#27

Rankin papers
Box 18
F. 291

March 20, 1964

MEMORANDUM OF INTERVIEW

On March 20, 1964, I interviewed Robert Bouck, head of the Protective Research Section (PRS) of the Secret Service, in the presence of Inspector Tom Kelly of the Secret Service. I explained that the Commission would probably desire to take the testimony of Mr. Bouck at a later date, and that I wanted to meet with him several times to define the topics as to which he would be examined before the Commission.

We examined the various filing systems of PRS. There are the following files:

(a) Basic Files. These contain the names of and data on some 50,000 persons. PRS learns of them either through their own efforts to contact the President by letter, visit, or the like, to communicate some form of threat, or because they have otherwise come to the attention of PRS, as on the advice of another Agency, as persons who constitute a potential threat to the President. Mr. Bouck estimates that, before the assassination, some 90% of the names resulted from PRS's own activities and only about 10% as a result of liaison advice.

(b) Check-Up Control Files. When PRS learns of an individual whose conduct should be scrutinized further, it requests an investigation by the cognizant field office. If the field office determines that the subject warrants continuing review, the field office sends a check-up control card to PRS. The field office thereupon has the responsibility of

reviewing the case at least every six months and PRS maintains the check-up control card as part of its tickler system. (A determination by the field office not to set up this check-up routine for an individual is reviewed, and often overruled by PRS.) At the time of the assassination, there were some 400 cards in the category. Bouck believes that none of the cards covered anyone in Dallas, but is checking this.

(c) Trip Files. This is an index of about 100 names, set up on a geographical field office basis. At the time of the assassination, there were two subjects in this file who lived in the jurisdiction of the Houston office and none who lived in the jurisdiction of the Dallas office. This file contains those persons who are regarded as potential threats to the President, and whose residence is rather well fixed.

(d) Album. This contains the photographs and identification of from ten to twenty individuals who are regarded as clear risks to the President and who do not have a fixed place of residence. Both characteristics are usually involved in the album subjects, although a serious enough risk would be included even if his place of residence were fixed.

None of these files includes any individual in complete custody. Instead, a system is established for immediate notification to the Secret Service by the institution at which the person is kept immediately upon his release or escape. Bouck explained that a main goal of PRS is to try to neutralize serious risks by obtaining their removal from society, by imprisonment if they have committed an offense such as threating the President, by confinement in a hospital if they are sufficiently disturbed. Bouck agreed to survey his records to try to determine how many persons have been institutionalized over the past three or four years in Dallas,

and in Texas generally, under this system.

In preparation for testifying before the Commission, Bouck will prepare actual case histories of persons in the various files, with any identification deleted, so that he can illustrate the operation of the file system and the cases of persons that fall into each of the various categories.

The Secret Service also relies to a large extent on advance notice to locate those individuals in an area that the President intends to visit who may present a threat. When such persons are identified, through liaison with local law enforcement and through the investigative efforts of the local Secret Service office, appropriate measures are taken to establish surveillance over any person who presents a significant threat, and to identify all persons suspected of presenting any danger to the Secret Service and local law enforcement personnel responsible for protection on the trip. The advance work for Dallas led to the identification of a number of persons who had been obstreperous during the visit of Ambassador Stevenson; these persons were put under surveillance and their names were added to the basic PRS files. Bouck's response to the question why these individuals were not identified and added to the files at the time of the Stevenson demonstrations is that they were not regarded as of general interest to PRS until the President planned a trip to Dallas.

We discussed PRS liaison relationships with other Federal agencies. Bouck described these relationships as excellent and very intimate. For example, the FBI had an agent designated as liaison who visited with Bouck almost daily. Bouck explained that, at the time of the assassination, there had been no effort to develop explicit principles covering the

liaison relationships beyond an effort to establish the general understanding that the other agency would supply to the Secret Service information regarding any individual who appeared in any way to constitute a threat to the President.

I then asked whether PRS would have expected to have been informed under this understanding of an individual like Oswald, and what Secret Service would have done in Dallas had they been informed about Oswald. Both Bouck and Kelly said that they would have expected to have been informed about Oswald, since they would have regarded him as a potential threat to the President, in view of the available information as to his defection, political pursuits, Marine Corps training, job and family instability, FPCC activities, New Orleans misdemeanor arrest, trip to Mexico City and visa efforts there, and, most importantly, employment in the TSBD. I asked whether their answer would be the same if his employment at TSBD had not been known. They replied that even without this information they would still have expected to have heard about Oswald. If they had learned everything except employment at TSBD, but knew of his return to Dallas, they would have attempted to locate him. (They would not have tried to locate him if his last known location was New Orleans.) As soon as they learned about his employment at TSBD they would have arranged to keep him under surveillance, either by a Secret Service agent or a Dallas policeman, during the President's stay in Dallas.

How do they explain the FBI's failure to advise of Oswald? They say only that the FBI must not have regarded him as presenting any danger to the President. This does not seem unreasonable to them, although they admit the incongruity of saying at the same time that Oswald would have seemed a sufficient threat to PRS. I asked whether

they expected the FBI to advise of any member of an extreme political group, such as every member of the Communist Party. They do not expect to receive such advice, but would, for example, expect to be informed of the activities of each member of the Porto Rican Nationalist Movement in the continental United States. (They had not been advised of the Porto Rican Nationalists who attempted to invade Blair House, although they believe the FBI had some information on these individuals.) They now receive automatically information on the Porto Rican Nationalist Movement, and will undoubtedly receive reports on defector returnees and members of the FPCC after Oswald. They will think about this some more for further discussion with me.

It was left that Bouck will take several days to check his records to develop the statistical and illustrative material described above. I will meet again with him and Kelly by approximately March 24 or 25 to continue this review, preparatory to testimony before the Commission within the next few weeks.

Samuel A. Stern