

Memorandum

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DATE: 4/30/64

Callahan	
Conrad	
DeLoach	
Felt	
Gale	
Rosen	
Sullivan	
Tavel	
Trotter	
Tele. Room	
Holmes	
Gandy	

TO : MR. TOLSON

FROM : A. H. Belmont

cc Mr. Belmont
Mr. Rosen
Mr. Malley
Mr. DeLoach
Mr. Sullivan

SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION

Inspector Malley and I met with Mr. Rankin of the President's Commission and two assistants, Samuel Stern and Howard Willens, at 11 am. today, as they said they wanted to check with us relative to the questions that would be addressed to the three FBI agents who are to appear before the Commission on 5/4 and 5/64.

They were advised that the agents could testify as to any knowledge they had of the Oswald case and any investigation they conducted, but would not be in a position to give opinions because our agents are charged with investigating and gathering facts, and not with rendering opinions.

They stated they desired to enter the Bureau investigative reports, prior to the assassination, on the record, through the testimony of these agents, and this raised the question as to whether information contained in these reports could be made public; for example, statements in one report that a Mrs. Taylor advised our agents that Oswald had beaten up Marina Oswald; and statements regarding Mrs. Marguerite Oswald being a loudmouth. They wondered if Mrs. Taylor would resent having her statements made public. I told them that these reports, of course, had not been prepared for public consumption; that, nevertheless, the Bureau was taking the position that, in view of the importance of this matter, we would leave it up to the Commission as to what should go on the public record.

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[Handwritten signatures and initials]

Mr. Tolson

As to all these items, I reiterated that the Director desired to cooperate to the fullest extent and in response to the Commission's request we had furnished these reports, and we would not take the position that something should be held back from the record if the Commission felt it was necessary to use it.

They said that these reports, prior to the assassination, served the best purpose in showing that the Bureau had no information prior to the assassination of the President that would indicate any potential for violence on Oswald's part, and it was for that reason they thought the reports should go on the record. I told them that we had given them our basic position, and that we would look over these reports to see whether there was any specific item that might cause a problem. We are looking these reports over, and in the absence of something which will cause a very real problem we will again advise Rankin that our position is as I stated to him today. If there is a real problem we will prepare a memorandum pointing it out to the Director.

FBI

Mr. Rankin then advised that their method of operation at the hearings is to introduce documents, et cetera, through a witness. He referred to the Bureau's letter of 4/6/64, wherein the Bureau answered some thirty questions posed by the Commission; also, he referred to the Bureau's letter of 3/31/64, referring to the Bureau's dissemination procedures both prior to and subsequent to the assassination. He also referred to the Director's affidavit, stating Oswald was never an informant of the Bureau. He was of the opinion that these documents could not be introduced through a field agent and would require an official of the Bureau to introduce them and answer questions concerning them. He wanted to know if I was available, and I told him I was, with the Director's permission.

Relative to our letter of 3/31/64 concerning dissemination criteria, Mr. Stern asked whether it would be all right to place on the record the change in our dissemination after the assassination. I told him most certainly; that we had given this information to the Commission and we stood behind it.

of information furnished.

At this point we launched into a discussion of the broadened criteria following the assassination, and I again discussed, as I had previously done with Willens and Stern when they visited the Bureau's Files Division, the problem of security versus individual rights, and our concern over whether the information we were furnishing the Secret Service would be handled properly, bearing in mind the recent action taken by the police in Chicago and the reverberations that could come from such actions. Mr. Rankin showed considerable interest in this discussion.

Mr. Tolson

FBI

I also discussed rather fully the Bureau's approach to security work and the requirement for good judgment, both in investigative procedures and the handling of security information. I pointed out that in every security investigation we have a reason for the investigation, and the type of investigation is based on this reason; that in the Oswald case we took it upon ourselves to interview him when he returned from the Soviet Union, for the purpose of seeing if he was under the control of the Soviets; that this was our interest and the reason for the investigation; that, although he pretended to head a New Orleans chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, actually there was no such chapter; that when he left New Orleans and we heard he had been in touch with the Soviet Embassy in Mexico, we located him again, in Dallas, and found he was doing menial work, of nonclassified nature, which again satisfied our interest, and nowhere had we learned of any potential for violence.

Mr. Rankin said that it would be of real value to the Commission to have the Bureau's position spelled out to the Commission on these points, as they made it clear just where Oswald fitted into the picture and as to the nature and scope of our investigation. He also thought it highly desirable that the Commission be advised of the delicacy of security investigations in a free society such as ours.

HENRY District Attorney - Dallas County
Mr. Willens then took up the matter of the Director's affidavit regarding Oswald not being an informant. The first two pages flatly deny that Oswald was an informant. The remainder deals with the allegations of Wade regarding the handling of Bureau informants, and Willens wondered whether this latter part should go on the record, as it went into the matter of Wade serving as an agent in South America; payments to informants; and into the fact that Wade was turned down when he sought reinstatement in the Bureau, and why. DC 6-10-64

Mr. Rankin said the affidavit should stand as written; that the Commission asked for the information, based on a question raised by Wade, and if Wade did not like the answer that was Wade's problem.

I told Mr. Rankin that this affidavit had been prepared at the Commission's request, and the Bureau stands behind it. I reiterated that Mr. Hoover has taken the position that the Bureau will provide the information requested by the Commission, and does not desire to request any changes or deletions in the material the Commission feels necessary to use for the record. Mr. Rankin said that there will be material, of classified nature, which will be filed in archives under appropriate restrictions as to access, but this is a matter the Commission is going to have to decide and be responsible for.

SECRET

During one point in the conversation the Commission members brought up the memoranda of the Dallas police officers regarding the alleged statement by Hosty that Oswald had a potential for violence. Rankin indicated rather clearly that he thought the police memoranda were "rigged." I told him I did not know; that the only thing I did know was that Hosty could not have properly made this statement as neither he nor the Bureau had any information indicating potential violence on the part of Oswald. I pointed out that our Dallas Office had been in constant touch with the Dallas police and we had never heard of these memoranda before. Mr. Rankin advised that it was peculiar to him that such memoranda should appear at this late date. He tied this in with the damning police testimony against Ruby, which had not appeared in interviews with FBI agents or in reports by the police officers to their superiors after the assassination.

Mr. Rankin advised that, in the event the Director approves Belmont testifying before the Commission as to the Bureau's position in these matters, it would not be necessary for the Director to appear, unless of course the Director felt it desirable to do so. He advised that prior to my testimony, the staff would like to get together with me again to go over the format of the testimony and the types of questions that would be asked, although of course the Commission members would be free to ask whatever questions they desired.

Should the Director desire me to handle this before the Commission, I will so advise Rankin.

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