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RM 25/67

14 February 1967

NOTES AND COMMENTARY

on Preliminary Meeting held on 13 February 1967
with Mr. M. Cadieux, Under Secretary of State for
External Affairs; Mr. E.R. Rettie, Acting Head of
Defence Liaison (2) Division, Department of
External Affairs; and Mr. J. Timmerman, Departmental
Security Officer, Department of External Affairs
(See also RM 20/67)

General

1. The Department of External Affairs is an important target for subversion and espionage, as about 70 per cent of the material it handles is classified, and much of this material is of considerable sensitivity. Further, a majority of the personnel of the Department serves abroad, many in posts within the Communist bloc where there are physical and personnel security problems of a special nature. In addition, because Canadian relations with foreign states are involved in almost all cases of espionage and subversion, the Department is centrally concerned with the delicate judgments that must be made in this field. Judgments on possible recruits, on cases involving persons in the Department, on persona non grata cases, on control of visits and the issue of passports, all involve in different ways a balance between, on the one hand, the apparent threat and the safety of the state and, on the other hand, the extent to which the public is aware of the dangers and prepared to suffer inconvenience or a diminution of its real or imagined rights. This statement is of course oversimplified; real situations can be considerably more complex, and Canadian public opinion can itself become a factor to be manipulated by those unfriendly to Canada.

Personnel Security

2. Personnel security is a particularly perplexing area, for here the safety of the state must be directly judged against human rights. Clearly any serious doubts regarding risks to security or character weaknesses must be resolved in favour of the Department and the state, but the assessment of potential risks involves some disturbing judgments. For example, the tests to apply when recruiting personnel for sensitive work are often troublesome. Not only is there the overriding need for security, but there is also the fact that it is unfair to individuals who may have certain character defects to expose them (and,

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through them, the state) to the undoubted risks that are encountered at many foreign posts. In practice, evidence of character weaknesses (involving all the possibilities for compromise and blackmail that are related to cases of homosexuality, promiscuity or drunkenness) is a clear reason for rejection. Political activities are perhaps more difficult to judge. In the first place, it is relevant to consider the extent to which political activity at a university should be a factor in judging a possibly immature candidate. Has the state any right to make judgments on the basis of the activities and apparent attitudes of students? Are students in fact willing to admit that their behaviour is the concern of the state, even when the state is a prospective employer? These are complex questions, and the situation they imply is not improved by the fact that the RCMP does not enjoy entirely ideal relationships with universities.

3. Separatist activity is especially difficult to judge, and not only because of the prevailing political situation. There are clear indications that some separatist groups show a disposition to use force in an attempt to change the present state structure and make purposive efforts to infiltrate members into positions of influence in federal and provincial agencies. In addition, there is evidence of the penetration of such groups by foreign and sometimes unfriendly elements and agents. Should persons who have been associated with such activities be recruited into a government organization in which they will have to represent the nation of Canada? In practice, judgment can only be made on the basis of detailed information on the depth and nature of an individual's commitment to such groups.

4. Partly in order to provide a better basis for judgment of these and similar cases, the Department of External Affairs is considering placing representatives at certain universities. These representatives would maintain contact between Departmental research and academic thinking, would act as "talent scouts" for the Department, and would also perhaps be able to provide information on the ability and character of potential recruits.

5. Most troublesome of all are cases where character defects (in particular, homosexuality) come to light after employment. In most cases there is no

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evidence of disloyalty or even potential disloyalty, but the situation in Communist countries is such that it is quite impossible (and unfair to the individuals concerned) to place them in vulnerable positions or to entrust them with classified information. In other words, their careers must be ended. Infinite care is taken to avoid public scandal or any possibility of financial destitution, and to enable such persons to leave the service with dignity. In this connection Mr. Cadieux said that one or two such persons had already expressed concern at the establishment of the Commission, and he warned that any public exposure of individual cases could have sudden and dramatic results; suicides were by no means impossible.

6. The reason why it was impossible to employ persons with any character defects, and especially to post them abroad, is that at posts in Communist countries the whole resources of the state are pressed into service in attempts to compromise individuals with the object of blackmailing them into cooperation with Communist authorities. There is no doubt about this; information on individuals is passed from one part of the Soviet Union to another, and from one country within the bloc to another. Neither are persons immune from Communist attack even at posts outside the Communist bloc. Communist tactics are simple, repetitive and effective. For example, sixteen members of the staff of the Canadian mission in Warsaw had to be withdrawn in a period of three years as a result of attempts at compromise. The threat is ugly, constant and sometimes physical; and there is no sign that it is abating as a result of the so-called political détente.

7. It may be asked why in such circumstances missions are kept open in Warsaw and similar locations. This decision is a result of balancing political and security factors. It is judged that there is a certain price to be paid for the maintenance of contact and dialogue between East and West, for the opportunity to develop cultural and trade relations, and for the possibility that some limited but significant rapport will develop over the years. The price is sometimes measured only in terms of embarrassment, but can be measured in terms of broken families, mental illness and human suffering.

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8. In the general context of personnel security it should be borne in mind that the new collective bargaining agreements may lead to more frequent appeals against denials of promotion, transfers or other personnel actions. These agreements may tend to make such actions impossible unless reasons are made available to the individuals concerned, their counsel and their staff associations. This situation is likely to lead to some difficult choices in the future. At the least, in the long term, it must make sensitive Departments consider even more carefully the apparent reliability and loyalty of their recruits.

Visits, Visas and Passports

9. Exchanges of visits and delegations between East and West can also lead to difficult situations. There is little doubt that Communist bloc countries have selected Canada as one of the places from which they can obtain scientific, technical and economic information, and this information is often of United States or British origin. Canadians—especially Canadian scientists and academics—appear to find opportunities for such exchanges irresistible. Attempts are made to warn persons visiting Communist bloc countries or receiving delegations of the dangers, and in addition to ensure some broad reciprocity in programmes. There are, however, difficulties in doing this. In the first place there are certain difficulties in consulting with universities in this general field; secondly, even such agencies as the National Research Council tend to be sceptical of the dangers, and to feel that science is in a meaningful sense "international".

10. No control is exercised over persons wishing to visit dangerous countries or countries in which they may be vulnerable. The only grounds on which a passport can be refused to a Canadian citizen are concerned with debts to the Government. There is some control of entry through the requirement for visas, and official or quasi-official visits are considered by the Visits Panel. It is incidentally, often suggested that Canadian passports are too easy to obtain, and this may well be true. At present a Canadian passport can be obtained by mail, almost entirely on the basis of the signatures of two guarantors (whose knowledge of the applicant is not confirmed).

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Persona Non Grata Cases

11. Persona non grata cases involve conflicting considerations, especially in terms of the publicity that should be allowed to surround them. In many such cases, the RCMP is anxious to demonstrate to the public the severity of the threat (and, naturally, its success in countering it); the Department must also consider the implications of unnecessarily straining relations with another country.

International Security Agreements

12. Certain inter-governmental agreements exist for the exchange of both intelligence and security information. As far as security is concerned, there are special arrangements within the tripartite network (Canada, Britain and the United States). In addition, agreements exist within NATO and with some non-NATO countries. Arrangements are in force with some countries (including Britain, the United States, France, Italy and Germany) concerning the provision of security information on intending immigrants.

Departmental Security Organization

13. The Department's security organization includes a Departmental Security Officer and staff in Ottawa; this section is part of Defence Liaison (2) Division. Full-time professional Regional Security Officers are stationed in London, Mexico City, Cairo and Tokyo; each of these is responsible for the physical security of missions within a given area. The Regional Security Officers, however, have no responsibility for personnel security matters. At each post the Ambassador is finally responsible for the security, not only of the External Affairs premises and staff, but also of all Canadian government offices located in the country or countries to which he is accredited. One of the officers of each mission acts as a part-time security officer to the mission, and is trained for this purpose.

Further Information

14. The Department of External Affairs will prepare a comprehensive brief on the above and other subjects for the information of Commissioners, and the Commission's staff will consult with the Department concerning certain personnel case histories.

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