

FOR COORDINATION WITH ^{ed} INS

KEERD

0300-262319 Pt. 0.

EXAMINATION OF ELMAR KEERD AT ROOM NINE, SEVENTH FLOOR, 70 COLUMBUS AVENUE,
NEW YORK 23, NEW YORK.

APRIL 26, 1949.

P R E S E N T:

FRANCIS J. CONHOLLY
Investigator
Examining Officer.

ELMAR KEERD
Witness.

E. TEPLY
Official German Interpreter.

SYLVIA KOBITZ
Stenographer.

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EXAMINING OFFICER TO WITNESS: (Through Official Interpreter.)

- Q. You are advised that I am an officer of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, authorized by law to administer oaths and to take evidence in connection with the enforcement of the Immigration laws. I desire to question you at this time regarding your right to be and remain in the United States. Any statement which you make should be voluntary and you are hereby warned that such a statement may be used against you. Do you understand?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You are further advised that it is your privilege to have a relative or friend present during this examination. It is understood that the presence of such person shall be subject to the condition that he shall act simply as an observer. Do you understand?
- A. Yes. (No one present.)
- Q. Will you please stand and raise your right hand?
- A. (Witness complies.)
- Q. Do you solemnly swear that all the statements you are about to make will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?
- A. I do.

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- Q. You are informed that if you wilfully and knowingly give false testimony concerning a material fact during these proceedings, you may be prosecuted for the crime of perjury, the penalty for which is a fine of not more than \$2,000 and imprisonment of not more than five years. Do you understand?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What is your full, true, and correct name?
- A. ELMAR KEERD. I have never used any other name.
- Q. When and where were you born?
- A. March 23, 1912 in Tartu, Estonia.
- Q. Are you married or single?
- A. Married- I consider myself divorced in view of the fact that when the Russians over-ran Estonia they promulgated a law whereby all married women in that country whose husbands were not in the country had to apply for divorce and it is my understanding that my wife did apply for such divorce, and that she lived with another man, and it is also my understanding that under Russian laws that that divorce is a legal divorce.
- Q. Where do you live at the present time?
- A. 242 East 34th Street, New York City, Room 25, on the fourth floor.
- Q. What is your usual occupation?
- A. I was a State Attorney when I was in Estonia.
- Q. Where and how are you now employed?
- A. Now I am employed by Manhattan Water Proofing Co., 390 Pead Street, New York City, as a house painter.
- Q. Have you had any other employment since your arrival in the United States?
- A. First I worked as a shipping clerk for Charles and Co, Madison Avenue between 42nd and 43rd Street and then for Steinway and Co. in Astoria as a laborer and now in the Manhattan Water Proofing Co.
- Q. Have you ever been arrested in the United States or in any other country?
- A. No.
- Q. Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?
- A. No.
- Q. What is your opinion of Communism?
- A. I lived under the Communist government for one year and my personal experiences lead me to believe that it is a very bad sort of government. Some of my good friends were deported to Siberia by the Communists and were placed in some sort of penal institution there.
- Q. What is your opinion of the Nazi and Fascist form of Government?

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- A. I do not have a good opinion of these two forms of government because they both desire to vanquish all Europe and to make her populations which were non-Germans or non-Italians as their vassals, and they are both dictatorial forms of government which I do not approve.
- Q. What form of government do you approve?
- A. I believe that free democratic governments are the best.
- Q. Have you had any military service?
- A. I was in a military school from 1931 to 1932 in Estonia, but I did not serve in an active capacity in any army. I was put in the Reserve because of my standing as a jurist.
- Q. Was this an officer's school that you attended?
- A. It was for Reserver Officers.
- Q. What rank did you hold?
- A. I was 2nd Lieutenant. I was mobilized by the Estonian Government which received from the occupying German Armed Forces some sort of autonomy and served in the Estonian Army from about March 1944 to about March 1945. When the Germans were evacuating Estonia, some units of the Estonian Army were going with the Germans and I served in the Estonian Army under the supervision of the German Army.
- Q. When did you officially sever your relations with the Army?
- A. March or April 1945. Thereafter, I spent one month in a German Army hospital up until May, 1945.
- Q. Were you wounded?
- A. No.
- Q. What transpired after that?
- A. I left the hospital about the end of May or the beginning of June, 1945 and at first I was in Reichenberg, then Zittau and in Gera, Germany. Before my discharge from the hospital, I was given civilian clothes and I resumed my civilian status. In Gera, I was in a refugee camp. It was a camp for refugees under international supervision. About June 20, 1945, I decided to quit this camp because rumor held it that the Province of Thuringa would be turned over to the Russians, and I proceeded to Saalfeld, where I stayed for three days. (Saalfeld was in the American Zone.) and then I arrived about June 23, 1945 in Ansbach, Bavaria where I stayed a month and then I proceeded to the Province of Wurttemberg to a town called Schwabisch Halle where I stayed for two months until May 1, 1945, then I went to Hamburg, which was in the British Zone and I stayed there until March 7, 1947 and then I left for Sweden where I arrived on March 10, 1947.

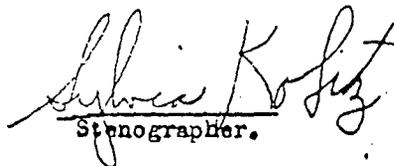
- Q. After you escaped from your internment, were you at any time under the control of the Russian Army?
- A. No. During my entire stay in the American and British Zones, I had the status of D.P. all the time.
- Q. Did you ever attend any espionage or saboteur school in any country?
- A. No.
- Q. What branch of the army did you specialize in?
- A. In the Infantry.
- Q. Have you heard from your wife since you left Estonia?
- A. Yes, when I was in Sweden I received two cards from her in the summer of 1947. They were delivered to me by hand through mutual friends.
- Q. You stated before that you were a jurist in your native country. Did you ever hold any other position in that country or had any other kind of work?
- A. No.
- Q. Is this an appointed job that you held with the Estonian Government?
- A. I was appointed.
- Q. Did you hold that appointment at any time when Estonia was dominated by the Russian authorities?
- A. No, only during the time that Estonia was independent.
- Q. After you went to Sweden, were you employed and in what capacity?
- A. I worked as a helper in a textile factory in Uddevalla, Sweden.
- Q. Do you have any children?
- A. No.
- Q. Do you have any relatives living in the United States?
- A. No.
- Q. Do you have any other close relatives living abroad?
- A. I have a cousin in Montreal, Canada. My parents are in Estonia and I do not know whether they are alive or not.
- Q. When is the last time you heard from them?
- A. 1947 when I was still in Sweden.
- Q. Were you ever required to become a member of the Nazi Party while you served under the German occupation?
- A. Pressure was put on the Estonians to join the Party and advantages were given to those who did join, but I personally did not join.

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- Q. In view of the fact that your wife and your mother and father are presumably residing in Estonia, in your opinion, could this fact be used as a threat to you to perform any service for a foreign power?
- A. No. I would not let myself be influenced or thrust into the Service of a foreign power even though my family is in Estonia because I could not help my family under any circumstances and I would not be in the position to know whether or not such foreign power would carry out any promises they would make.
- Q. During the voyage to the United States in the schooner "Prolific", did you suspect any of the other members of your group of being Communists or sympathetic to the Communist ideals?
- A. Even though there were some members of the party which undertook the voyage with me to the United States, who were not known to me personally, I believe I can state that there were no Communists at all in that party.
- Q. Do you have any additional statements that you would like to make?
- A. No—except all I want to say is that I trust the United States Government to permit me to stay permanently and if I would have the knowledge that I can do so then I would take all steps to learn the language in this country. This is a free democratic country and I would really enjoy living here.

HEARING CLOSED.

I hereby certify that the foregoing consisting of five (5) pages is a true and correct transcript of the stenographic notes taken by me in this matter on April 26, 1949.


Stenographer.

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Q. Have you ever been a member of any political party?

A. No.

Q. What organizations or societies have you belonged to outside of the United States?

A. No political organizations. I was a member of a jurist association in Tartu in 1940. In Sweden I belonged to a textile factory workers union. It was necessary to belong to these unions in order to work at the factory.

Q. What organizations have you belonged to in the United States?

A. Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paper Hangers, Local #1011, New York City. I have been a member since June 1951. I am also a member of the World Association of Estonians in New York City since 1949. I am also a member of the Society for the Independent Veterans of Estonia in New York City since 1949. I am also a member of the Estonian Educational Society of New York, 243 East 34th Street, since 1949. I am also a member of the Estonian Lutheran Church which is presently using the facilities of the Lutheran Church at 123 West 71st Street, New York City.

Q. Are you now or have you ever been a member or affiliated with the Communist Party anywhere in the United States or in any other country in the world?

A. No.

Q. Were you ever in favor of Nazism and Fascism?

A. No.

Q. From what country do you claim to be displaced?

A. Estonia.

Q. Why do you believe that you are a person displaced from Estonia?

A. Because that country is presently under the domination of Soviet Russia.

Q. Are you opposed to the present government in control in Estonia?

A. Yes.

Q. Why?

A. I have been living one year under Russian occupation between 1940 and 1941 and since then I have enough experience to know what it means to live under the Russian occupation, because during this year they arrested and deported all the leaders of the Estonian Government, of the Estonian Army and of the Intelligence of the Estonian Republic.

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Over 60,000 persons were deported to Russia in those days and there are no news from these persons and if there is, these persons are living under the most inhuman conditions and they are starving and they are freezing to death.

Q. Are you opposed to Communism itself?

A. Yes, because it is perfectly inhuman and it is destroying all the cultural world. It is a perfect terror. When the Communists occupied Estonia, it was part already of the Russian Army and then all the prisoners were released from the prisons and all these persons who were thieves or murderers, these became the rulers. The Estonian Police was fired and those were then the policemen, so that everybody was afraid and nobody could sleep in peace, because you never knew when someone was knocking at the door and was coming for us.

Q. Would you fear persecution if you should return to Estonia at the present time?

A. I will be hung.

Q. Why?

A. First of all, I know it from my own experience, that all those men were killed or arrested who have been ever fighting against the Communists. It may be even twenty years ago and this is the reason number one. There was an independent war between the Estonian people and the Communists between 1918 and 1920 and that is the beginning when the Estonians started their fight against Communism and I will say this fight has not come to the end until now because the Estonian men are fighting in Korea now.

Q. You believe you would be subject to persecution because of the fact that you fought in the Estonian Army against Russian Armies? Is that correct?

A. Yes. I am still living in another country. I didn't return when the war was over. I was working in the years of the independence. I was working with the President for this regime.

Q. Then you believe you would be subject to persecution because of your opposition to Communism. Is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Since leaving Estonia in 1944, have you been admitted to any country with the privilege of permanent residence?

A. No.

Q. Is there anything more you wish to say in your own behalf before the end of this hearing?

A. I haven't anything to say because I hope that all the reasons why this situation came are explained now. All these refugees who are