

MEMO FOR THE FILES

Nov. 17, 1959

Pricilla Johnson of NANA asked me today about Oswald. I gave her a general run down of the outlines of the case as I know they were known to the public, suggesting that she also check with Korengold for any factual details I might have omitted and which were already generally known.

She told me that on Sunday, May 15, she had spent several hours talking with Oswald and that she had left it with him that she was available if he wanted somebody to talk to again.

Her general impression of Oswald was the same as ours has been. His naïf/vete about what he can expect here is balanced by a rather carefully worked out set of answers and a careful reserve about saying things he feels he shouldn't. He made one interesting comment to her to the effect that he had never in all his life talked to anyone so long about himself. She remarked that although he used long words and seemed in some ways well read, he often used words incorrectly, as though he had learned them from a dictionary. He told her that his Soviet citizenship was still under consideration, but that the Soviets had already assured him that he could stay here as a resident alien if he so desired. They are also looking into the possibility of getting him into a school. He said that in any case he would never return to the United States. He also said that he had had a dependency discharge from the Marines to care for his mother, but had come right here instead. He said that his reason for taking this step was that he had seen imperialism in action against minority groups; to wit, Communists, negroes, and workers. Miss Johnson asked him whether it had occurred to him

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to desert from the Marines, since he had apparently intended so extreme a step as this anyway. He said that he did not wish to do anything "illegal". It was her opinion that he might have been consciously or not trying to leave a loophole for himself. Along this line she had also told her that he did not intend to come back to the Embassy, ^{yet} He seemed very much annoyed at the Embassy for having prevented him from formally giving up his citizenship.

Miss Johnson was particularly interested in picking me up on what she called a discrepancy in his statements; at different times he had said that the Embassy had not allowed him to give up his citizenship because it had been too busy and again on another occasion because we could not do it until he had heard from the Soviets, ^{about their decision.} I explained that the law required that we not withhold the right to give up citizenship, but that the regulations and common sense ^{also required that we ~~xxxx~~ be sure that someone was not going to take any such serious step without due consideration and understanding of what he was about.} I said that we had duly informed Oswald that he had a right to come in and give up his citizenship.

I also pointed out to Miss Johnson that there was a thin line somewhere between her duty as a correspondent and as an American. I mentioned Mr. Korengold as a man who seemed to have known this difference pretty well. I said that if someone could persuade Oswald at least to delay before taking the final plunge on his American citizenship, or for that matter Soviet citizenship, they would be doing him a favor and ^{doubtless} ~~xxxx~~ the USA as well. She seemed to understand this point. I believe that she is going to try and write a story on what prompts a man to do such a thing.

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PS (11/19/59) Priscilla J. told me since that O. has been told he will be leaving the hotel at the end of this week; that he will be trained in electronics; that she has asked him to keep in touch with her; that he has showed some slight signs of disillusionment with the SU, but that his "hate" for the US remains ~~NOT~~ strong although she cannot fathom the reason.

McV