

Rankin #1
the Jan 21st

we
session

Is key re:

How the we
handled

Marina
or Rankin
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Marina

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File - Marina Oswald

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his since-assassinated brother, was in the files, where it stayed.

Is it not perplexing that these busy men who spend so much of their time flying assumed, with the Secret Service, that a potential assassin had to be within walking distance to endanger the President?

"Some comments" would have been "helpful".

Despite its best, if "top secret", efforts, the members did blurt out some comments the Commission did not share with the public in its official Report. One of the more interesting came from the man reputedly the best Congressional friend of the CIA, the one who shepherds their unaccounted for funds through Congress without himself knowing what they total or are for, where they are hidden or anything else about them or the agency or what it really does.

Dulles had a thing on Oswald in Russia, his idea, as it was in other areas, coming from his career, where everything can be explained by the charge of Communism. He, therefore, said of this material and the understanding of it the Commission should have what prompted an astounding comment from best CIA-friend Russell that was never again uttered, questioned or heeded:

MR. DULLES: I would like to get that material into the hands of the CIA as soon as possible to explain the Russian parts.

SEN. RUSSELL: I think you've got more faith in them than I have. I think they'll doctor anything they hand to us.

Then there was other comment, such as what amounts to the admission that a professional anti-Communist was, in effect, preparing Marina's incredible and impossible testimony while she was in Secret Service custody. She had been virtually a prisoner for the three months prior to her production before the Commission. She was its first and major witness, even though she was a witness to nothing. This tidbit slipped out twice on a

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single day, January 21, and was then dropped.

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McCloy asked, "Do we talk to Mrs. Oswald and what is this we see in the newspapers about Mrs. Oswald being examined by the Commission?"

Rankin's answer was, "We are planning to examine her and it is on the agenda."

McCloy changed his rejoinder in midsentence: "How people like Isaac Levine - then about visiting the scene of the crime."

(The Commission often talked about visiting the scene of the crime, as it should have, immediately; but one way or another, Rankin or Dulles talked them out of it until late, May 24, 1964, just before the time it expected to complete its work.)

Mention of Isaac Don Levine in this "Top Secret" session and in this fashion interests me in particular. A friend of his who then was the executive editor of a publishing house to which I had submitted WHITEWASH in 1965 asked me if I'd object to Levine reading it. This executive's written opinion of my book is this:

Personally, I think it could have a very big sale in this country ... In Europe, where everyone believes there was a conspiracy, there is every reason to expect the book would be a bestseller.

With this advance prediction of a tidy profit, based on publishing considerations only, from the man whose job it was to know, who had read the book, the decision was adverse. Isaac Don Levine gets around.

The second time McCloy mentioned his name, it was to say, "I think this fellow Levine is trying to pep it up." Rankin was ever ready to condition Commission thinking and steer it away from its proper course. He deprecated this way, "I think they have a little more see (sis) in and all those things in it." Dulles then wanted to know, "Is he in touch with her, closely in touch with her? Isaac Don Levine?"

McCloy "heard this through Life Magazine and they were throwing in

this note she was saying, giving evidence that she was going to put evidence in this thing he was a Soviet agent."

Dulles's revelation of friendship with the man whose career is based on anti-Communism is not surprising for the former head of the CIA, who has an identical career! "I can get him in and have a friendly talk. I have known him."

Dulles never did say what there was to talk about. Presumably, it was about Oswald as a Russian agent, seemingly a forthcoming Levine-Marina manufacture. All available indications are to the contrary, which can explain Dulles's indirection. He, above all, was anxious that there be no talk of Oswald as any kind of an agent.

Wise old Richard Russell drew upon his rich experience in the Senate, where he headed military affairs and as a lap dog watchdogged the CIA: "That will blow the lid if she testifies to that."

The only comment was the immediate one of the chairman: "All right."

Nonetheless, this Commission took every fantasy Marina wove as the truth, never asked her or him of Isaac Don Levine's contributions to her knowledge and recollections and, in fact, largely based its Report on her. She was, far and away, the major witness in length of her testimony. It and she ran on for days and days.

There was no further discussion, here or elsewhere, of Levine or how what lid would "blow off". Russell's observation, more of a threat, remains ambiguous. Did he mean off the story of the assassination? That is as unlikely as the Russians having anything to do with Oswald, although there are other, if unsubstantial, hints of his working for them. Did he mean of Marina's credibility? If so, it was too much. She never was credible. The Commission knew she changed her stories to suit its varying conveniences, swore to what was not true.

Or is it possible Russell had the deepest misgivings about a really professional, competent propagandist having access to the mind and memory of the Commission's star witness before it did? If he did not, he should have. I think he did, too late and too little prepared. There was a mysterious Sunday hearing, in the U. S. Naval Air Station at Dallas, on September 6, 1964, when most of the Report was written and set in type. The Commission had examined Marina often, but always in Washington, always with maximum press attention. The first time, Russell had offered to use his influence to have her flown up in secrecy and privacy in a Jet-Star military plane - not to save pennies, but to hide her until she testified. Hiding its hearing in a military establishment, the Commission avoided attention when Russell was concerned about her credibility. Russell was hardly prepared for his important task, having nothing but warranted suspicion. But when he began really to question her for the first time, Marina began to fall apart. She changed her story, flustered, stumbled - had she been in a court of law, she would have fallen flat on her face. In a secret hearing, she was safe. The authors of the Report selected what suited their purposes and ignored what did not.

There remains the unasked, hence, obviously unanswered, question what was an intelligence-connected man like Isaac Don Levine doing with clandestine access to the star witness when the Secret Service had her in protective custody? What was Dulles's friend and compatriot up to? How, indeed, could such a thing happen at all and what did it do to the entire investigation that then had not yet really begun?

Whatever this is and means, it is consistent with the combined and separate misdirections of Commission interest and attention by the former chief lawyer for the United States Government, former Solicitor General J. Lee Rankin, and the former head of the CIA, with which, without doubt,

Oswald had been connected, beginning with his directorship, Allen Dulles.

One of Rankin's neater plays was to threaten the Commission with the prospect Marina would flee the country were she released from what the Secret Service sugar-coated as "protective custody". It was captivity, to keep her away from friends and good advice, from anyone who could learn the truth from her before she had the testimony expected of her drilled into her. There is a lengthy exposition of this in the chapters "Scheherazade" of WHITEWASH II and "The Oswalds' Government Relations" of WHITEWASH. There is no doubt that this young woman was taken into captivity immediately and given the choice between deportation to the Russia she had been so anxious to leave and "cooperation", for which, she was given to understand immediately, she could remain in the United States and also would be enriched. Her enrichment and her dropped opposition to speaking to the FBI began simultaneously. The Secret Service lined it all up, including even her business agent.

Rankin knew the last thing Marina wanted to do was leave the United States. The Secret Service and the FBI knew it, for they were in physical and exclusive control of her and had made the deal, before her murdered husband was stiff. I also exposed this, and the accompanying inhuman, prolonged, forced grilling they subjected her to the afternoon of his murder. Marina accepted the government deal because, above all, she wanted to remain in the United States. It is for this reason alone that she consented to see and be interviewed by the FBI, because she hated them for what she and Lee believed the FBI had done to him and them, getting him fired from every job he got. (This, incidentally, is consistent with keeping economic pressure on him so he'd be more dependent on handouts from government spooks.)

The Commission members should have known this - would have had they

been in a position to do their own work. Had they been alert earlier during the January 21 session, they would have recognized what Rankin was telling them about Levine and the literary properties was inconsistent with the scare he threw into them.

After chitchat about the prospects for Marina's literary properties (Dulles thought they would make a movie, with Fox interested), Rankin acknowledged a package had been put together. He did not acknowledge what his files and a special Secret Service investigation of the hidden scandal showed, that Marina was being milked by her associates as no prize cow ever was.

That deal cost her 35 percent, a rather high commission but exactly what kindly, public-spirited, Ruby-befriending Larry Schiller got for his package from the man who shot Oswald. With Marina, the cut was 15 percent to James Martin, the man to whose motel the Secret Service had taken her; 10 percent to a lawyer; and 10 percent to brother-in-law Robert Oswald. If there is any doubt what skills Robert took from the brickyard for which he worked that made him worth this considerable sum, Rankin dispelled them:

(The lawyer) is apparently in on the deal, and we know he has a percentage in it, along with the lawyer (sic) and along with Robert Oswald, the brother, and we think they put Robert in there in order to get him to cooperate, and try to get her to do things they want her to do in connection with this matter ...

Robert's initial service seems to have been to separate Marina from Ruth Paine, who had befriended her and with whom Marina could communicate in Russian.

Later that session, after discussion of Marina's constitutional rights, in which no one had other than a pretended interest, this was said, beginning with mention of the efforts of the American Civil Liberties Union to see her and satisfy itself that she knew and was enjoying all her rights:

Sen. Russell. I don't think they have a right to invade her privacy if she doesn't want to talk to them. She has got her own lawyer.

The Chairman. She doesn't have to talk to them at all.

Sen. Russell. I don't know that we have her in our custody, why should we get into that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rankin. We do have a little problem because the Secret Service came to us and said, "Shall we quit our surveillance over her?"

Sen. Russell. Oh, no, we can't do that.

Mr. Rankin. I said we can't do that because she would slip right across the border and be gone, and if it got down to that issue, I suppose they would say we told them to stay there, blame it on us.

Mr. McCloy. Is that something we have a responsibility to tell the ACLU about?

Mr. Rankin. No.

Mr. McCloy. She is represented by counsel, she is herself satisfied with this?

Mr. Rankin. Oh, yes.

Mr. McCloy. Katzenbach talked to her about it, told me he talked to her about it. She had no objection, she seemed to like the idea, as a matter of fact, because she was being protected.

(Fascinating how, in two successive sentences, Russell first claimed, "I don't know that we have her in custody" and then, when

by RAB
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relinquishing it was suggested, exclaimed, "Oh, no, we can't do that.")

Katzenbach, the FBI, the Department of Justice, they were in on everything, the Commission's eyes, ears, mind and mouth.

This was a trick Rankin pulled off to guarantee that no one would have access to Marina before she testified. She appeared before the Commission within a few days. She straightened out the matter of her repetitious lying by saying now that she was under oath and subject to penalty, she would lie no more. This is a new legal accreditation of a witness that satisfied the legal luminaries. She then complained of being under virtual arrest, and the Commission had no choice but to remove the burden from her. Of course, by then it had her testimony. To put it less gently, they had her statement under oath, and she was under constraint not to say otherwise under threat of a perjury rap, as she well understood.

Marina, now rich, then on her way, never had any intention or desire to flee. She subjected herself to what few people will accept just to be able to remain here.

This was one of Rankin's more polished performances, of a style and competence befitting the capability of a former Solicitor General of the United States and somewhat more professional, in its category, than his services and successes on the Commission, if one assumes his major obligation there was to run the Commission, develop the fact of the assassination and get an honest Report about it written.

One of the more fascinating evidences of Dulles's persistence in attaching Communism as an issue to the Commission and its work is his repeated, really very persistent, effort to make it seem that, when anything critical of the government's handling of the assassination investigation appeared in the papers, it was all part of a Communist conspiracy. All of