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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : D - Mr. Gordon Gray

DATE: 28 December 1951

FROM : P - Wallace Carroll *W.C.*SUBJECT: Repatriation of Prisoners of War

1. You will recall that in October we developed and sent to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Director of the Joint Staff a staff study on the question of repatriation of prisoners of war.

2. There can be no doubt that the forcible repatriation of prisoners of war in Korea would have serious effects upon U.S. psychological warfare operations for many years to come.

3. Our treatment of Soviet and satellite expatriates has an unfortunate history, as you will recall. As a result of an agreement at Yalta, the United States in the years immediately after World War II assisted the Soviet Union in the repatriation of various categories of Soviet bloc persons--chiefly prisoners of war, escapees, and displaced persons. The result of our cooperation was that more than four million Soviet citizens were returned to the Soviet Union and that thousands were executed or punished in other ways without regard to the conditions which caused their displacement from Soviet-controlled territory.

4. In addition, persons escaping from the Soviet area after World War II were forcibly returned to Soviet control as a matter of U.S. policy up until well into 1948. This treatment of Soviet expatriates became well known to the populations within the Soviet area and, as has been well documented, became the cause of widespread despair. It practically stopped the flow of defectors, and it would make it very difficult to wage effective psychological warfare against the Red Army in event of war.

5. Our policy was subsequently changed so that persons entering the Allied Zone of Germany and Austria are no longer forcibly returned. The treatment we have given defectors has, however, not been sufficiently good or well publicized to erase the former picture.

6. This is the background within which the question of forcible repatriation of Chinese and North Korean prisoners of war must be examined. Repetition of our previous mistake would discourage defection by Chinese communist forces in any future conflict. It would therefore in the long run cost us more American lives than are involved in the exchange of prisoners problem.

7. The latest JCS directive to General Ridgway on the subject indicates that we are making an effort to exchange prisoners on a voluntary basis. (We are not giving publicity to this fact, probably because we are not yet ready to

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make the final decision). The instructions to General Ridgway require that should he be compelled to examine the desirability of forcible repatriation, he must refer the matter for decision to Washington.

10. I have learned by hearsay that the President is informed on this question and is inclined to oppose forcible repatriation.

11. Recognizing that there are factors to consider in making a decision on this question other than the psychological, I believe nevertheless that the great importance of the psychological factor should be emphasized at the time when a decision is about to be reached. I recommend that you discuss this problem with the Board members and consider also discussing it with the President.

