

SECRET

J-8

SR/6-62-159

19 June 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, CI/Liaison

SUBJECT : Possible Surveillance Activity against Potential  
Repatriate to the USSR.

1. Transmitted herewith for your information and any action you deem appropriate is a self-explanatory memorandum prepared by a contract employee of the ARJAMER project panel. The memorandum refers to the possible surveillance, real or imagined, of an old Estonian emigre who has applied for repatriation to the USSR.

2. It is requested that you protect the identity of the source of this report if any follow-up action is undertaken.

[ Chief, SR/6 ]

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2006

SECRET

TO: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

FROM: Aleks KURGVEL.

DATE: 6 June 1962.

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SOVIET SURVEILLANCE OF A PROSPECTIVE RETURNEE TO SOV. ESTONIA.

1. Mrs. Anna LEE, 78, domicile 75, West 85 Street, New York, N.Y., has told my wife, Mrs. Salma KURGVEL, domicile 30-70, 34 Street, Long Island City 3, N.Y., some three weeks ago that since she (Mrs. Lee) had filed an application for repatriation to Estonia with the USSR Consulate in Washington, she has noticed that two men are surveilling her living place. One of them is the janitor of the house on the W 85 Street vis-a-vis to the house she is living and working (as a caretaker of the boarding rooms). She does not know anything about the other man. She has noticed those two men (or one of them) on the street when she leaves the house or returns to it.

Mrs. Lee warned my wife not to visit her any more because she thought that these visits might cause harm to my wife. They agreed to telephone and to agree to meet somewhere else if necessary.

Later, when my wife tried to call Mrs. Lee, she had on a few times trouble to get through. When she, at last, succeeded to call and told Mrs. Lee of these troubles, the latter complained about similar difficulties in using the telephone which stands in the corridor of the house, close to her living room. Even the repairmen had been out to the place to investigate. She thinks that the trouble were caused by an old tenant of the house who doesn't know to use the telephone properly.

Mrs. Lee thinks that the surveillance comes from the Soviet authorities who like to check her contacts before deciding whether to allow her to return to Estonia or not. On 26 or 27 May, when my wife telephoned Mrs. Lee the last time, the latter said that the situation is unchanged, however, she thinks that Mrs. Kurgvel might visit her if she wishes.

2. I do not know whether the claimed surveillance is a fact or the product of the imagination of the elderly, lone lady, who is driven by the wish to go and see her grandchildren in Estonia although she fears and distrusts the Communists.

3. Mrs. Lee is the widow of Mr. Max Lee, former Lt-Commander of the Estonian Navy, who died in New York in December 1960. The couple fled from Estonia to Germany in 1944 and emigrated to the USA sometimes about 1950, staying most of the time at the address mentioned above, where Mr. Lee worked as a elevator operator.

Mrs. Lee has no close relatives in the United States. She has a daughter-in-law, the widow of her single son, and three grandchildren, aged 20 to 9, in Tallinn. Their names and address: Mrs. Evi LEE, Kalinini t. 34-3, Tallinn; son Enn, 20, son Uelo, 13, and daughter Eva, 9, all ages being approximate. The couple, and later Mrs. Lee alone, have supported the family in Tallinn by sending parcels from their scant savings.

4. The Kurgvels and Lees got acquainted in Germany when living in the same Displaced Persons' camps. After the death of Mr. Lee my wife tried to comfort Mrs. Lee by visiting her from time to time like we used to do when Mr. Lee lived. On Mrs. Lee's request I helped her to prepare her will, so that the small amount of money she has would be used for parcels to her grandchildren when she would die before she had used the money.

Mrs. Lee discussed with us the matter of her returning to Estonia, thus following the call of her daughter-in-law. We all agreed that she could be of more help to her grandchildren when remaining in the USA and sending them some parcels than when returning to Estonia. However, the pull of the grandmotherly feelings of the lone and old widow were more powerful than her and our reasoning. To comfort her, and to avoid raising the obstinacy of the elderly person, I wrote in June 1961 on her request a draft of application of hers to visit her relatives in Estonia, and her life history in Russian. I sent those papers to her by mail, and in the forwarding letter I once more explained the risks coupled with such a step of hers.

Now, end of May 1962, I learned that after long hesitation she has filed an application for repatriation in March or April 1962.

Mrs. Lee is heart sick. She has to carry along some kind of special medicine and to take it instantly when feeling the trouble starting. She has told my wife that she takes the medicine daily or every second day now. She has heard that the Soviets do not allow the repatriants to take any medicine to the USSR. She has said to my wife that she wishes and hopes that this will be the case with her also. Then she would refuse to go because she feels that in such a case she would certainly die before reaching her grandchildren.

5. Mrs. Lee does not know that I am reporting this case of hers. She knows that I am working "with the Army" in Washington, D.C. My wife knows of my intention to report the case, and she agrees. In case that Mrs. Lee's observations are factual, this report might give some clues about the Soviet security activities in New York.

*Aleks Kurgvel*  
Aleks Kurgvel