

R Watton Moore Papers  
Box 3  
Bull. H. WC 1936

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

March 16, 1936.

MEMORANDUM FOR

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE MOORE

This seems so important that I suggest that you and Stanley Reed have a confidential talk in regard to it. I believe that we should not remain passive.

F. D. R.

Personal, Confidential  
and Secret.

Moscow, February 22, 1936.

Dear Judge Moore:

I have just written you a more or less formal letter about personnel matters which I have no objection to your showing to Tom Wilson. This letter, I feel, should be strictly between ourselves and, of course, the Secretary of State if you consider there is anything in it which might interest him.

The appointment of Umansky to replace Skvirsky as Counselor of the Soviet Embassy in Washington raises, in my opinion, a question that we have thus far avoided: the question of whether or not the Bolsheviks are abusing diplomatic privileges in the United States.

Umansky is an astonishingly loathsome Jew, capable of any baseness. Among the many unpleasant underlings in the Soviet Foreign Office he stands out as uniquely slippery. He is Litvinov's especial pet.

For some years Umansky has been chief press censor in Moscow and chief propagandist of the Soviet Foreign Office. He has not hesitated to lie outrageously about the United States and this Mission. He was the source of the story which caused Duranty to send me that abject apology last September, a copy of which I sent you. He is heartily detested by every American newspaper man who has dealt with him except Duranty and Louis Fischer who have often been glad to publish his propaganda.

Umansky has great energy and a sly intelligence, and is so useful to Litvinov in carrying out intrigues in Moscow that he would not be sent to

The Honorable  
R. Walton Moore,  
Assistant Secretary of State,  
Washington.

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to the United States unless important work of some sort was involved. The question for us is, what is his work to be?

It is, of course, obvious that he is being sent to watch Troyanovsky and to report personally to Litvinov on everything that happens in the United States. Litvinov's hostility to Troyanovsky is no secret in Moscow. I have been informed on excellent authority that when Troyanovsky returned to Moscow this November, Litvinov attempted to have him removed as Ambassador in Washington, and that it was only after three personal conversations with Stalin that Troyanovsky was able to re-establish his position and go to America with the confidence of the Dictator if not of the Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

It is no business of ours to concern ourselves with the internal disputes in the Soviet Embassy in Washington but I am convinced that Troyanovsky is a decent, straightforward person who genuinely desires good relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, and I am equally convinced that Umansky is a Bolshevick intriguer of the lowest type and I feel that he should be received with due politeness but absolute frigidity. I venture to suggest that you might warn not only those members of the Department of State who may come in contact with him but also such Senators and ex-Senators as are within the orbit of the Soviet Embassy that Umansky is not to be trusted.

My concern is not, however, the damage that Umansky may do as an official representative of his government. In point of fact, any Government which sends a man of Umansky's type as its representative suffers far more than the country to which the person may be sent.

I am concerned because I suspect that there is a further purpose in sending Umansky to America. He is extremely able as a Bolshevick propagandist. The Presidential campaign is approaching. The program and propaganda of the Communist Party in the United States

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States is now under consideration. I suspect that he is being sent to control that propoganda in the interests of the Soviet Government.

In view of our protests last Summer the Kremlin may well have decided that it is unsafe for the Communist Party in the United States to communicate constantly with Moscow asking for decisions of one sort or another and may have sent Umansky to advise the American Communist leaders from Washington.

Some time ago the President asked me if I did not feel that we should request the Department of Justice to keep an eye on the connections of the Soviet Embassy in the United States. I replied that I believed that Troyanovsky would be scrupulous in keeping out of American internal affairs and that I felt he did not need to be watched. I can not say the same thing with regard to Umansky and consider it my duty to present this question to you for most careful consideration. It is so delicate and nasty a question that it has no place in an official despatch. And I hope that you will either burn this letter or put it in a safe, not a file cabinet.

One more word with regard to this unpleasant subject. Umansky has a very close friend in America, a man named Kenneth Durant, who is the representative of TASS, the Soviet news agency, in New York.

Durant is a curious fellow whom I have known since childhood. He comes of an excellent Philadelphia family. During the war he was one of the assistants of George Creel in the Committee on Public Information.

He became violently disgusted with the publication by the American Government of the forged "Sisson Documents", which purported to prove that Lenin and Trotsky were both in the pay of the German Government and were making revolution in Russia simply with the purpose of extending the rule of William II to the east. The documents were palpably false and their dissemination by the American Government aroused, as you may remember, indignation among people who care for

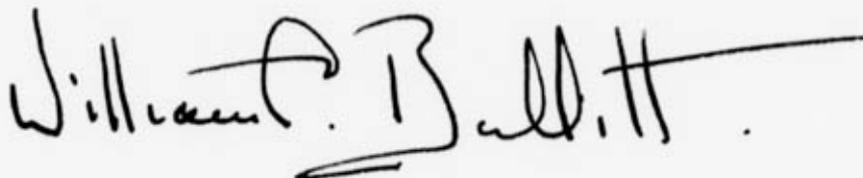
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for fair play.

Durant became so incensed that he swung over completely to the revolutionary point of view. He is able and courageous. He might well become Umansky's channel for operating in America.

Good luck and apologies for having to write you about such unpleasant matters. In life one has from time to time to look into the condition of the drains; but it is not agreeable.

Yours always,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William C. Bullitt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

William C. Bullitt.

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