any type of political indoctrination ?

Two of the SLOBODA children are at present with their father in Lvov. The eldest goes to the International boarding school in Lvov whilst the second son (born in America) attends day school. The third child was too young attend school in Russia and is now in England with her mother.

- K. What knowledge does she have of other Americans in U.S.S.R.? Identity of any U.S. citizens contacted by SLOBODA since his arrival in U.S.S.R.

Mrs. SLOBODA said that she travelled from Moscow to London with the wife of an American citizen but she claimed to be unable to recall the name of this person, even though at the time she did agree to write to the woman concerned and took details of her address in America. This woman also came from Lvov. She had to wait seven months for an exit visa and did not propose to return to the U.S.S.R. Her husband was an electrical engineer and possibly of emigre stock. Mrs. SLOBODA said she understood he was a U.S. citizen in much the same boat as her husband.

- L. How was communication established with her husband before she went to U.S.S.R. and persons in England while she was in U.S.S.R.? Did she notice any type of censorship?

In the first place her husband wrote to her from the U.S.S.R. and she had experienced no difficulty in sending letters from Lvov to her family in the U.K. or indeed subsequently receiving letters from her husband, even though the mail was sometimes subject to delays which might imply that censorship was taking place.

- M. Has she contacted any U.S. military personnel since leaving the U.S.S.R? Request full details of affirmative.

She has made no contact with any U.S. military personnel since leaving the U.S.S.R. Her last contact with the American Military was in Germany in 1960 and she recalled in particular the many kindnesses she then received at the hands of the U.S. Red Cross who were of great assistance to her in her hour of need, and who

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in particular raised sufficient funds to clear all outstanding SLOBODA family liabilities in Germany.

4. CONCLUSION

On the basis of my interview, which lasted upwards of two hours, I found it impossible to make up my mind about Mrs. SLOBODA. She is difficult to talk to and the conditions under which we met in Halifax police station were by no means ideal. Whilst it is possible that she has withheld information which might incriminate her as an accessory before the fact of her husband's defection I came across nothing in my interview with her to suggest that she has been recruited by the R.I.S. or that her husband was at all forthcoming with her when they were reunited in the Soviet Union as to the reasons and the method of defection.

When it was suggested to her that it might be found desirable to see her again, and that it might be more convenient for such an interview to be conducted in London, her reaction was unexpectedly sharp and adverse. With a flushed face, she said that she did not see why, and indicated her marked reluctance to take part in such an exercise without, however, being able to adduce any particularly good reason for being so reluctant. She also seemed to be taken aback when she was asked what she would be saying to the Russians should they question her on her return to the U.S.S.R. about possible approaches from U.K. intelligence agencies. The question seemed to take her completely by surprise as though such a possibility had not occurred to her up to that moment. Eventually she mumbled that she did not know. She was therefore briefed to deny having had any such contacts and to limit herself to statements that of course she had been interviewed in the normal way by the local police, as well as by the Press. She was asked to advise us - through the Halifax Police - if she did decide to proceed with her plan to go back to Russia, and she reluctantly agreed to do so. Before she left, I offered her 5/- to meet the taxi fare to her home, and this she gladly accepted.

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