

# Oppenheimer Called an 'Informer'

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nesses in the Oppenheimer case, will call Condon for testimony. One of the letters bore the date of June 27, 1949, and was written after Oppenheimer had appeared before the House committee in secret session. His testimony there was never made public, but a portion leaked and was printed in the Rochester (N. Y.) Times-Union.

### "Thoroughly Cooperative."

THE NEWS was informed that Oppenheimer was a friendly and thoroughly cooperative witness. He was questioned about possible Communist affiliations of a number of A-bomb scientists.

Particular attention was given to Dr. Bernard Peters and his wife, Dr. Hannah Peters. Oppenheimer was reported to have told the committee that he knew Peters had been a member of the Communist Party in Germany. Peters was a naturalized citizen.

Without direct admission that it had copies of the letters, the House probers quizzed Dr. Condon intensely on the subject in a hearing in Chicago Sept. 5, 1952.

Condon conceded that he had talked to Peters about the secret Oppenheimer testimony and was very angry at the charges. But he said he did not recall specific details.

### Took Oppenheimer to Task.

Here is the cryptic testimony, with Frank Tavenner, committee counsel, doing the interrogation and Condon supplying the answers:

Q. Did you take J. Robert Oppenheimer to task for his alleged testimony before the Committee on Un-American Activities? A. Yes, I wrote him a very critical letter.

Q. Did you charge Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer with endeavoring to involve other people in an effort to obtain immunity for himself? A. I am not sure. I don't have a copy of that letter.

Q. Well, that is a very serious charge to make against a person, and you say that you wrote him a very sharp letter. A. That is right.

Q. Can't you recall that you did make such a charge? "It is known that Tavenner had a copy of the purported letter before him as he asked the questions." A. I wouldn't want to say that I made it unequivocally. I may have said something substantially like that, and I was very angry at that time, and I am still quite angry about it.

Q. Well, what had occurred to your knowledge, if anything, which in your judgment would constitute a reason why Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer should seek immunity by telling something that was untrue about someone else, or something



Harold Velde Steven Nelson

that was true about some other person? A. What do you mean? Such immunity could be immunity just from harassment and annoyance without any foundation such as in my own case, and there is no basis for any of the annoyance that I have been put through.

Q. I am asking you about Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, and was there anything that Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer had done to your knowledge which would constitute a reason why he should seek immunity? A. No.

### One to "Dear Robert."

THE NEWS was told that copies of the letters, one of which was addressed to "Dear Robert," have been in the hands of the FBI and are among the material available to the AEC security board. It is reported that strong language was used in the documents, with the implication of a threat against the scientist if he started telling all.

Condon said he wrote the letter on his Corona portable typewriter, and that either Peters or Frank Oppenheimer, brother of the A-bomb wizard, may have been present when he wrote the letter. He testified "I think probably it was a little stronger than I would write if I had to do it over again."

Q. Did you express to any person the possibility that he might involve other people? A. I may have, and if so in that letter; I am not sure; it is a possibility. . . . I suppose he might do the same thing about other people.

### Questioned on Peters.

Q. Now, did you also take Dr. Oppenheimer further to task by telling him that it was his duty to write at once to the president of the University of Rochester (where Peters was teaching) and advise him that Dr. Peters was all right? A. That may have been included in the letter. I don't remember the exact details.

Q. Did you also demand that if Dr. Peters lost his position at the University of Rochester as a result of Dr. Oppenheimer's alleged testimony before this committee, it was his moral obligation to offer Dr. Peters a position on the staff

of the Institute for Advanced Study? A. I may have said that. This was a personal letter between friends; and we are still friends.

Still another development popped up as a result of Oppenheimer's own disclosure in answer to AEC charges against him that he had met Steve Nelson, Communist leader now free pending an appeal from Smith Act conviction.

### Seek to Void Citizenship.

Last Friday, Attorney General Herbert Brownell Jr. ordered The U. S. Attorney at Pittsburgh to institute proceedings to cancel Nelson's citizenship.

The AEC accused Oppenheimer of telling Nelson prior to 1945 that he was working on the atom bomb. The scientist denied this and said: "Steve Nelson came a few times with his family to visit; he had befriended my wife in Paris, at the time of her husband's death in Spain in 1937. Neither of us has seen him since 1941 or 1942."

The House Committee reported that Nelson's friendship with Mrs. Oppenheimer "undoubtedly had a great bearing" on Nelson's selection as "chief atomic spy in the U. S." and continued: "Nelson, through his acquaintance with the scientist's wife, believed he could gain access to secret atomic data."

### Velde Says Scientist Knew of Red A-Cell

Pekin, Ill., April 14 (AP)—Representative Harold Velde (R-Ill.), chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee, said today that Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer testified in 1949 that he knew there was a Communist cell at the Los Alamos, N. M., atom bomb project. Velde, who said the testimony was given at a closed session of the committee, said Oppenheimer also requested that he not be questioned about the activities of his brother, Frank Friedman Oppenheimer, who later admitted membership in the Communist Party from 1937 until early 1941.

Velde said he would not give further details of Oppenheimer's testimony until he discusses the matter with other members of the committee.

"I want to look into it further to see how Steve Nelson was able to introduce Dr. Oppenheimer to his present wife," Velde added.

Nelson was a Communist organizer in California and Pennsylvania.

### Measles Up in City

An epidemic of measles has hit the city, Dr. Leona Baumgartner, Health Commissioner, reported yesterday. More than 22,000 cases have been recorded thus far this year with nine deaths, she said.

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# Condon Tells of His Critical Letter

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native of Poland who came to the United States by the same House committee, 20 years ago. He was questioned in 1948 when he returned from Europe, after his credentials were lifted by Navy security officers in France. He was en route to England to attend a scientific conference as a representative of the Naval Research Agency.

### Declines to Give Details.

Condon, a famous atomic scientist himself, declined to give details of his letter to Oppenheimer, but said: "Soon after that—it was early in July of 1949, I believe—Oppenheimer wrote a letter to the editor of the Rochester Times-Union in which he tried to make amends for what he had done."

"As far as I know, not only was Dr. Peters not dropped from the faculty of the University of Rochester, but he was actually promoted. He is now in Bombay, working in a staff position as a research physicist for the Tata Institute for Fundamental Research."

Commenting on current developments in the Oppenheimer case, Condon said: "It is quite evident that Oppenheimer has had his attack hanging over his head for some time. Not that I think the at-

tack should be made—but the surprise to me is that it hasn't happened sooner."

### What Oppenheimer Wrote Upstate Paper

(Special to THE NEWS)

Rochester, N. Y., April 14—Following is a partial text of the letter, dated July 5, 1949, that Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer wrote to the Times-Union after Dr. Edward U. Condon wrote to him:

"Recently the Times-Union published an article based on reports of my testimony before an executive session of the House Committee on Un-American Activities which it seems to me could be damaging to the good name of Dr. Bernard Peters.

"I knew Dr. Peters not only as a brilliant student but as a man of strong moral principles and of high ethical standards.

"During those years his political views were radical. . . . This seemed to me not unnatural in a man who had suffered as he had at Nazi hands.

"I have never known Dr. Peters to commit a dishonorable act nor a disloyal one.

"Dr. Peters has recently informed me that I was right in be-

lieving that in the early Nazi days he had participated in the Communist movement in Germany, but that I was wrong in believing—as the article stated—that he had ever held a membership in the Communist party. . . .

"From the published article one might conclude that Dr. Peters had advocated the violent overthrow of the constitutional government of the U. S. He has given an eloquent denial of this in his published statement. I believe his statement, questions which were put to me by

"As indicated in the article the House committee with regard to Dr. Peters arose in part because of reports of discussions between me and the intelligence officers at Los Alamos.

"I wish to make public my profound regret that anything said in that context should have been so misconstrued and abused that it could damage Dr. Peters.

"Beyond this specific issue there is ground for another, more general and even graver concern. Political opinion, no matter how radical or how freely expressed, does not disqualify a scientist for a high career in science; it does not disqualify him as a teacher of science; it does not impugn his integrity nor his honor. . . ."