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Chapter Seven

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Could He Not Be Brought to This Country and Used? (U)

The year 1948 marks a milestone in the history of the Central Intelligence Agency. During the first years after World War II, American intelligence, like the military itself, was in the throes of demobilization. Uncertainty in the wake of the disbandment of OSS was compounded by personnel turnover, a lack of funding, and, most importantly, confusion as to targets and missions. The Strategic Services Unit and the Central Intelligence Group had both been small, resource-starved organizations while the new Central Intelligence Agency, established by the National Security Act of 1947, still had to establish itself as the first civilian intelligence agency in the history of the United States. Over the next two years, the United States Government reevaluated the role of secret intelligence. Directives issued by the National Security Council (NSC) transformed the young CIA into an action-oriented, operationally minded agency. As the Cold War heated up with the outbreak of fighting in Korea in 1950, the Agency witnessed a tremendous expansion of agents and operations that broadened its overall thrust of

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foreign intelligence and counterintelligence to the new world of psychological warfare and covert action. (U)

Covert Operations (U)

NSC 4-A in December 1947 authorized CIA to conduct "covert psychological operations designed to counteract Soviet and Soviet-inspired activities which constitute a threat to world peace and security or are designed to discredit and defeat the aims and activities of the United States in its endeavors to promote world peace and security."¹ The National Security Council soon broadened CIA's responsibilities with NSC 10/2 in June of 1948.² Perhaps one of the most important documents in the CIA's history, NSC 10/2 authorized the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) to conduct "covert operations," or "activities . . . which are conducted or sponsored by this Government against hostile foreign states or groups or in support of friendly foreign states or groups but which are so planned and executed that any US Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered the US Government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them." (U)

NSC10/2 authorized the OPC to handle such covert operations as:

¹A copy of NSC 4-A is found in US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945-1950, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996), pp. 649-51. In response to NSC 4-1, the CIA established a Special Procedures Group, whose duties were taken over by the Office of Policy Coordination. (U)

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propaganda, economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuative measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries of the free world.³ (U)

Headed by Frank G. Wisner, the State Department official who had recommended the use of émigrés a few months earlier, OPC had virtual autonomy in the new field of covert operations. The new office received its guidance from the Departments of Defense and State, especially from the latter's Policy Planning Staff under George Kennan.⁴ (U)

OPC's Rapid Growth (U)

OPC left a deep mark on American intelligence during its brief life (it merged with the Office of Special Operations in 1952 to form the Clandestine Services of the Deputy Directorate of Plans, or D/DP). Under NSC 10/2, the Truman Administration gave Wisner the clear signal to proceed with his plans to utilize émigré groups in Europe. As he had originally conceived in SANACC 395, Wisner wanted to exploit the

²A copy of NSC 10/2 is found in State Department, FRUS, *Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment*, pp. 713-715. (U)

³Ibid. (U)

⁴The composition of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff and its relationship with OPC is discussed in [] []

Clandestine Services Historical Series []

[] For further discussion on the advent of CIA's covert operations, see Peter Grose, *Operation Rollback: America's Secret War behind the Iron Curtain* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000). (S)

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weaknesses in Soviet society by US covert support to resistance groups and by “black” propaganda. Some of the most notable Cold War legacies—such as Radio Free Europe (RFE), and the American Committee for Freedom for the Peoples of the USSR (later the American Committee for Liberation)—all had their genesis under OPC.⁵ (U)

OPC underwent rapid growth and transformation. In 1948, for example, Wisner had some 30-odd personnel in three bases in Germany. Within two years, it had swollen to 253 personnel in Germany handling 62 various projects and operations, many associated with German political parties, labor unions, and media outlets.⁶ OPC had so many widespread activities that it called for a budget of nearly \$10 million in 1953. Of that amount, the office planned to spend nearly \$5 million for operations in Eastern Europe. OPC also funded other psychological warfare missions. The National Committee for a Free Europe and its radio programming swallowed an additional \$10 million while OPC wanted to spend another \$10 million on the AmComLib. Projected expenses for paramilitary training, escape and evasion routes, and staybehind networks amounted to over \$10 million.⁷ (S)

⁵An overall perspective of this period is found in Evan Thomas, *The Very Best Men: Four Who Dared: The Early Years of the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995). (S)

⁶A summary history of OPC's early operations in Germany is found in [redacted]

[redacted] Clandestine Services Historical Series [redacted]

⁷Comptroller, “OPC Budget for Fiscal Year 1953 by Major Requirements,” 7 December 1951, (S), in CIA History Staff Records, HS/CSG-768, [redacted] Box 5, CIA ARC. (S)

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The veterans of SSU, CIG, and early CIA were amazed, and somewhat dismayed, by the growth of OPC. While the Office of Special Operations initially concentrated on exploiting those assets at hand in Germany and slowly built up its knowledge of the USSR, OPC had broader goals.⁸ OPC's rapid expansion caused confusion among US intelligence agencies in Germany because they competed for many of the same agents and operations. Gordon M. Stewart, OSO's chief of mission in Karlsruhe, recalled these heady days:

As a result of Korea [the conflict broke out in 1950] we found ourselves in the midst of a large military buildup and the hectic expansion of CIA's activities. Europe got more men and arms than the Far East; CIA's staff in Germany increased several fold. One cold war project was piled on top of another, agents were recruited by the hundreds. Any project which would contribute to the slowdown or harassment of invading Soviet or satellite forces got a hearing. The effect on CIA was too much money and too many people. By mid-1952 the nature of our organization had been radically changed and we were up to our hips in trouble.⁹ (U)

Frank Wisner's belief that Russian and other emigre groups could contribute to the defeat of Soviet communism added to the CIA's own organizational transformation and operational uncertainties. While expanding CIA's contact with the émigré groups in

⁸For examples of the diversity of OPC's worldwide activities, see "OPC Daily Reports," 14 February 1951 through 23 April 1952, (S), in CIA History Staff Records, HS/CSG-716, ☐ ☐ Box 5, CIA ARC. (S)

⁹Gordon M. Stewart, *From Corning to Karlsruhe: Memoirs of a CIA Original* [1996 revised draft manuscript], p. 105. Copy in CIA History Staff files. (U)

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Europe, Wisner also turned to European "experts" on the USSR to gain intelligence on the Soviets.¹⁰ (S)

Psychological Fission (U)

The German experience in the Soviet Union during World War II intrigued the Office of Policy Coordination. Frank Wisner, in particular, sought to learn the lessons of the German defeat in the East—a defeat that he felt was due in large measure to Nazi failure to capitalize on the anticommunist sentiment of the Russian people. Reviewing the Nazi experience on the Eastern Front, Wisner felt that the United States "should stop thinking of the Soviet Union as a monolithic nation and investigate the internal strains." He advocated the use of consultants, in some cases Americans and others of foreign backgrounds, who had firsthand knowledge of the Soviet Union, its peoples, and political system.¹¹ (S)

For political insight, OPC drew upon the services of Gustav Hilger, a Russian-born German, who had served with the German Foreign Ministry in the Soviet capital. OPC also employed Nicholas Poppe, a Russian social scientist, who possessed an

¹⁰According to a 7 September 1949 memorandum from Robert P. Joyce to George F. Kennan, "OPC was advised to undertake plans and preliminary operations looking forward to the organization of the Russian non-returnees and DPs presently in US Zone of Occupation in Germany and Austria." As early as January of that year, Kennan told Wisner that "as the international situation develops, every day makes more evident the importance of the role which will have to be played by covert operations if our national interests are to be adequately protected." See Joyce to Kennan, 7 September 1949, TS 41303, (S), in CIA History Staff Records, HS/CSG-761, [redacted], Box 5, CIA ARC; and Kennan to Wisner, 6 January 1949, TS 29143, (S), in CIA History Staff Records, HS/CSG-759, [redacted], Box 5, CIA ARC. (S)

¹¹See Wisner to Offie et al, "[redacted] Proposal," 30 April 1949, (S), in Gustav Hilger, [redacted], DO Records. (S)

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encyclopedic knowledge of the various nationality groups in the USSR. Both men had worked in the Soviet Union and, as it turned out, both Hilger and Poppe played leading roles in Nazi Germany. American diplomats, in fact, valued Hilger's expertise even before the war. His capture by American forces after Germany's collapse was seen as fortuitous. While Poppe had more esoteric value to American intelligence, the combination of Frank Wisner's interest in the "psychological fission" of the Soviet Union and the mandate of NSC 10/2 impelled OPC to exploit both men. (S)

The Agency's use of Hilger and Poppe reveals the extent to which the OPC appropriated German wartime expertise for its own purposes. Just as the Agency had expressed reluctance to become involved with the Ukrainians, CIA officials initially rejected the use of foreign experts. The Agency's reluctance, however, withered in the face of the growing need to prepare for war with the Soviet Union. In the end, CIA became deeply involved with both Hilger and Poppe. (S)

A Fabulous Scholar (U)

Nicholas Poppe first came to the attention of the Central Intelligence Group in August 1946 when Richard N. Frye, a former OSS officer and a Harvard University professor, informed Stephen Penrose, Jr., a senior OSO official in Washington, that he planned to visit "a fabulous scholar" now in hiding in the British zone of Germany.¹²

¹²"209" to Stewart, "Visit of Mr. Richard N. Frye," 26 August 1946, L-003-826, (S), in DO Records. [] , Box 2, Folder 21, CIA ARC. Born in Alabama in 1920, Frye received his AB from the University of Illinois in 1939 and a master's from Harvard the next year. He served during the war in the Near East section of R&A and completed his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1946. A specialist in Iranian history and culture, Frye was a visiting professor overseas and a Harvard University professor with numerous books and articles to his credit. Stephen Penrose was a specialist on the Middle East with OSS, []

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Following a meeting with Poppe, both Frye and Henry Hecksher "were quite impressed with his abilities," according to Gordon Stewart in early 1947.¹³ As it turned out, the Soviets also knew that Poppe was hiding in western Germany, and they requested his arrest in a memorandum to Lt. Gen. Clay in November 1946. Colonel General P. A. Kurochkin, the deputy commander of the Soviet Military Administration, noted that Poppe "took an active part in betraying Soviet citizens who participated in the fight against the German-Fascist invaders in the occupied Soviet territory." The Soviet officer added, "it was established that N.N. Poppe was an active agent of the Gestapo and personally cooperated with members of the Gestapo in the interrogation, often attended by cruel beating, of arrested Soviet citizens."¹⁴ (U)

After a preliminary investigation, Maj. Gen. Frank A. Keating, the Assistant Deputy Military Governor, reported back to his Soviet counterpart that American officials had been unable to locate Poppe, but promised that the search would continue.¹⁵ In fact, the German Mission sent [redacted] to northern Germany to locate Poppe while the Army's CIC searched for him in the American zone. [redacted] did not find Poppe in the British zone, but did meet with his son. Gordon Stewart, the chief of the Intelligence Branch, told Richard Helms in Washington that "in view of the fact that the British are

[redacted] From 1948 until his death six years later, Penrose was the president of the American University in Beirut. (S)

¹³ Stewart to Helms, "Nikolai N. Poppe," 22 January 1947, MGH-003-122, XARZ-29325, (S), enclosing [redacted] to Chief, Intelligence Branch, "Poppe, [Nikolai]," 15 January 1947, (S), in DO Records, [redacted] Box 3, Folder 20, CIA ARC. (S)

¹⁴ Colonel General Kurochkin to Lt. Gen. Clay, 20 November 1946, 34/43385, in RG 260, OMGUS Records, The Records of the Executive Office, The Chief of Staff, Correspondence and Records Maintained by Maj. Gen. Frank Keating 1946-47, Box 25, Folder 9, NARA. (U)

¹⁵ Keating to Kurochkin, 11 January 1947, enclosing Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Huebner, Chief of Staff, USFET, to Maj. Gen. Keating, 9 January 1947, in RG 260, OMGUS Records, The Records of the Executive Office, The Chief of Staff, Correspondence and Records Maintained by Maj. Gen. Frank Keating 1946-47, Box 25, Folder 9, NARA. (U)

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either attempting to hide him or intend to debrief him and then turn him back, we have decided to drop the whole matter.”¹⁶ (S)

Frye, however, was not willing to let matters drop. In April 1947, he traveled to Washington after his return from another trip to Europe, and spoke with Col. Robert McDowell at Army G-2 about the Russian. Frye expressed his frustration that CIG had not taken steps to protect Poppe, but offered the hope that Army intelligence would be interested in this “gold mine of information re Soviet Asia & relations with Japan & China.” [redacted] sent a reply to Frye explaining that CIG, in fact, tried to contact Poppe. Given the British interest in Poppe’s case, [redacted] concurred with the field’s recommendation that it was best to let things pass. He was, however, willing to try to contact Poppe again if CIG could ascertain his location in Germany.¹⁷ (S)

Following up on his correspondence to Frye, [redacted] cabled to Heidelberg asking that Hecksher take another look at Poppe to determine his usefulness to American intelligence.¹⁸ In the meantime, Frye expressed his frustration at the US Government’s inability to protect Poppe, complaining that Poppe was still waiting for assistance. “Frankly,” Frye told [redacted] “I am more sorry than angry at the way things have not developed. It is the same old story of lack of authority, or lack of initiative, or lack of desire to take responsibility. As I told you before, I & Henry H. who went with me to interview him, are convinced the man is a mine of information, rather –more important– knowledge. C.I.C. shouldn’t be able to turn him back to the cousins, because he is an

¹⁶Stewart to Helms, “Nokolai N. Poppe,” 22 January 1947, MGH-003-122, XARZ-29325, (S), enclosing [redacted] to Chief, Intelligence Branch, “Poppe, [Nikolai],” 15 January 1947, (S), in DO Records, [redacted], Box 3, Folder 20, CIA ARC. (S)

¹⁷[redacted] to Frye, 30 April 1947, in response to Frye to [redacted] 22 April 1947, XARZ-29326, in DO Records, [redacted], Box 3, Folder 25, CIA ARC. (U)

¹⁸Cable, Special Operations to Heidelberg, 19 May 1947, Washington 2434, OUT 2434, (S), in DO Records, [redacted], Box 4, Folder 26, CIA ARC. (S)

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Estonian D.P.” Frye told [redacted] that he would try to get Poppe a job at Harvard University if CIG would facilitate his immigration to the United States. “In such a case your people, who seem to fear taking responsibility on a possible ‘gold brick,’ would be soothed & could use his services, as he is most willing.”¹⁹ (S)

Later in May 1947, Frye wrote another member of CIG for assistance. “The problem is Nikolai Nikolaievitch Poppe, a friend, and the greatest living authority on Soviet Siberia and Outer Mongolia,” Frye explained. According to Frye, Poppe was “born in Shanghai in 1897, speaks twelve languages, prof. in the University of Leningrad 1923-28, and Moscow 1930-41. The two years in between mark the time when he was in Outer Mongolia organizing proper USSR-Mongol relations. He has done the same for Chinese Turkestan, and has lived in various cities of Asiatic Russia.”²⁰ Frye glossed over Poppe’s wartime activities, noting only that he “joined the Germans, returned to Germany and his friends.” Now living as a displaced person in the British Zone, Frye appealed, “could he not be brought to this country and used?” In Frye’s opinion, Poppe “is of importance to our gov’t, and also to the scholarly world,” and he pleaded “that such a person not be allowed to perish, but to serve a function.”²¹ (S)

Frye’s efforts sparked yet another round of talks within the Central Intelligence Group as to Poppe’s usefulness for American intelligence. The German Mission reported in early June that it could not assess Poppe’s value to American intelligence because of his “peculiar background.” The field stated that it could arrange his interrogation at Oberursel, if Headquarters desired, but felt that Poppe “would be far greater value in

¹⁹Frye to [redacted] 15 May 1947, XARZ-29325, in DO Records, [redacted] [redacted], Box 3, Folder 20, CIA ARC. (S)

²⁰Frye to [redacted] 28 May 1947, (S), in Nicholas Poppe, [redacted] [redacted], DO Records. (S)

²¹Ibid. (S)

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US"²² Headquarters, in turn, asked Heidelberg to consult with the British about Poppe.²³ Richard Helms, FBM's chief, reported British sentiments to Col. Galloway, the Assistant Director of Special Operations, in August 1947. "There has been considerable investigation of the Poppe case dating back some months. He lives in the British Zone of Germany, the British know all about him, and would, in fact, be glad to get rid of him because of his nuisance value."²⁴ Despite Poppe's credentials, Helms maintained "we can see no compelling reason to go to all the trouble of getting him to the United States. It is granted that he is a Far Eastern scholar of distinction, but, aside from his background," Helms added, "he has little present or future usefulness to a secret intelligence organization." Helms commented that if Frye "wants the man to come to this country so badly . . . he should have him apply as any other DP would apply, then do what he can to get the State Department to grant a visa." Col. Galloway agreed with Helms's assessment.²⁵ (S)

Two months later, the British requested that the US Army take control of Poppe. Helms reiterated, "Poppe has no operational interest to OSO" and cut right to the heart of the matter: "Does the United States Army or CIA desire as a courtesy to the British to dispose of Poppe? If it is decided that this courtesy be afforded the British, the decision will involve as a corollary necessary arrangements to bring Poppe to the United States."²⁶

²²Cable, Heidelberg to Special Operations, 3 June 1947, Heidelberg 912, In 15664, (S), in DO Records, ☐ ☐ Box 4, Folder 28, CIA ARC. (S)

²³Cable, Special Operations to Heidelberg, 5 June 1947, Washington 2947, OUT 2947, (S), in DO Records, ☐ ☐ , Box 4, Folder 28, CIA ARC. (S)

²⁴Helms to Galloway, "N. Poppe," 13 August 1947, (S), in Poppe, ☐ ☐ , DO Records. (S)

²⁵Galloway to ☐ ☐ "N. Poppe," 18 August 1947, (S), in Poppe, ☐ ☐ , DO Records. (S)

²⁶Helms to Galloway, 17 October 1947, (S), enclosing Gen. Lethbridge's 6 October 1947 letter (not found), in DO Records, ☐ ☐ , Box 522, Folder 1, CIA ARC. (S)

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The Agency agreed to take Poppe from the British after mid-October 1947, although the actual transfer itself did not occur until May 1948. (S)

Poppe arrived in the American Zone at the instigation of Carmel Offie, a State Department official assigned to the Office of the US Political Adviser in Germany (POLAD).²⁷ In an operation known as FATHER CHRISTMAS, Poppe moved from the British Zone and met Offie at a Frankfurt office of the Counter Intelligence Corps on 12 May 1948. A member of OSO, who attended the meeting observed, "Offie said he had come specifically from Washington to deal with his case among other specific problems." Interestingly, Offie told Poppe that "State Department permission would **not** [original emphasis] be necessary for Poppe to immigrate and that it could be arranged through him."²⁸ (S)

Following the interview in Germany, Offie returned to Washington and called on Larence R. Houston, CIA's General Counsel. After Offie urgently asked Warner to arrange for Poppe's transfer to the United States, Warner discussed the case with Frank Wisner. OPC later asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Intelligence Objectives Agency to expedite Poppe's immigration.²⁹ By January 1949, Poppe had received a CIA

²⁷Born in 1909 in Pennsylvania, the son of Italian immigrants, Carmel Offie was a colorful, if not unusual CIA officer. He joined the State Department in 1931 as a clerk and rose through the ranks after his assignment to US Embassy in Moscow. Outgoing, fluent in several foreign languages, Offie made quick friends in high society circles. He joined OPC in 1949, but served only briefly when he resigned in May 1950. By this time, Congressional investigators and the FBI had pinned Offie as a homosexual. Charges of corruption and other scandalous affairs hounded Offie until his death in a plane crash in Paris in 1972. ☐

☐ See also various entries on Carmel

Office in Hersh, *The Old Boys*. (U)

²⁸☐ ☐, Special Operations Section to ADSO, "Poppe Nikolaus - Operation "Father Christmas," 13 May 1948, (S), in Poppe, ☐ ☐ DO Records. (S)

²⁹Lawrence R. Houston to ADPC, "Nikolai Poppe," 10 December 1948, (S), in Poppe, ☐ ☐ DO Records. (S)

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pseudonym, Stewart G. Waite, while he waited at the European Command Interrogation Center for the Agency to complete its investigation. In the meantime, Wisner approved Offie's proposal to employ Poppe.³⁰ (S)

Is Justice a Janus-Faced Being? (U)

Not until mid-February 1949, however, did the chief of station in Karlsruhe transmit to Washington copies of the British reports of Poppe's interrogation in 1946.³¹ These reports discussed Poppe's anticommunist activities and his work with the Nazis after the German occupation of the Caucasus in mid-1942. Poppe admitted that he had worked for the Germans as a translator, and claimed to have saved the "Mountain Jews" from German retribution prior to the retreat of Nazi forces from the region. He went from there to Berlin as a researcher on Soviet matters at the RSHA's *Wannsee-Institut*, and later worked at the German *Ost-Asien Institut* in Czechoslovakia. While Poppe tried to make his work with the Germans seem harmless, both institutes in reality conducted research on the "Jewish problem" in order to perfect the Nazi killing machines.³² (S)

While in British hands, Poppe bemoaned his fate and said, "but I am called a traitor, a war criminal and I am refused in any country not only as specialist on my

³⁰Wisner to Chief, Special Funds Division, OSO, "OPC Project JITNEY-JIBOA 1-E-4," with funding for \$3750 in Poppe, [redacted] [redacted], DO Records. Originally proposed as Project EARTHQUAKE in December 1948, Project JITNEY sought to prepare and implement plans for the training, equipping, and use of guerrilla warfare units as a part of a larger underground movement. (S)

³¹British reports on Poppe were sent from Germany to Headquarters in Chief of Station, Karlsruhe to Chief, SPG, "Nikolas Poppe," 11 February 1949, MGK-A-6169, (S), in Poppe, [redacted] [redacted], DO Records. (S)

³²See "Interrogation Report on Professor Nicholas Poppe," 11 November 1946, PF20541, (S), Enclosure 4 to above-cited document in Poppe, [redacted] [redacted], DO Records. (S)

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scientific subjects but even as teacher on other subjects familiar to me. I must live in hiding as if I were an escaped criminal. Is there any justice, I mean human justice.” Comparing his situation with the Bolshevik revolutionaries of World War I, Poppe said, “why people who had plotted against the lives of the Czars and their Ministers were allowed to live openly in Switzerland and in other countries? Or are there two justices, one concerning murderers of the Czars and another concerning fugitives from Russia? Is justice a Janus-faced being?” The British generally accepted Poppe’s melodramatic presentation and concluded that while he worked for the RSHA, he was simply a traitor and not a war criminal.³³ (S)

Despite this admission, neither the British nor the Americans returned Poppe to Soviet hands. The fact that the Soviets wanted Poppe made him an even greater asset for OPC as it scoured Europe for Soviet experts. Bringing Poppe to the United States, however, proved to be a slow process and one that tested Offie’s patience. He complained bitterly to [redacted], CIA’s acting Executive Director, in April 1949 about the length of time that the Agency took to process Poppe’s immigration.³⁴ (S)

Offie’s complaint apparently hastened the procedure because Poppe arrived on a US Air Force transport at Westover Field, Massachusetts, on 16 May 1949. Entering the United States as a displaced person under the sponsorship of John Davies of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, Poppe immediately went to Washington, to learn that he would earn \$500 a month as a consultant to OPC.³⁵ Within weeks, Poppe (who also was referred to in official correspondence as Karl H. Bergstrom or “Professor”

³³Ibid. (S)

³⁴Carmel Offie to [redacted], “Nikolai Poppe,” 11 April 1949, (S), in Poppe, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

³⁵Poppe worked as a consultant for OPC under Project QKJIBOA. This project was solely dedicated as a research project for Poppe and was canceled on 20 February 1950. (S)

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Bergstrom), began producing reports, such as "Ethnic and Religious Frictions in Chinese Central Asia" and "Broadcasting to Asiatic Peoples in the USSR in their Native Languages," for American intelligence.³⁶ Poppe's case officer in June also desired information about "Soviet mass desertions in the summer of 1941 and the welcome by peasants and townspeople of the Germans as liberators."³⁷ (S)

Handled on a Classified Basis (U)

Poppe's arrival in 1949 complemented the studies being written by Gustav Hilger, perhaps OPC's most prized Soviet expert. While Poppe fell out of Offie's favor later that year and left to take up a teaching position at the University of Washington, Hilger's star shone bright at both OPC and the State Department.³⁸ Hilger had a notable career in the

³⁶Poppe resumed his real identity in June 1949 after his identity papers had been retrieved from INS. He had surrendered all of his documentation when he arrived at Westover Field. Copies of Poppe's reports are found in his 201 file. Robert P. Joyce told Carmel Offie on 8 June 1949 that "it appears obvious that the fruits of the good professor should be made available not only to key persons in Dept. of State, but also to key posts in the field." (S)

³⁷ [redacted] to [redacted] [redacted] "Soviet Desertions," 21 June 1949, (S), in Poppe, [redacted]
[redacted] DO Records. (S)

³⁸Poppe accepted a teaching position despite OPC's overall reservations in 1949. By this point, OPC had learned that "Offie had revised his opinion of Poppe and thought that he had a low potential." Despite this change in attitude, Poppe continued to act as a consultant for CIA on other projects even after he departed Washington and provided reports until 1973. There was some confusion in 1950 as to OPC's commitment to Poppe to bring his two sons to the United States from Great Britain. See "The Poppe Case: Terms of Employment," in Poppe [redacted]
[redacted] DO Records. The GAO reviewed Poppe's case during its second investigation and he is listed as "Subject E" in the 1985 GAO report. OSI also reviewed the CIA's holdings on Poppe in 1984 and 1985. One CIA official resented the fact that OSI obtained its lead on Poppe from the Soviet Embassy. While OSI had access to CIA files, this official wrote, "a review of the file [Poppe's 201 file] makes clear that this is just Soviet vengeance against a man who is in essence a defector, not a war criminal. I don't quite see why this agency should be forced to open its files to DOJ/OSI fishing expeditions every time the Soviets pass on a new name." For notes made by GAO investigators on Poppe from CIA records, see DO Records, [redacted] [redacted] Box 3, Folder 49, CIA ARC. For DO and OSI correspondence on Poppe, including [redacted] [redacted]

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German Foreign Ministry, serving in the German embassy in Moscow and later as personal secretary to Joachim von Ribbentrop, Germany's Foreign Minister (who was convicted of war crimes and executed at Nuremberg). During the war, Hilger helped to bring Soviet defectors into the German ranks and organized the Vlasov Army. His firsthand experience with both Soviet officials and anticommunist groups was considerable; a fact quickly recognized by both the Americans and the Russians. (S)

Hilger surrendered to the Americans in the spring of 1945 and underwent extensive debriefings in the United States about his knowledge of the Soviets.³⁹ He even produced a study, "Diplomatic and Economic Relations between Germany and the USSR, 1922 to 1941," for the Department of State.⁴⁰ Upon his return to Germany, Hilger worked as the chief of the political section in the evaluation side of the nascent West German intelligence service.⁴¹ While working for the Gehlen Organization, the US Army facilitated the escape of Hilger's wife, daughter, and two grandchildren from Soviet hands and brought them to the American sector in Berlin. Lt. Col. John R. Deane, Jr., the US Army officer responsible for the Gehlen Organization, supervised the removal of Hilger's family and commented that "the Russians have a great interest in the people we are attempting to evacuate in this case and therefore it is urgently requested that they be

IMS/FPLG/Appeals and Litigation Branch to Acting Chief, FPLG, "DOJ Trace Request: Alleged Nazi War Criminals: Nicola Poppe, OSI #789," 23 April 1985, XAN-1117, (S), see DO Records, [redacted] Box 2, Folder 10, CIA ARC. (S)

³⁹Capt. Halle, "Report of Interrogation: No. 5854, 5856, 5857, 5858, 5859, 5860," 9 November 1945, (S), in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

⁴⁰"Diplomatic and Economic Relations Between Germany and the USSR, 1922 to 1941," 15 October 1946, enclosure to United States Office of the Political Adviser, Despatch No. 7576, 5 November 1946, (S), in Hilger, [redacted], DO Records. (S)

⁴¹Donald G. Huefner to Chief of Station, Karlsruhe, "RUSTY Evaluation Group," 2 December 1948, MGK-W-1040, (S), in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

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afforded adequate protection against any type of harm or kidnapping from that quarter.”⁴²

(S)

Hilger’s reputation and his reports on the Soviet Union stirred interest at OPC as well as the State Department. Both organizations wanted to bring Hilger to the United States. Indeed, George Kennan at State arranged for Hilger and his family to travel to America using an Office of the Military Government of Germany (OMGUS) Temporary Travel Document on 18 October 1948. Hilger and his wife also possessed nonimmigrant visas issued by the US Consul in Germany. Lawrence Houston, CIA’s General Counsel, asked the INS that Hilger’s “examination at the port of entry be waived, and that the case be handled on a classified basis.”⁴³ Hilger and his wife remained in the United States and received extensions to their Military Government permits through May 1951. At the same time, the State Department explored ways to legalize the status of the Hilger family as Russian immigrants—both Hilger and his wife had been born in Russia, although they were German citizens.⁴⁴ (S)

A Resident Expert (U)

⁴²Lt. Col. John R. Deane, Jr., to Office of the Director of Intelligence, “Operation FIREWEED,” 21 July 1947, (S), and Deane to Col. Skinner, “Operation FIREWEED,” 31 July 1947, (S), both in Hilger, [redacted] [redacted], DO Records. (S)

⁴³Lawrence R. Houston, CIA General Counsel, to W.W. Wiggins, Chief, Investigation Section, INS General Counsel, “Dr. Gustav Hilger,” 18 October 1948, (S), in GAO Notes of CIA documents, Gustav Hilger file, DO Records, [redacted] [redacted], Box 3, Folder 55, CIA ARC (hereafter cited as GAO Notes, Hilger file). Houston wrote this document the same day that Hilger arrived in the United States. (S)

⁴⁴For examples of Kennan’s and CIA’s intercessions on Hilger’s behalf, see [redacted] [redacted] Memorandum to Special Assistant to ADPC, “Dr. Gustav Hilger and his Wife Marie—Immigration Status,” 3 January 1950, (S); George F. Kennan to Cecil F. Cross, American Consulate General, Montreal, Canada, undated [c.1949]; and H.J. L’Heureux to Mr. Schwartz, 3 January 1950, in Hilger, [redacted] [redacted] DO Records. (S)

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The Agency soon established Hilger at its headquarters in Washington. By April 1949, he had produced 16 reports on topics ranging from "Strategy and Tactics of Bolshevism" to "The Ukrainian Problem as it Showed up in the War between Germany and the Soviet Union (1941-1945)." In the latter report, Hilger described Germany's failure to take advantage of Ukraine's situation during the war and some of the resultant difficulties. In light of the overall weakness of Ukrainian nationalism in the face of Soviet repression, Hilger felt that there was little hope for the Ukrainians to confront the Soviets. In the event of war, the Ukrainians, in Hilger's opinion, could be expected to support Russia's adversary if that country could "guarantee the Ukrainians the abolition of collectivization and a raising of their standard of living."⁴⁵

Hilger's access to raw as well as finished intelligence products did not sit well with officials within the CIA. OPC's Executive Officer, [redacted], who had returned to Washington from his assignment as the deputy chief of the German Mission, requested in November 1948 that the Agency's Inspection and Security branch conduct a "covert" investigation of Hilger after his arrival in the country.⁴⁶ Col. Sheffield Edwards, CIA's Security Officer, in fact, refused to extend Hilger's clearance a year later.⁴⁷ (S)

⁴⁵For a list of Hilger's reports, see [redacted], Acting DADPC, to [redacted] Office of Operations, "Reports by Dr. Hilger," 26 April 1949, (S), in DO Records, [redacted] Box 1, Folder 1, CIA ARC. Copies of some of these reports are located in Folder 2 of this same job. Hilger's report on the "Ukrainian Problem" has been declassified and is located in the Records of the National Security Council at the Harry S. Truman Library. (S)

⁴⁶[redacted] to [redacted], Inspection and Security Branch, "Dr. Gustav Hilger," 4 November 1948, (S), in GAO Notes, Hilger file. (S)

⁴⁷[redacted], Acting Chief, Special Staff, to Chief of Programs and Planning, "Clearance of Gustav Hilger," 20 October 1949, (S), in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

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Tensions developed between OSO and OPC regarding Hilger's use of classified material. In September 1949, nearly a year after Hilger's arrival, Frank Wisner appealed to the DCI to permit Hilger "access to certain categories of classified information which is needed for Dr. Hilger to perform his job." Wisner warned Adm. Hillenkoetter that "we will have to dispense Dr. Hilger's assistance if information can not be accessible to him to perform his valuable task."⁴⁸ By this point, OPC had hired Hilger for a yearly salary of \$8000.⁴⁹ OSO, however, did not want Hilger to use raw intelligence, especially the intelligence reports from the Gehlen Organization.⁵⁰ (S)

The situation appeared to have been resolved by late 1949, when ADSO Robert A. Schow, insisted that "no OSO information, or OSO-developed information, be made available to Hilger without the specific concurrence of this office."⁵¹ Wisner agreed to Schow's request and noted, "it is proposed that he [Hilger] shall instead receive certain finished intelligence reports, studies, periodicals, and summaries with a classification of no higher than Secret."⁵² By January 1950, the Inspection and Security Branch reached a

⁴⁸Wisner to the DCI, "Dr. Gustav Hilger," 12 September 1949, (S), in GAO Notes, Hilger File. (S)

⁴⁹Note in GAO Notes, Hilger file (S). OPC employed Hilger in Project PBSTEAM, which became Project AEFORD in April 1953. See [redacted] Executive Officer, Programs and Planning, to M80, "1F-4 PBSTEAM-Extension of Project," 2 March 1950, (S), in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. Project Status Reports for Projects PBSTEAM and AEFORD from August 1952 until September 1953 are found in DO Records, [redacted] Box 3, Folder 14, CIA ARC. (S)

⁵⁰Wisner to Maj. Gen. William Hall, Director of Intelligence, OMGUS, 30 December 1948, (S); [redacted] Intelligence Support Staff, to Chief, Programs and Planning, "Proposed Use of Classified Information by Drs. Bergstrom and Hilger," 20 June 1949, (S); Helms to Chief, Inspection and Security Branch, "Dr. Gustav Hilger," 26 February 1950, (S), all documents located in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

⁵¹Schow to Wisner, "Dr. Gustav Hilger," 31 October 1949, (S), in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

⁵²Wisner to ADSO, "Dr. Gustav Hilger," 1 November 1949, (S), in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

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similar agreement with OPC about Hilger's presence in government buildings and his access to classified material.⁵³ After a polygraph interview, a CIA security officer noted, "Hilger's account of his dealings with people, countries visited, and time was such that he accounted for all periods of time and his actions satisfactorily." Security also approved Hilger because "there was no evidence of past activities, future intentions, and or, connection with the Communists or Bonn government in the form of deception on the polygraph test."⁵⁴ (S)

Taking Stock (U)

OPC soon found itself running out of work for Hilger.⁵⁵ [redacted], acting chief of OPC's Programs and Planning Division, told [redacted], the deputy chief of Staff I, in February that "Hilger has been with us for relatively a long time. He has produced, I believe, a few very excellent papers but in the main I believe that he has been busily engaged in the production of his memoirs." "I have not been convinced," [redacted] lamented, "as to Hilger's precise, positive value to us at this time." [redacted] wanted Hilger to produce more research to determine whether to retain him or not.⁵⁶ (S)

⁵³Memorandum of Understanding between Col. Sheffield Edwards, Chief, Inspection and Security Staff, and Wisner, ADPC, "Gustav Hilger - Security Controls Re," 18 January 1950, (S), in Hilger, [redacted], DO Records. (S)

⁵⁴Memorandum for the File, [redacted], Chief, Security Control Staff, "Gustav Hilger," 3 February 1950, (S), in GAO Notes, Hilger file. (S)

⁵⁵See Wisner's comments about Hilger and Poppe at the ADPC staff meetings. Both men are mentioned at the meetings on 6 January 1950, 26 May 1950, 21 June 1950, 19 July 1950, and 15 November 1950. ADPC Staff Meeting Minutes, 1949-1951, (S), in DO Records, [redacted] Box 1, Folder 6, CIA ARC. (S)

⁵⁶[redacted] Acting Chief, Programs and Planning, Memorandum to Deputy, Staff I, "Dr. Gustav Hilger," 17 February 1950, (C), in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

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☐ ☐ replied in mid-March that more reports would require additional time.

Concerning Hilger's overall usefulness, ☐ ☐ was "convinced" that:

- a. Hilger is a definite asset.
- b. We will seldom get from him precise answers to precise questions. We can, however, profit greatly from his evolutionary thought.
- c. He can only be exploited by mature and intelligent persons.
- d. His problem has three aspects: administrative, security, and exploitation. (S)

Consequently, ☐ ☐ recommended that Hilger be handled by "an extremely high caliber person," and he suggested ☐ ☐ of the Office of Reports and Estimates.⁵⁷ In an effort to boost Hilger's value to OPC, ☐ ☐ also arranged to have him hold biweekly briefings at a conference room in Building K after May 1950. Hilger could then speak for 25 minutes on "the implications of current events from the viewpoint of Soviet policy," and answer questions for another 30 minutes. Even these presentations, however, faced limitations for security reasons.⁵⁸ (S)

With the opening of the war in Korea, Hilger's value jumped as both OPC and the State Department sought his views on matters pertaining to the Soviet Union. In one case, Hilger informed Frank Wisner in July 1950 that he expected the next Soviet aggressive move to take place in Iran, although he did not foresee an imminent conflict.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ ☐ ☐, Deputy, Staff I, to Chief, Programs and Planning, "Dr. Gustav Hilger," 13 March 1950, (S), in Hilger, ☐ ☐, DO Records. (S)

⁵⁸ ☐ ☐ to CPP et al, "Biweekly Conference with Dr. Hilger," 5 May 1950, (S), in Hilger, ☐ ☐ DO Records. (S)

⁵⁹ Unsigned, Memorandum to Chief, EE, "Certain Remarks by Karl H. Bergstrom and Arthur T. Latter on the Korean and World Situations," 20 July 1950, (S), in Hilger, ☐ ☐, DO

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In a meeting with George Kennan in November 1950, Wisner raised the subject of Hilger's usefulness. Kennan, who had known Hilger in Moscow before the war, told Wisner that he believed the German to be an "honorable and decent individual."⁶⁰ As a result of this discussion, Wisner nominated Hilger for the new Office of National Estimates.⁶¹ [redacted], chief of EE-4, seconded this proposal; in part, because "actually we have exhausted most all the topics on which Dr. Hilger is an authority over the past year and a half."⁶² (S)

Wisner also took steps to legalize Hilger's presence in the United States. He wanted the DCI, in conjunction with the Attorney General and the Commissioner of the INS, to approve Hilger's admission to the country under Section 8 of the CIA Act of 1949.⁶³ The General Counsel's office recalled that the CIA had once deemed it "incompatible" for Hilger to seek permanent residency because he planned to return to Germany upon the restoration of civilian government.⁶⁴ DCI Walter Bedell Smith in May 1951 authorized Hilger and his wife to remain in the United States. Smith asked

Records. The State Department sought Hilger's views on Stalin's comments on capitalist encirclement and the prosecution of revolution. See John Davies, Jr., to Mr. Joyce, "Hilger, Gustav," 3 August 1950, (S), in Hilger, [redacted], DO Records. See also [redacted], Chief, EE to ADPC, "Arthur T. Latter," 6 July 1950, (S), in DO Records, Job 78-01094R, Box 2, Folder 12, CIA ARC. (S)

⁶⁰Unsigned, Memorandum for the Record, "Conversation with Mr. Kennan re: Panel of Consultants for National Estimates," 14 November 1950, (S), in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

⁶¹Wisner to Dr. William L. Langer, Assistant Director of National Estimates, "Subject Who May Be of Interest to Dr. William Langer," 13 December 1950, (S), in Hilger, [redacted] DO Records. (S)

⁶²[redacted], Chief, EE-4, to Chief, EE, "Utilization of Dr. Hilger," 18 December 1950, (S), in Hilger, [redacted], DO Records. (S)

⁶³Wisner to Security Officer, CIA, "Dr. and Mrs. Gustav Hilger," 19 March 1951, (S), in Hilger, [redacted], DO Records. (S)

⁶⁴Lawrence R. Houston, CIA General Counsel, to Chief, Inspection and Security Branch, "Dr. Gustav Hilger," 26 April 1951, (S), in Hilger, [redacted], DO Records. (S)

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that the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization present the CIA's application to the Attorney General.⁶⁵ In less than four months, the INS notified the Agency that Hilger and his wife were now permanent residents as of the date of their initial arrival at Westover Field in 1948.⁶⁶ (S)

Despite this new status, Hilger and his wife left the United States in late 1953 after the new West German Government offered him a substantial pension if he returned to work as an adviser for Soviet affairs.⁶⁷ According to one official, Hilger (under the pseudonym of Arthur T. Latter) "is leaving the US with great reluctance, since he has made many friends here and has enjoyed living here. He is also extremely grateful to KUBARK [CIA] for having looked after him so well for the last five years. He is willing and anxious to continue a liaison contact in Bonn after his return."⁶⁸ Hilger, indeed, maintained a steady relationship with American intelligence until his death in 1965.⁶⁹ (S)

⁶⁵Col. Sheffield Edwards, CIA Security Officer, to the DCI, "Gustav Hilger and Wife, Marie Hilger," 3 May 1951, (S); and DCI to Argyle R. Mackey, Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, "Gustav Hilger and Wife, Marie Hilger," 4 May 1951, JL-567, (S), both documents in Hilger, [] []

⁶⁶Peyton Ford, Deputy Attorney General to the DCI, 23 August 1951, granting admittance to Hilger and his wife under Section 8; and W.F. Kelly, Assistant Commissioner, Enforcement Division, to DCI, 30 August 1951, noting that the INS had backdated Hilger's admission for permanent residency to 18 October 1948. See GAO Notes, Hilger file. (S)

⁶⁷Peer de Silva for [] [] Chief, SR Division, to DD/P, "Gustav Hilger," 8 October 1953, (C), in DO Records, [] [] Box 12, Folder 11, CIA ARC. (C)

⁶⁸Chief, EE, to Chief of Mission, Frankfurt, "Arthur T. Latter," undated [probably 1953], EGQ-W-11845, (S), in Hilger, [] [], DO Records. (S)

⁶⁹Hilger's presence in America later attracted some attention. The Jewish War Veterans of the USA, for example, protested to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy in 1963 about Hilger's work for the Federal government. Col. Edwards responded to the Department of Justice and stated that Hilger "was not an employee nor a consultant of CIA at this time." As the Attorney General's Office knew, the CIA and the State Department had used Hilger "because of his wealth of information concerning the USSR." See Morton L. London, National Commander, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, to Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General, 23 January 1963, in Hilger, [] [], DO Records, and Sheffield Edwards, Director of Security to J. Walter Yeagley, Assistant Attorney General, Internal Security Division, "Gustav Hilger in Reference to

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The fact that the Office of Policy Coordination wanted Nicholas Poppe and Gustav Hilger as consultants and brought them to the United States for permanent residence is a significant step. It indicated that American intelligence had expanded its idea of what constituted insightful perspectives on the Soviet Union. German diplomats and Russian social scientists with Nazi records, in addition to German wartime intelligence officers and agents, were now regarded as valuable assets in the struggle against the Soviet Union. While the use of Poppe and Hilger turned out to be rather benign, OPC had other, more sinister plans to develop "secret armies" by utilizing émigré groups. Inevitably, these plans brought Wisner's OPC into greater contact with other collaborators of the Third Reich. (C)

Jewish Veterans of USA," 4 February 1963, (S), in GAO Notes, Hilger file. In August 1979, OSI requested information on the present residence of Hilger and his family from the CIA. After a search of various Agency components, the Agency reported no information as to where Hilger lived after he left the United States. See Jeffrey N. Mausner, Trial Attorney, OSI to [redacted]

[redacted], OGC, "Gustav Hilger," 20 July 1979, (C), and [redacted] to various components, "Nazi War Criminal Investigations—Gustav Hilger, aka Gus Hilger," 8 August 1979, OGC 79-07323, (C), in OGC Records, [redacted] [redacted], Box 1, Folder 6, CIA ARC. Interestingly, responses from most CIA offices, including the Office of Security, claimed no information at all on Hilger. The DO simply reported no information about the current whereabouts of Hilger and his family. [redacted]

[redacted] Chief, Operations Group to [redacted] [redacted] Chief, FPL Group, "Nazi War Criminals Investigation—Gustav Hilger, aka Gus Hilger," 30 August 1979, EIRS-0372/79, (S), in DO Records, [redacted] [redacted], Box 1, Folder 2, CIA ARC. (S)