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EYES ONLY~~

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Washington, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

April 1, 1957

The Honorable J. Edgar Hoover  
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

Subject: JOSEPH ALSOP

Dear Mr. Hoover:

Referring further to my letter to you of 27 March 1957, and its enclosure in the above matter, I enclose herewith a photographic copy of a memorandum prepared by subject in Moscow on or about February 23, 1957. The original of this memorandum has just been received [REDACTED]

The contents of this memorandum are being made known to the State Department at a high level.

Information received [REDACTED] indicates that the developments mentioned in this memorandum occurred during the week of February 17-23. The "incident" apparently occurred on Monday, February 18, the trip to Leningrad took place on February 20-21, and subject left Moscow for Paris via Prague on February 24.

[REDACTED] an interview with subject abroad as we understand that he does not contemplate an early return to this country. [REDACTED]

made by the KGB to reestablish contact with subject during his stay in Europe, and generally to take steps which will permit a proper evaluation of this matter from a security standpoint.

O-C 26, Doc 9 (131)

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Approved for Release  
Date MAY 1999

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In case there are any matters which you would cover in the contemplated interrogation,

I will keep you informed of any significant developments in this case and I request that you kindly coordinate with me any dissemination of this information outside of the Bureau, or other action which might bear upon the counter intelligence aspect of this case while subject remains abroad.

Sincerely yours,

(S) Allen W. Dulles

Allen W. Dulles  
Director

"I gave this to A.G. yesterday  
& he returned it to me this morning. H."

4/3/57

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O+C Z6, Doc 9 (pg. 2)

C O P Y

MEMORANDUM

This is the history of an act of very great folly, unpleasant in itself but not without interest for the light its casts upon our adversaries in the struggle for the world.

It must begin with a personal confession. I have been an incurable homosexual since boyhood. Very early, I sought medical advice, especially from Doctor Adolf Mayer at Johns Hopkins, but the doctors I consulted only confirmed my own diagnosis. It is a curious thing, but it is a fact, that the vast majority of homosexuals who have honestly faced the nature of their predicament, somehow end by accommodating themselves to it, shocking though this may seem. Most simply say, as I have said, "If I do no harm to anyone, if I am no trouble to anyone, I should not be too much troubled myself." I have always been deeply troubled, however, by one aspect of my predicament---by the concealment of the truth from my family and friends. Circumstances have now arisen which make further concealment impossible; and while those circumstances are disturbing and painful in the last degree, there is still a certain inner relief at being forced to tell the whole truth at last.

I am forced to tell the truth because I have been most successfully framed by what I judge to be the foreign espionage branch of the Soviet secret police. How it happened is, in essence, rather simple.

In the course of my visit to this country, I have been exposed to enough homosexual invitations to suggest, as one looks back, a rather continuous attempt to entrap. One of these occurred shortly after my return from Siberia, when I was walking home late one evening from the Metropole to the National Hotel; and a young soldier walking in the opposite direction abruptly stopped and stared in an unmistakably meaningful manner. There was still another a few nights later, when I dined at the Sovietskaya Hotel with the Bernard Cutlers and a pretended editor of the "Literary Gazette." Our Russian host, by a strange coin-

C O P Y

4-10-50  
11:50 AM  
ORIGINAL DELIVERED TO  
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT H.

ORIGINAL FILED  
By DEPUTY A.G. ROBERT H. (3-11)  
4-11-50

cidence, had taken a table next to a group of quite obvious homosexuals--one of them even had plucked eyebrows and dyed hair, and as the evening wore on, the usual Russian post-vodka embraces merged into something considerably more startling. When I had to go to the men's room, the fellow with plucked eyebrows at once followed me and made a proposition. Had I known then what I know now, I should of course have been warned; since this kind of flamboyant display of homosexuality could only occur in the Soviet Union with the assurance of police protection.

Finally, again a few nights later, I was invited last Sunday by the Ed Stevens to a dinner they were giving for Chester Bowles. We had hardly taken our first vodkas when a supposed reporter for "Tass", an acquaintance of Stevens', came up to us and asked our whole party to join his table. He was accompanied by a younger friend, an athletic blonde, pleasant-faced, pleasant-mannered fellow. Instead of joining them, Ed asked them to join us, and in the ensuing rearrangement of the table, I found myself sitting next to the "Tass" reporter's friend. We had a common language in French---I now suppose that he was chosen for this purpose, since comfortable talk dispels caution--- and we fell immediately into conversation.

The topic of the talk, which was both interesting and agreeable, was the state of the arts in the Soviet Union. As a professed teacher of literature at a school in Leningrad, he at first defended "socialist realism" with great energy. Then, blaming the single vodka he had drunk, he abruptly switched sides, proclaiming that Anna Akhmatova and Pasternak were the only living Russian poets worth reading, attacking the Communist party's dead hand on the arts, and in general talking in a very open and incautious way. I must, he said, talk to some of the Leningrad intellectuals; and we made a date to meet there.

I had already made reservations through Intourist to go to Leningrad, and I now believe that the original plan was to stage the frame-up there, merely establishing the first contact in Moscow. As will be seen, the course of events suggests that the new acquaintances I was soon to make were unprepared for the rapidity of my folly.

At any rate, as the evening wore on, the talk about literature merged into a veiled confession by Boris Nikolaievich, as he called himself, that he was a homosexual; and when I did not appear shocked, this in turn merged into an invitation. As arranged, I said good ~~bye to the Stevens~~ a little later and went to his room, No. 219 in the Grand Hotel where we had been dining. Nothing outwardly suspicious occurred during the hour we passed there, and when I left, he invited me to come back at 4 p.m. the next day, when he would, he said, have finished his business in Moscow, "to say goodbye before his return to Leningrad". Looking back, I can hardly credit my own idiocy. But my time in Russia had been so interesting, the Russians as a people had seemed to me so friendly and so vital, the presence of the police had been so little apparent, that I had just about forgotten this was a police state. So I kept the appointment at 4 p.m. Monday, and of course, at the appropriate moment, the door burst open and a militia officer, the English speaking vice director of the hotel and another unidentified man entered the room.

Beyond asking my name, which I thought it foolish to try to conceal, they hardly bothered with me. When I refused to sign the "act" drawn up by the militia officer, on the ground that I could not read it, they did not even press me to do so. Shortly after they entered the room, a telephone call had been put in. And the "act" was hardly signed by the others, when there was a knock at the door and two men entered. These - dismissed all the others, and asked me to stay behind.

The senior, who was plainly in command, was a man in his late forties or early fifties, moderately corpulent, of middle height.

with a most striking face--- the skin olive-brown, the nose rather hooked, the eyes, deep-set in the rather plump cheeks, flashing sharply through the steel rimmed spectacles unless he was considering his next move, when he would half close his eyes and drum on the table. He wore a muskrat chapka and smoked the imitation-Turkish Russian cigarettes almost continuously. The junior must have been in his early thirties, was perhaps 5' 10", fattish, blondish, with a long nose and a loose-looking, rather ~~Germanic~~ face. Except that his suit was rather lighter blue than most Russians wear, there was nothing else to distinguish him.

They got down to business without any delay, saying I had of course committed a serious crime under the Russian code, that they did not want to make any trouble for me all the same---here the younger one ostentatiously telephoned the hotel director to command, as he explained, "absolute secrecy"---but that I must help them a little if they were going to help me. The police had done their work well, added the senior one, all but licking his lips and fingering the scarlet dossier which the militia officer had turned over to him. It contained the "act", some other papers and several small packets. From one of these he extracted a photograph to show me the efficiency of the police. As it happened, this photograph was a singularly brilliant fake---what it portrayed had not occurred---but this seemed to me fairly irrelevant in the circumstances so I did not argue about it.

Not knowing what course to take, I simply told my new friend at this first meeting what was in fact the truth---that in my situation, I had had to decide many years earlier what I would do if I found myself exposed to blackmail, that I had long ago decided I would much prefer any other course, however unpleasant, to paying blackmail, and that I might kill myself or end my writing career, but that I would never allow myself to be blackmailed in any way. The older man, who led the conversation, merely laughed comfortably, repeated that he wanted to help me, and suggested that we move to pleasanter surroundings.

my problem. When I said I did not care where we discussed it, he began a most curious political discussion, about Soviet-American relations, in which, in effect I was asked to explain my viewpoint at great length. In this discussion, the older man showed himself coolly unprejudiced, indeed apparently quite unaffected by the local propaganda, while the younger, who served as interpreter, either genuinely was or pretended to be shocked by my "lack of objectivity." The talk went on in this manner for nearly three hours, being interrupted from time to time by their assurances that "they only wanted to help me." At length, at 7:30 p.m., I said that I was dining at the Embassy in an hour's time, that I would be missed if I did not turn up, and that I had better telephone if they wished to continue our conversation. They replied that I was quite free to go, but that we three must meet again soon "to try to find a way out of your problem". A date was made to dine at the Praga Restaurant the next evening, and so we parted.

I had made up my mind--- as I now see, very foolishly--- that it was my duty to involve no one else in the consequences of my folly. My first intention--- it sounds melodramatic, but it really was my intention--- was to go through with dinner, return to my hotel, write out an account of the whole business, slip it under the door of the newspapermen living at the National Hotel, and then commit suicide. Through dinner, I considered this and other alternatives. I finally concluded, before I went to bed, that suicide was a cowardly alternative, at least at that moment, and that I ought to play the game out a bit further, to see where it would lead. I adopted the tentative plan, therefore, of pretending to be recruited by my two new friends, in order to get out of the country, and then, when I reached Paris, making a clean, public breast of the whole business, telling the story in detail to the whole world first as a warning and second as proof that I could not be blackmailed any longer. As I have said, I have always been troubled by the concealment that homosexuals must practice, and the fact that the course I meant to adopt would surely mean the end of my present career hardly weighed in the balance against the prospect

of telling the honest truth and so ridding myself of the incubus of my folly. As I write these words, I think I shall still do so, although I have now promised to take Ambassador Bohlen's advice on this point.

Having taken these decisions, I presented myself at the Praga the next evening. A luxurious and enormous dinner had been prepared in a private room. I greatly disconcerted my two new friends by refusing anything to drink, on the ground that I had had a stomach upset during the previous night, and having a bad liver owing to hepatitis, had been forced to go on the waggon for a week. They pressed vodka on me again and again, but without success. The whole first part of dinner was taken up with another interminable political conversation of the sort that had already taken place. One topic, I remember, was Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey's desire to cut the military budget. They appeared to be singularly well informed about American politics and personalities, but they asked no questions going beyond the sort of thing printed daily in the newspapers. I had made up my mind to say nothing about "my problem" until they brought it up. They had hoped, I think, that I would bring it up, but at length, as it was getting on for 11 p.m., the senior man--neither ever gave me any name to call him by--said that it was still necessary to decide what to do about "my problem"; that the police were still holding the "other man" and wished to try him; and that he would have to be able to offer some quid pro quo to the police in order to keep my name out of the case. He then produced a letter, which he said came from some man to whom I had made overtures "in broken Russian" in a restaurant in Kemerovo. I replied that this was clearly nonsense, since I did not know enough broken Russian to order my breakfast, but that I could not see how that altered matters. He then said that "it did not matter how I wrote, that in fact you and your brother do not write nearly so badly about the Soviet Union as many other people, and in any case you must carry on your career", but that he would like to be able to talk to me from time to time in "order to get advice that would assist the cause



of peace". After a show of reluctance, I carried out my plan, pretending to agree to his proposal in principle. There was some further discussion (in the course of which he asked me how much money I made from writing) and he then suggested that we meet again "one last time, so that I can ask you some final questions" in Leningrad on Friday. He added---I could hardly help smiling---that he "only wanted to help me", and that he would like to prove this by opening the closed doors of the special collections at the Hermitage, before we dined together and got down to business.

I had then to make my final decision as to the course to follow thereafter. I was still foolishly determined not to burden Ambassador Bohlem with the consequences of my folly; but it was increasingly clear to me that I could not meet these men again without safeguarding myself in some manner or other. On the one hand, if I disappeared, as was clearly possible, I wanted my family and friends to know what had happened, and to know above all that I had never had any intention of yielding to these men's requests. On the other hand, if worst came to worst, I also wanted to be able to say to them that all the facts were already available to the American authorities, and that they had better consider the consequences to themselves if they proceeded to extreme measures. Finally, I saw now what I should have seen at the very outset---that having anything to do with these men placed me in a false position, to put it very mildly, unless I took measures in advance which would automatically render me entirely useless for their purposes. In the end, therefore, I adopted the expedient of preparing a full account of everything that had happened, and passing it to a friend whom I thought reliable in a sealed envelope, with a request that he give the envelope to the American embassy if there was the slightest sign I had got lost or was in trouble. I added the instruction that he was to read the contents of the envelope in two weeks time. By then, as I explained in the document in the envelope, I hoped to have reached Paris and made by clean breast to the world.

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(b)(3)  
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This friend, whom I shall not name, [redacted] and the document in his possession seemed me to solve the three problems set forth in the preceding paragraph. If I had not chanced to run across him, I think I should have paid a final call on Ambassador Bohlem and confided the document to him. But I did not, merely telephoning to say good-bye before taking the night train to Leningrad. The next day in Leningrad was reasonably nightmarish. I had hoped to keep my mind off what lay ahead by forgetting everything else but the pictures at the Hermitage; but the Hermitage was closed, and after three hours sightseeing with a birdlike female interpreter guide, Zenaida Alexandrouna, I had nothing left to do. I passed the afternoon, therefore, writing a fake column which would, I hoped, prevent my new friends from questioning me too closely about who had told me what concerning the current campaign here against dissident students and intellectuals. (The column stated that I had been unable to confirm any incidents of the campaign, and mainly knew of its existence from the government press.) At 5 p.m., the maid appeared with a telegram from the American Minister, saying that a personal message of great urgency had reached the Embassy, that the Ambassador had seen it before leaving for the US, and that the Ambassador insisted I must return to Moscow to receive this message. I thereupon telephoned the Minister, saying on the telephone that I supposed the message had to do with my mother's poor health, and that I would return immediately. I had of course divined that the friend to whom I had confided the sealed envelope, instead of following my instructions, had brought the Ambassador into the business. And I cannot describe the sudden wave of relief that came over me, when I felt that now I was no longer carrying the burden alone.

After telephoning Mr. Davis I went at once to the Intourist ticket bureau, and after an agonizing delay caused by a busy telephone, I got a place on the 8 p.m. plane to Moscow. I then packed. When I went downstairs, however, to order my bags brought down, I caught sight

of the two recruiting agents in the Astoria Hotel lobby. And when I presented myself at the Intourist Service Bureau, the girl there who was handling my affairs said there had been a mistake, and that my ticket on the plane had been issued when there was no space for me. I returned to my room to telephone Mr. Davis again; there was a knock; and the younger of the two recruiting agents appeared. I showed him the telegram from the Minister, said I feared very bad family news, and explained that I must return at once to Moscow. In a sharp tone, I added that "someone had done something to cancel my air ticket." I said further that I hated to inconvenience them, would have to go back to Moscow by train if no plane was available, and would meet them there for as long as they chose. After a short delay, when he left the room to confer with his chief, he returned to say that my air ticket would be all right after all--he had looked into the matter to help me. So with many assurances of looking forward to a long talk very soon, I parted from them and took the Moscow plane. The rest of the story is known to the American Minister, whose kindness and wise advice have placed me in his debt to an extent that can never be repaid.

Handwritten notation: Original signed by  
the subject of the  
cover memorandum.