things, to deflect the Warren Commission from focusing on evidence of the real Soviet role with Oswald. The overall question of whether he was a bona fide defector or a KGB plant became the most divisive issue within the Agency since its establishment: Is Nosenko a bona fide defector, and is his information about Oswald reliable?

When Nosenko contacted an American diplomat in 1962, the CIA was immediately notified. It dispatched thirty-seven-year-old Tennant "Pete" Bagley and an agent fluent in Russian, George Kisevalter, to meet Nosenko four times at a safe house near Geneva's center.[1] Nosenko said he was dissatisfied with the Soviet system and asked for some money in exchange for information. He refused to be contacted inside the USSR for fear of exposure.[2]

CIA transcripts reveal that at those meetings, Nosenko provided critical leads on a number of intelligence cases. Among other disclosures, he exposed KGB spies in the U.S. embassy in Moscow, the British admiralty, and in the U.S. Army;[3] revealed new Soviet surveillance technologies; pinpointed the location of hidden microphones in the U.S. embassy; and startled his CIA contacts by claiming that both Canadian ambassador John Watkins and prominent U.S. newspaper columnist Joe Alsop were homosexuals who were compromised by the KGB.[4]*

Bagley was ecstatic with the information, and not only considered Nosenko bona fide but the most important Soviet agent ever recruited by the CIA.[5] However, Bagley was shocked when he returned to CIA headquarters because the chief of counterintelligence, James Jesus Angleton, was convinced that no matter what Nosenko said, he was a KGB plant.

The reason for Angleton's distrust was another defector who had arrived in America six months earlier, Anatoliy Golitsyn. Golitsyn had told the extremely cynical Angleton that the CIA was penetrated by a high-ranking KGB agent code-named Sasha. The possibility that the CIA was compromised, as British intelligence

*Because Alsop was a good friend of President Kennedy, the CIA's assistant deputy director for plans ordered those references cut from the Nosenko interview tapes.

lieutenant colonel, but since he defected before the chairman's approval, the CIA could not verify that rank.[16] The Agency mistakenly assumed the higher rank was part of a false legend prepared for Nosenko.

When Nosenko first arrived in the U.S., he was placed in a safe house. He did not know that his CIA debriefers were only interested in exposing him as a liar. However, when J. Edgar Hoover learned about him, he immediately obtained access for the FBI. A deep-cover FBI informant at the Soviet mission to the United Nations, code-named Fedora, personally confirmed to Hoover that Nosenko was bona fide and that his defection had caused an uproar in the highest Kremlin circles.

The FBI believed Nosenko about Oswald and supported his request to testify before the Warren Commission. But Angleton outmaneuvered them. Richard Helms, then deputy director of plans, met privately with Earl Warren on June 24, 1964, and informed him the CIA doubted Nosenko's credibility.[17] Helms warned that if the Commission used his information and it was a lie, it would ruin the rest of their work.[18] Nosenko did not testify and is not even mentioned in the Commission's twenty-six volumes.

Helms did not tell the Chief Justice that since early April, with the backing of attorney general Robert Kennedy, Nosenko had been under hostile interrogation, treated as a captured spy rather than a voluntary defector. The FBI was denied access to him, and his CIA jailers expected him to crack within a few weeks. Robert Kennedy called frequently to discover whether he had confessed yet.

Nosenko's ordeal had started on April 4, 1964, when he was driven to a three-story safe house in a Washington suburb. He was given a medical exam and then strapped to a polygraph machine.[19] The operator, Nick Stoiaken, knew the CIA thought Nosenko was a liar. After an hour of questions, Stoiaken made a big show of discussing the prearranged results with some of the CIA personnel. Then Bagley appeared and denounced Nosenko as a "liar." Several guards rushed into the room. Nosenko was stripped, inspected inside his mouth, ears, and rectum, and then marched into the house's tiny attic, which would serve as his prison for more than a year.

The windows were boarded over. The only furniture was a

metal bed fastened to the middle of the floor. Guards watched him twenty-four hours a day through a wire mesh screen built into the door. The room had no heat or air-conditioning, and during the oppressive Washington summers it was like a furnace. Nosenko was given little food, allowed to shower only once a week, and not allowed a toothbrush or toothpaste.* Human contact was banned. There was no television, radio, reading material, exercise, or cigarettes. He was told he would be kept like that for twenty-five years. The interrogations, which began within days, were extremely aggressive. He was constantly attacked as a KGB plant and told his only chance for freedom was to confess. Over the months, the CIA agents became increasingly frustrated that he refused to admit he was a bogus defector. Robert Kennedy had long since stopped telephoning for an update, and the Warren Commission had released its report. Nosenko was a forgotten man, a prisoner of the CIA.

On August 13, 1965, after sixteen months closeted in the attic, Nosenko was moved by the CIA to a new prison, a top-secret facility constructed especially for him. Located on the grounds of the CIA's training facility, Camp Peary, it made the attic seem luxurious. On a heavily wooded site on the ten-thousand-acre compound, Nosenko was locked inside a ten-foot-by-ten-foot windowless concrete bunker. A single bare bulb illuminated the room's only piece of furniture, a metal bed so small that his feet hung over the edges. The luxuries from the attic—a pillow, sheet, and blanket—were gone. The bunker accentuated the weather, either brutally hot or freezing cold.[20] A ceiling camera monitored him. His allotted food was lowered to the subsistence level. Documents reveal that while the government spent $1.5 million to construct and man the prison, it spent less than a dollar a day feeding him.

After four months, he was finally allowed to walk in a small enclosed yard that had been constructed outside his jail. It was the first time in nearly two years he had seen daylight or been in fresh air. The yard was encircled with a twelve-foot-high chain-

*Because he was deprived of dental care for nearly two years, he later suffered severe gum disease, which led to the loss of most of his teeth.

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link fence, and several feet beyond was an eighteen-foot-high fence of solid material.[21] The CIA did not want anyone, even at Camp Peary, to see what had become of him.

He tried to keep his sanity in a variety of ways. When his jailers finally allowed him to brush his teeth after two years in captivity, he was so starved for something to read that he secretly kept a printed piece of paper from the toothpaste package. Though it was only a list of ingredients, he kept rereading it until his guards saw him and confiscated it. Another time he painstakingly created a makeshift deck of cards from shreds of paper napkins. The guards watched him for several weeks and destroyed it on the day he completed it. The same happened to a chess set he fashioned from pieces of lint.[22]

Meanwhile, each subsequent Soviet defector who knew of the Nosenko case vouched for his bona fides.[23]* Most of them, like Colonel Oleg Gordievskiy, were quite surprised to learn that the CIA thought Nosenko was a plant, and told the Agency of the KGB's panicked reactions when he had fled to the West.[24] Nosenko had been tried in absentia and was to be executed on his recapture.** But to Angleton and Golitsyn, the moment a defector vouched for Nosenko's bona fides, it branded that defector as a plant. Angleton concluded that in the decade after Golitsyn, the Soviets sent twenty-two phony defectors to the U.S.[25] Today, the CIA and FBI consider every one of those defectors as bona fide.[26]

Instead of being persuaded by growing evidence that Nosenko might be authentic, Angleton and Bagley grew increasingly impatient and debated drugging him to hasten his breakdown. Internal documents show an assortment of drugs were considered,

*Every Soviet defector to the U.S. who was in a position to know about the Nosenko case confirmed his bona fides. Of the fifteen who have confirmed Nosenko, the following are considered by CIA officials to be the ten most important (their year of defection is in parentheses): Yuriy Loginov (1961); Igor Kochnov (1966); Oleg Lyalin (1971); Rudolf Herrmann (1980); Ilya Dzhirkvelov (1980); Vladimir Kuzichkin (1984); Viktor Gundarev (1985); Vitaliy Yurchenko (1985); Ivan Bogattyy (1985); and Oleg Gordievskiy (1985).

**The KGB had no intention of returning Nosenko to Russia. Plans had been preapproved to liquidate him once he was found.

including a so-called truth serum, an amphetamine, and even LSD. Nosenko is positive he was drugged, recalling injections by CIA doctors, followed by days of panic and terror. "Once, following an injection, I couldn't breathe," he remembers. "I was dying."[27] His guards dragged him to a shower, where they ran alternating hot and cold water to revive him.[28]

In October 1966, two and a half years after he was placed into solitary confinement, and shortly after the incidents with drugs, a second polygraph was administered. Nosenko recalls it was "even uglier than the first."[29] Without any warning, the same doctor who had examined him in April 1964 conducted a physical. During the exam, the doctor inserted a gloved finger inside Nosenko's rectum and, over his protests, wriggled it around for some ten minutes.[30] The doctor suggested he liked the degradation. Nosenko is certain this was done to anger him and stimulate his blood pressure, a key factor in affecting polygraph readings.[31]

After the "exam," he was immediately hooked to the machinery. The same operator, Nick Stoiaken, conducted the test. But instead of asking yes and no questions as on the first test, he spent an hour calling Nosenko a "liar" and asking demeaning questions about alleged homosexuality.[32] Then Stoiaken took a lunch break, leaving Nosenko strapped to the machine. Guards ensured he did not move.

When Stoiaken returned a couple of hours later, he continued the questioning for another two hours.[33] No matter how Nosenko responded or what the polygraph showed, Stoiaken said he was a liar. It was conducted so he would fail. Shortly after the test, Bagley presented him a fake confession that admitted he was a plant and there were moles inside the CIA. Nosenko took a pencil and turned to the last page. Summoning his last reserves of strength, he scrawled near the signature line, "Not true."[34]

Bagley was infuriated. His desperation was evident when he soon made a list of how the festering case could be closed. Included among the choices were "liquidate the man," "render him incapable of giving [a] coherent story (special dose of drug, etc)," or committing him to a "loony bin without making him nuts."[35]

After the second polygraph, Nosenko was at his lowest point since defecting. But unknown to him, his fortunes were about to

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