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Author: Documents prove US recruited Russian Nazis

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Globe Staff

A Rockland lawyer yesterday released three formerly classified documents that he said proved a clandestine State Department unit knowingly recruited the entire leadership cadre of a group of White Russian Nazi collaborators and brought them into the United States after World War II.

John Loftus, a former Justice Department investigator, said the State Department planned to use the White Russians to gain information about the Soviet Union.

Byelorussia, sometimes known as White Russia, was occupied by the Nazis from 1941 to 1944.

The plan, however, turned into a disaster, he said, because the White Russians were "riddled with Soviet agents." He said at least 300 are still living in the United States, some of them working for government and quasi-government groups.

Loftus said the declassified documents back up contentions he made in a book he wrote and a television movie based on it.

Loftus said he timed the release to back up assertions in a CBS television movie that was broadcast Saturday night. The movie, "Kojak: The Belarus File," was based on Loftus' book "The Belarus Secret," he said.

Loftus said he had access to the documents while working as a lawyer for the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, which investigates Nazi war criminals, but had agreed not to mention them when he wrote his book after leaving the agency in 1981.

He said the documents were subsequently declassified and he procured them about two months ago under the Freedom of Information Act.

The "smoking gun" among the documents, Loftus said, was a 1952 letter Radaslau Ostrowsky, former president of the Nazi puppet state in Byelorussia, wrote to the State Department's intelligence operation, the Office of Policy Coordination.

In the letter, which Loftus displayed, Ostrowsky offered to join "our modest forces with US intelligence services.

"If your intelligence agencies come to the conclusion that they

would like to work in conjunction with our modest forces, a condition of such collaboration would be complete frankness and trust between us," the letter said.

Loftus also released a roster of 100 Nazi leaders who attended a 1954 convention in South River, N.J. of the Byelorussian Central Council. The list included Ostrowsky and his followers.

Loftus said the convention roster proves the State Department accepted Ostrowsky's offer. Most of the Nazi collaborators who attended the convention already were living in the United States, but some came from Germany, England, and Canada. Ostrowsky died in Michigan in 1954.

"By 1954 we had brought the entire leadership of the Nazi puppet government in White Russia to America," the lawyer said. Loftus

said Ostrowsky's group was financed by a State Department front group.

Although many of those who attended the convention have since died, Loftus said among those alive is S'vyataslau Koush, who Loftus said is the parish priest of a Byelorussian Orthodox church in South River, N.J.

"I am not hunting Nazis," Loftus said at a press conference at his home. "I am hunting Nazi recruiters."

He said he has sent copies of the documents to Congress and hopes the publicity "might deter some of these wild operations" in the future.

However, he said, "I know there are modern connections between the White Russians and US operations in Central America." He refused to elaborate.