

## Chapter Three

### The Secret Alliance

#### *The National Student Association (U)*

The Central Intelligence Agency's involvement with the National Student Association (NSA) began at the height of the Cold War, when both organizations realized they shared a desire to fight Communist control of Western and Third World student groups. Soon after they began cooperating, the Agency and the Association separately discovered that they could make use of each other to achieve goals that were only indirectly related to fighting Communism. The Agency found NSA to be a useful cover mechanism, a recruiting ground, and a source of operational information. In turn, CIA money heightened NSA's profile among domestic and foreign students—and increased the influence of certain offices and officers within the Association. (U)

Within NSA "a clique developed that was basically using associates . . . for ulterior purposes," noted one Association officer in 1967. The Agency case officers who dealt with this clique came from the same milieu:

These CIA men are not evil. They are quite intelligent, often very liberal. They seemed to believe in and want to do the same things that NSA wanted to do. Moreover, because they were often former officers of NSA, they were considered good friends, whose judgment was trusted, who possessed a monopoly of information regarding the international student movement; discussions with them were often very comfortable, and such pressure as there was, was very subtle.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, a cohesive group of witting student leaders *cum* CIA agents and officers in effect brokered the link between the Agency and the Association. The student members of this group collectively were rather like an elite campus secret society monitored and defended by its distinguished but clandestine alumni. They persuaded both CIA and

<sup>1</sup>Richard G. Stearns, "We Were Wrong," *Mademoiselle*, August 1967, p. 351. (U)

NSA to continue the worldwide struggle against Communist domination of the student movement long after the initial alarm over the Soviet-dominated International Union of Students (IUS) had subsided. "People used to joke among themselves, 'who co-opted whom?'" recalled one veteran of both NSA and CIA.<sup>2</sup> "Actually we thought NSA was running CIA rather than the other way around," an unnamed former Association officer explained.<sup>3</sup> The history of the NSA-CIA relationship is a chronicle of how this informal group coalesced, persevered for roughly 15 years, and then in the mid-1960s found it impossible to perpetuate itself. (U)

#### Launching HBEPITOME (C)

NSA's August 1951 Congress demonstrated that the organization was moving closer to a consensus on the need to resist Communist inroads in the student world.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, many delegates still opposed the creation of a Western union of students for fear such a polarizing step might alienate students from the nonaligned nations.<sup>5</sup> NSA President Allard Lowenstein later claimed that his anti-IUS speech in Stockholm in December 1950 had "outraged" NSA's strong left wing, which nominated for NSA president a Swarthmore student opposed to Lowenstein's call for a new international student organization. At the NSA Congress in 1951, Lowenstein thwarted the left by supporting the successful candidacy of his friend and fellow liberal, William T. Dentzer, Jr., who had just graduated from Muskingum College. NSA then elected Dentzer's ally, Avrea Ingram of Harvard, as its new international affairs vice president after the popular choice for that office, Lowenstein's former girlfriend, Helen Jean Rogers, stepped aside. Rogers had just returned from a conference of Latin American students in Rio de Janeiro and impressed the delegates with her "lurid tales of Communist student terror in the streets,"

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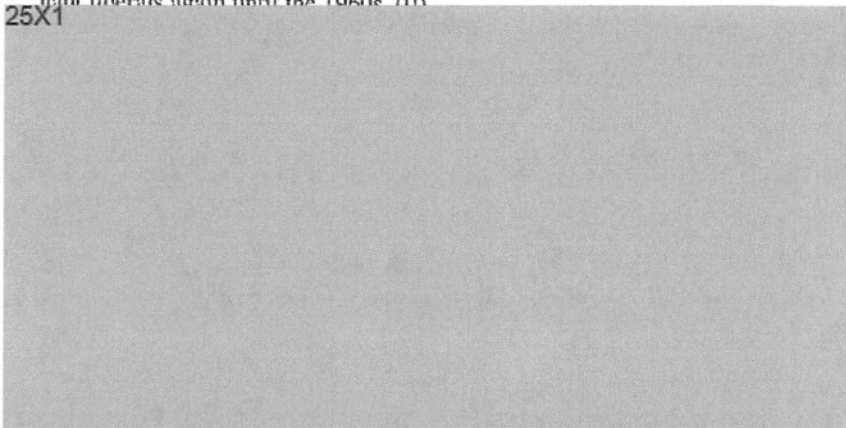
<sup>2</sup>Stuart H. Loory, "Mystery Death Hides CIA Tics," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 February 1967. (U)

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<sup>3</sup>Peter T. Jones, *The History of US National Student Association Relations with the International Union of Students, 1945-1956* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1956), pp. 83-84. (U)

Lowenstein later remembered.<sup>6</sup> The 1951 Congress marked the decisive defeat of NSA's left, which would not challenge the Association's dominant liberals again until the 1960s. (U)

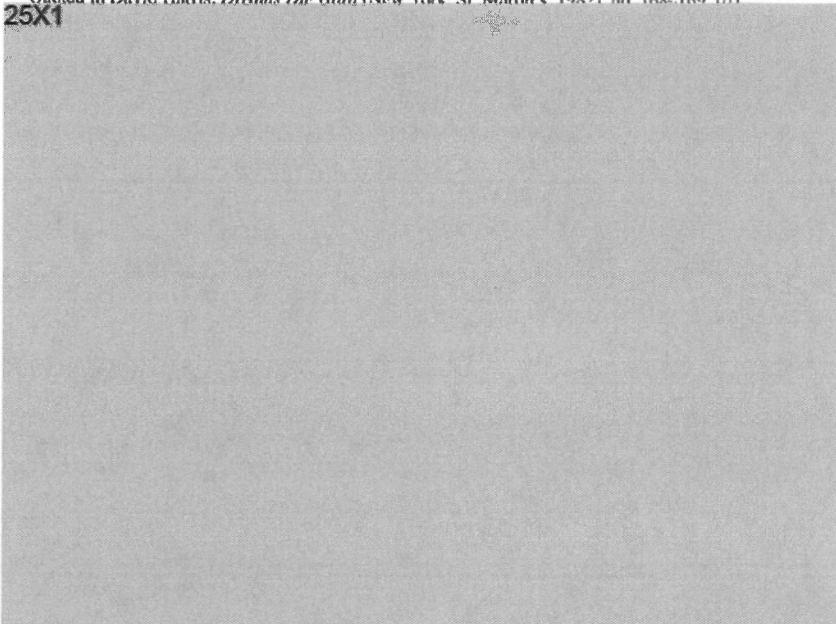
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NSA International Commission officers by this time were desperate for funds. Money—or the lack thereof—had long been a concern in the Commission's official correspondence. On almost the same day that

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in David Harris, *Dreams Die Hard* (New York: St. Martin's, 1982), pp. 168-169. (U)

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OPC's Milton Buffington told his superiors that NSA was "not receptive to accepting government subsidy." NSA's International Vice President Herbert Eisenberg informed a friend and former NSA officer "I am going to approach the State Department and see if they can put us in touch with some underwriting in case things get really tough."<sup>11</sup> Helen Jean Rogers complained to Eisenberg's successor, Avrea Ingram:

I feel terrible about this money thing, Avrea, and if you have any more suggestions I will certainly see them. But no one here [in Washington] has any more ideas. At the Department of State they just sigh and look depressed and say we're wonderful and isn't it too bad, but they just don't know. DRAT IT. After all we went through in Rio and all the progress that has been made, and now for the lack of a few thousand dollars—the whole thing is likely to fall. [Spelling and punctuation in original]<sup>12</sup> (U)

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NSA's Executive Committee rebuffed the International Union of Students' eleventh-hour offer of "cooperation." Dentzer and Ingram, joined and bankrolled by [REDACTED] then headed for Scotland and the International Student Conference.<sup>14</sup> Representatives of the

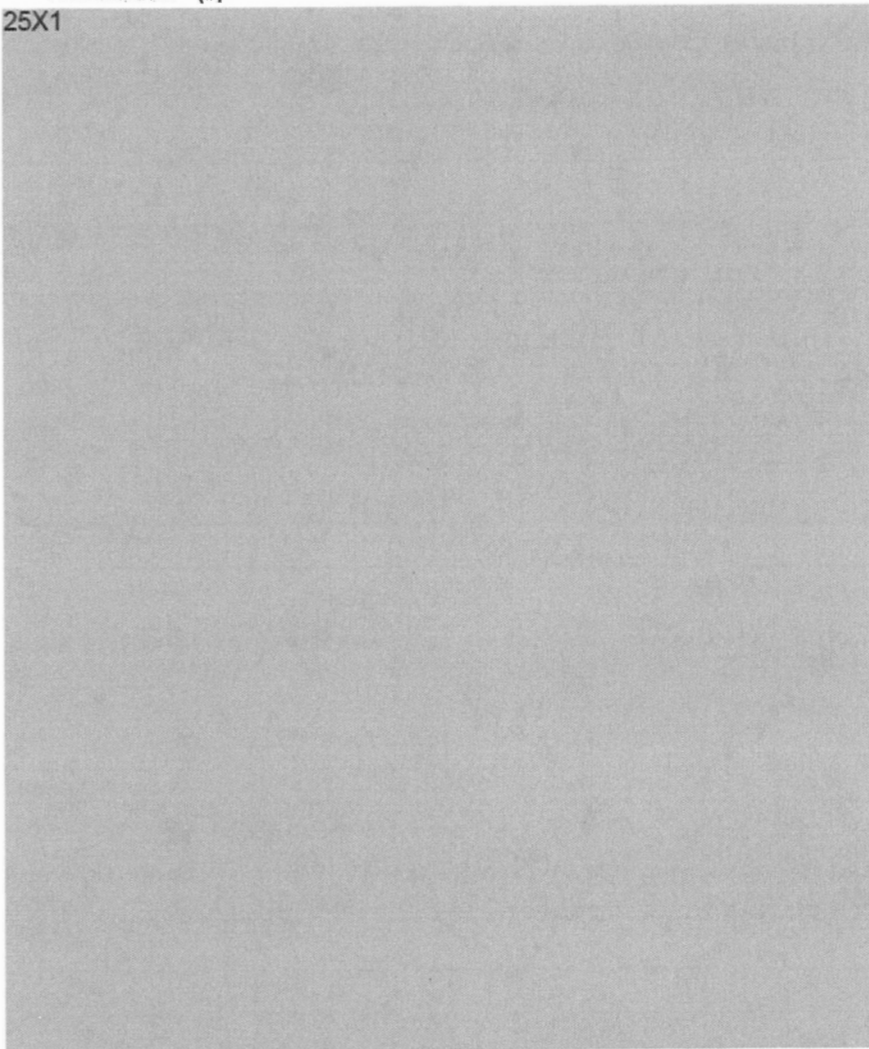
<sup>11</sup>Milton Buffington to Lewis Thompson, "United States National Student Association," 17 February 1951, in Warner, *The CIA under Harry Truman*, pp. 383. Herbert Eisenstein to Erskine Childers, 9 February 1951, Hoover Institution, United States National Student Association (International Commission) Papers, box 26, "Erskine Childers" file. (U)

<sup>12</sup>Helen Jean Rogers to Avrea Ingram, 25 May 1952, Hoover Institution, United States National Student Association (International Commission) Papers, box 26, "Erskine Childers" file. (U)

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25 national students' unions in attendance in Edinburgh formally rebuffed the IUS, expressing regret that events had made a truly global student community unattainable for at least the time being. They also decided that their coalescing movement needed a permanent administrative body to monitor performance of the tasks that the annual Conferences assigned to member student unions. To this end, the delegates established a Coordinating Secretariat (COSEC), to be based in Leiden, The Netherlands.<sup>15</sup> ~~(S)~~

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At this point, Braden and Meyer contemplated a long-term and greatly expanded subsidy for the NSA's international activities, but they hesitated to commit themselves to such a step before testing the reliability of the Association's leadership.<sup>20</sup> 25X1

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Just after the 1952 NSA Congress—at which the delegates all but ruled out any future dealings with the IUS—25X1

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The US Congress published the lowest (and perhaps the most accurate) estimate in 1980, guessing that the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students together spent about \$2.5 million a year. This figure may have reflected a fading of Moscow's interest in youth and student organizations.<sup>10</sup> ~~(S)~~

**Operations (U)**

With HIBEPITOME approved, IO had all the pieces of the CIA-NSA relationship set in the patterns they would retain for more than a decade. A nucleus of 25X1

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NSA would carry on the original ideals of the covert partnership. The 1950s and early 1960s saw a rationalization and a growing sophistication in the operational ties between CIA and NSA, as the two organizations covertly explored opportunities and devised new activities. ~~(S)~~

IO's dealings with the National Student Association comprised only a portion of the much larger HIBEPITOME program (which IO consolidated into a single project for administrative purposes in 1957).

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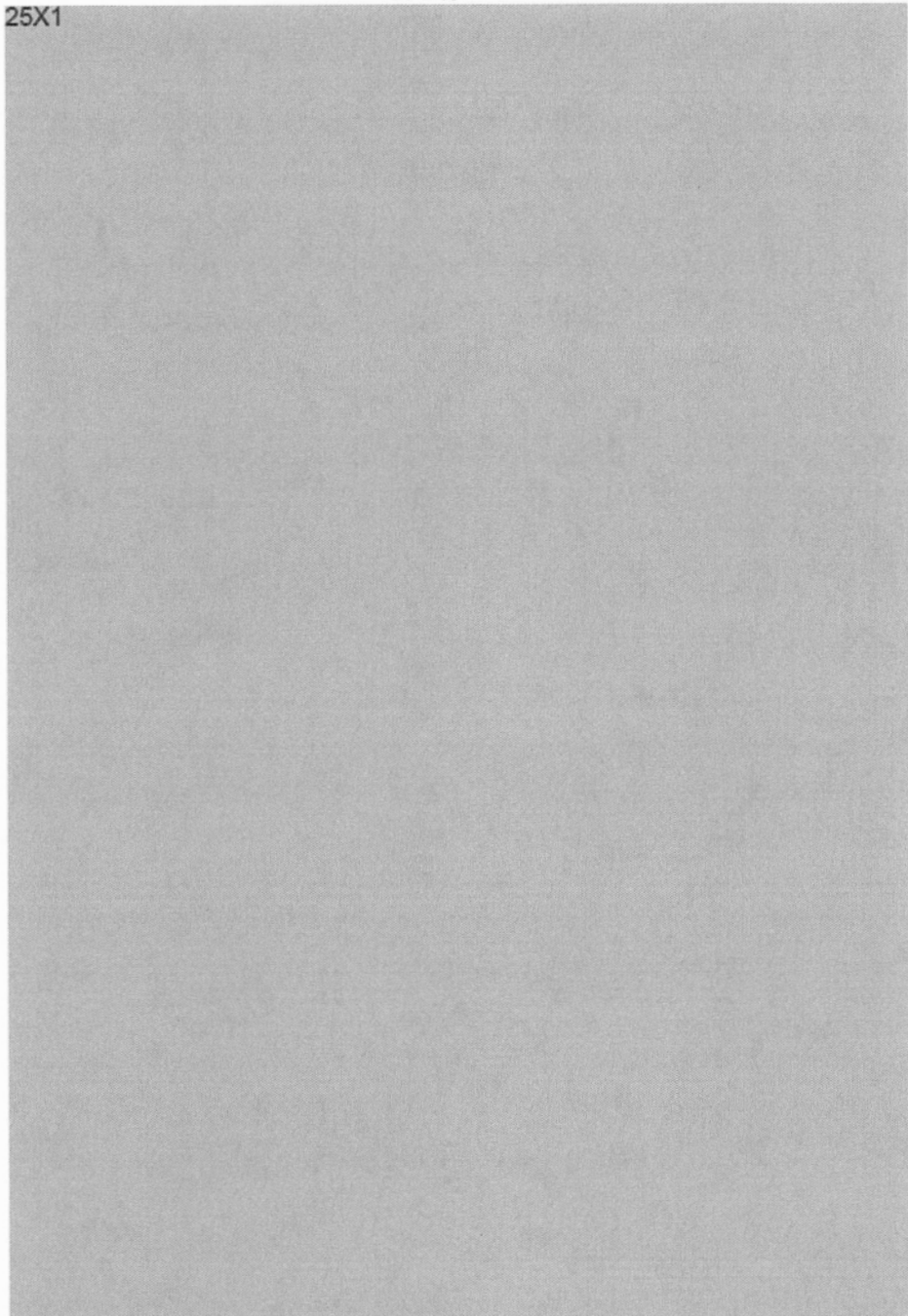
<sup>10</sup>Clive Rose, *Campaigns Against Western Defence* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 297 25X1

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**Operational Accomplishments (U)**

Two DDP appraisals reflect the evolution and accomplishments of the HBEPITOME program's use of the National Student Association. The two studies reflect: a) NSA's evolution beyond what in the 1950s were, for the most part, parliamentary victories in international student gatherings, to more concrete achievements in the 1960s; and b) the geographic widening of NSA's interests and impact. (C)

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In addition, [redacted] feared that Communist influence among youth and students would rise again as the Soviets and their allies exploited new tactics and opportunities in the emerging nations. CIA officials could not see how the comparatively amateurish and underfunded Western student organizations, without CIA support, could hope to prevent Moscow from regaining the initiative and eventually dominating international student gatherings. (S)

The International Union of Students soon seemed to confirm CIA fears of Communist organizational adaptability by moving away from the Stalinist rigidity that had alienated many Western and Third World student leaders. In 1955, the same year that Moscow dissolved the Cominform, the IUS secretariat reversed course and began calling for cooperation among all national student unions. Some ISC members, particularly the French, soon realized that they could gain leverage within COSEC and the ISC by endorsing IUS calls for cooperation and joint projects. Even more important, the emerging international debates over colonialism and development began to blur formerly sharp East-West distinctions of the early Cold War and to complicate relations within the ISC. The IUS labeled the United States an imperialist power and publicized complaints by colonial student groups while dismissing the ISC's moderate criticisms of colonialism.\* (U)

International Student Conference gatherings themselves became tense during debates over the wording of proposed anti-imperialist resolutions and disputes over the seating of delegations from not-yet-independent colonies. The ISC reached a low point at the 1962 Conference in Quebec. Representatives of 27 Third World student groups stormed out after losing a vote to seat a group of Puerto Rican students as a "national" delegation, and the American delegates braced themselves for the worst after hearing a rumor that the Cubans would soon douse the lights and charge the American table. "That was very scary; they were very tough guys," recalled [redacted] (S)

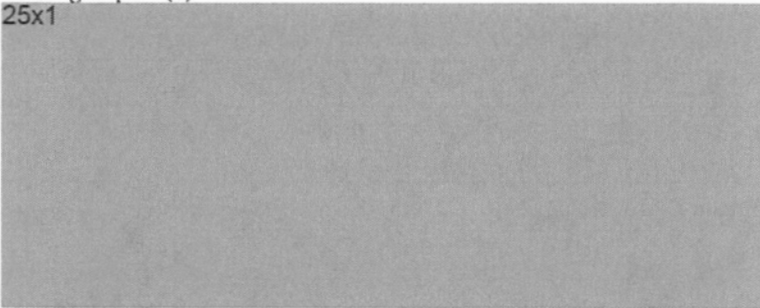
Throughout these controversies, NSA continued to wield influence in COSEC and the ISC. Unfortunately for the CIA's purposes, the clear objectives of the original HBEPITOME program were no longer directly relevant to the unfolding international situation. With the West European colonial powers on the defensive in the ISC—and the United States itself accused of "imperialism"—NSA could do little to inoculate Third World

\*Jones, *The History of US National Student Association Relations with the International Union of Students*, pp. 105-109. (U)

students against the perceived allure of Communism. NSA's foreign representatives and delegations spent their energy working to moderate Third World sentiments against imperialism and the United States. (S)

Officials in the CIA and the US Government recognized that many young people in the emerging nations of Africa and Asia—perhaps an entire generation of political leaders—might decide that the Soviet Union was their true ally in the struggle against colonialism. Policy support for HBEPITOME's program to combat this threat spanned the executive and legislative branches. In Congress, Senator Richard B. Russell of Georgia—the Senate's dominant figure in intelligence matters—promoted the program.<sup>39</sup> Presidents Truman and Eisenhower endorsed it as well. (S)

The election of John F. Kennedy heralded a new emphasis on the US Government's efforts in the youth and student field.<sup>40</sup> The Kennedy administration saw the eroding situation as a national challenge and enthusiastically rose to meet it. Just days after his inauguration, President Kennedy asked CIA to brief his aide Richard Goodwin on the Agency's activities. The new President's former next-door neighbor, Cord Meyer, went to the White House to lay out the program for an interested Goodwin, who concluded by asking what the President could do to help the effort. Not one to miss a cue, Meyer requested that the White House extend various official courtesies to NSA and the Agency's other client groups.<sup>40</sup> (S)



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25X1 untitled history of the National Student Association project prepared for Senator Robert Kennedy, 16 February 1967, 25X1

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The Kennedy administration's interest in this arena gave the HBEPITOME program enough institutional momentum to propel it well into its second decade. Attorney General Robert Kennedy paid personal attention to the government's efforts toward youth and students, and in 1962 the administration established the Inter-Departmental Committee for Youth Affairs to coordinate overt and covert programs.<sup>45</sup> President Kennedy's death in 1963 did not diminish high-level interest in these projects, 25x1

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25x1 <sup>46</sup> In early 1964 Cord Meyer told his Covert Action Staff that the Agency had received "strong directives from higher authority to expand [covert action] operations" in three fields; one of these was the effort to exploit "the political potential of student and youth groups and to counter Communist manipulation of them."<sup>46</sup> (S)

#### Operational Problems (U)

Throughout the long covert partnership with NSA, CIA officers worried about maintaining the fiction that the Association operated without any secret assistance from the US Government. NSA was an independent, private organization, and it had to remain one if it was to have any hope of influencing foreign students with CIA's money and direction.

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Student-run organizations, however, were (and are) notoriously anarchic and underfunded. The relationship between a democratic student organization and a covert action agency thus had to balance the competing demands of credibility and security. The Agency tried to ensure that the security and accounting procedures followed by its NSA agents left them plenty of latitude to conduct themselves like typical student leaders. (U)

NSA's need to maintain its cover as an independent student group became acute in the mid-1950s as the cooperation between the Agency and the Association expanded into a wide variety of events and ongoing activities. CIA funds and guidance enabled NSA to build a large international program in just a few years. NSA posted its student representatives in Asia and Europe, underwrote popular educational travel and exchange programs, flew its officers and delegates to meetings all over the world, and ran a summer seminar for promising American students interested in foreign affairs. These activities constituted the *raison d'être* of CIA's subvention for NSA; they fostered the Association's influence among foreign students 25X1

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(C)

Agents and case officers typically worked closely together to hide the Agency's involvement. Witting NSA officers had to be able to explain why NSA's International Commission operated so differently from the rest of the Association. The Agency's subsidy was small by CIA standards but still represented the bulk of NSA's budget. NSA's international affairs vice president regularly had to explain how an organization of American students had so much money to spend on world travel and overseas representatives, and why the various charitable foundations providing this largess would not also subsidize the Association's domestic programs. Perceptive observers such as those at *Ramparts* magazine eventually noticed that the differences between NSA's national and international activities reflected more just than an unequal distribution of its own resources. The Association's International Commission, especially its overseas representatives [redacted] somehow seemed odd to one writer in *Ramparts*:

NSA has always shown two faces. Its domestic programs, its Congresses and its regional meetings have always been open and spontaneous . . . Yet NSA's overseas image has been very different. Despite its liberal rhetoric, NSA-ers abroad seemed more like professional diplomats than students; there was something tough and secretive about them that was out of keeping with their openness and spontaneity back home. <sup>46</sup> (C)

\*Sol Stern, "NSA: A Short Account of the International Student Politics & the Cold War with Particular Reference to the NSA, CIA, Etc.," *Ramparts*, March 1967, p. 30. (U)



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Allard K. Lowenstein, former president of the National Student Association and an influential alumnus. (U)

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OPC's

Milton Buffington probably saved NSA's unwitting President Allard Lowenstein from conscription (and the Korean war) in 1951.<sup>49</sup>

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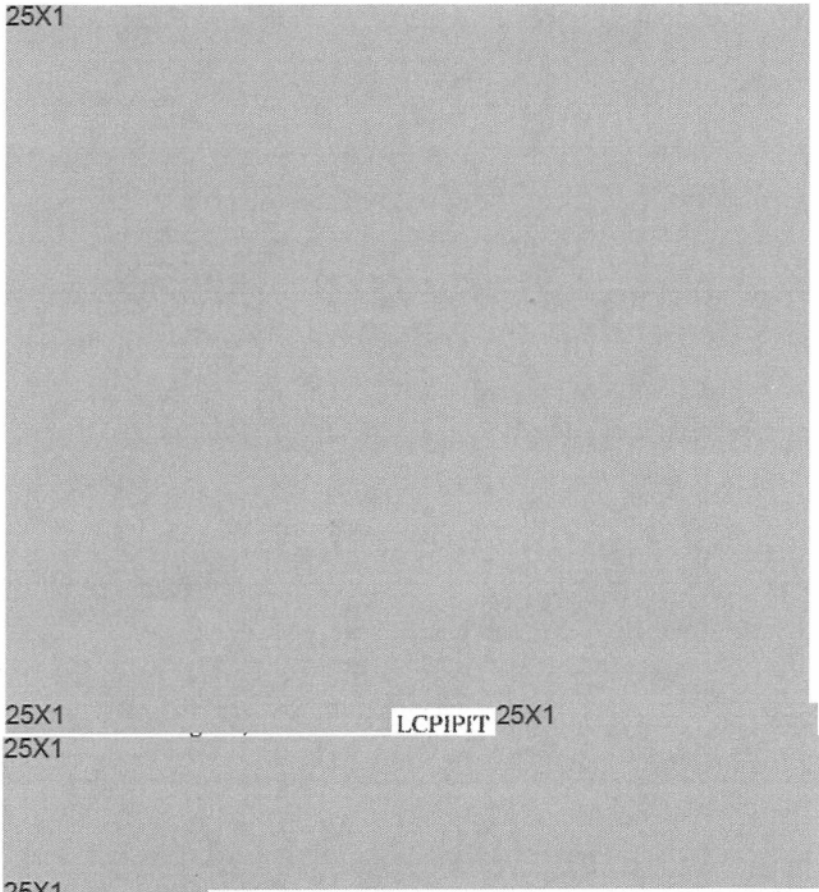
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<sup>49</sup>Milton Buffington, Special Projects Division, to Lewis Thompson, Chief, Special Projects Division, "United States National Student Association," 17 February 1951, in Michael Warner, *The CIA under Harry Truman*, p. 383. (U)

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"The student leader of today is the student leader of tomorrow." (s)

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