

14

MEMORANDUM

January 24, 1964

Key is Smith
P-4A

Rankin Papers
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To: Mr. J. Lee Rankin

From: William T. Coleman, Jr., and W. David Slawson

SUBJECT: Oswald's Foreign Activity -- Statement of Objectives and Problems Based on Review to Date of the Relevant Materials.

Oswald was in Russia from September or October 1959 to May 30, 1962, having left the United States for Russia on September 21, 1959, and returned to the United States on June 13, 1962. After returning to the United States, Oswald and his wife had contact with the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D. C. In addition, Oswald entered Mexico on September 26, 1963, and returned to the United States on October 3, 1963. Finally, part of Oswald's military service was spent in Japan and the Philippines during 1957 and 1958.

The basic reason for inquiry into the Russian trip is to determine whether Oswald received any training in sabotage, assassination, spying, etc. or was enlisted by the Russian Secret Service for service in the United States. Relevant in the foregoing inquiry also is the contact with the Soviet Embassy after his return to the United States. The basic reason for inquiry into the trip to Mexico is to determine whether Oswald received any instructions in connection with the assassination of President Kennedy or for any other reason. In addition, even if no such instructions were given, Oswald's action or statements in Mexico may shed light on his personal motive in killing the President. The reason for inquiry into Oswald's Japanese and Philippine trip is to determine, if possible at this late date, whether he might have been contacted by Communist agents. This last line of inquiry suggests itself because it is clear that Oswald had intended to go to Russia prior to the time he was released from the United States Marine Corps.

Obviously, if any of the above lines of inquiry reveal enlistment by a foreign government, it supplies the motive for the assassination.

The difficulty with inquiry with respect to the Russian trip is that efforts to obtain further information would necessarily be based upon the cooperation of the Soviet government. Obviously, if the Soviet government was in any way involved, it would not be willing to give the information. Even if the Soviet government was not involved, there would be great reluctance to give the information. Moreover, even to ask certain questions might raise political problems.

Likewise, a complete investigation of what Oswald did in Mexico would require cooperation of the Soviet Embassy in Mexico and also of the Cuban Embassy. Once again there are understandable reasons why this cooperation may not be forthcoming. Some pertinent aspects of his Mexican trip, however, could probably be investigated without Russian or Cuban assistance. For example, at the time Oswald made his trip to Mexico he was apparently extremely aroused about Cuba and actively promoting the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and it seems not unlikely that he would have used the opportunity of being in Mexico City to try to make contact with pro-Castro or communist organizations at the University of Mexico or elsewhere in the Mexico City area. Inquiries directed towards such organizations ought to be made.

I

Some Unresolved Questions in Re Oswald's Stay in Russia

A few of the unresolved problems in connection with the Russian trip include the following:

1. To what extent was Oswald given preferential treatment in Russia, and why was he given such preferential treatment?

Oswald himself acknowledged that the 5000 rubles he received from the Soviet "Red Cross" in late 1959 and the extra 700 rubles per month he received from the same source thereafter constituted special treatment. He felt they were payment for "denouncing the United States" in November 1959, when he sought to expatriate himself, and an "implied promise" that so long as he lived in Russia, life would be good. (FBI Exhibit 37). If this confession of Oswald's is authentic and sincere, a portion of the above question is answered. Still unanswered are what the Russians actually intended, as opposed to what Oswald thought they intended, by the gifts and what other "gifts" there may have been. For example:

(a) Oswald stated that from January 13, 1960, to May 18, 1962, he worked as a "checker" (officially, "adjuster first class") in the Minsk Radio and Television Factory, a job he described as "very easy". (FBI Exhibit 36 and "Soviet Work Book" referred to on page 57 of FBI Supplemental Report.) Obviously, we would like to know exactly what he did and also the type of work generally done at the factory. In one of his writings, Oswald described it "as being a major producer of electronic parts." He said he worked in the "experimental shop" of that plant and there were 58 workers including the "Party Shop Secretary who is a Communist worker." (FBI Statements, p. 712). In connection with his work, Oswald stated that he received approximately 700 rubles per month. After the currency revaluation, this became, according to

Marina's testimony, 80-90 rubles per month. Marina, on the other hand, who on paper had better training and a more significant job, a registered pharmacist, received only 45 rubles per month. Marina also stated that she knew doctors who earned only 65 rubles per month. If the foregoing figures are correct, some doubt is raised whether Oswald was merely working as a mechanic, and/or that a large portion of his salary was in reality a gift from the Russian state.

(b) Marina's statements reveal that the uncle with whom she lived in Minsk was a graduate engineer and held a fairly important executive position, and one of Oswald's associates was the son of a general who had occupied a significant position in the second World War. (FBI Statements, page 258.) These seem to be fairly high-level associates for a general factory laborer, especially one who was, according to Marina's later testimony, "not popular". (New York Times interview, January 19, page 10E.)

(c) Marina's relatives' living quarters in Minsk and Oswald's quarters in the same city seemed to be on the plush side by Russian standards.

2. Oswald stated that he had received 5000 rubles in a lump sum plus an additional 700 rubles per month from the "Red Cross" because he had denounced the United States and as an implied assurance that for so long as he lived in Russia, life would be good. He said the payments stopped only when he indicated that he would like to return to the United States. So far we have record of only one or two statements of Oswald denouncing the United States. A line of inquiry would be whether he periodically made statements to the press which were published in various countries during the time he was working at the radio factory.

3. A check should be made of the significance of the use of the expression "Red Cross", i.e., whether it was a euphemism understood by Marina and Oswald, or whether it might even have been a code word. Oswald has stated that he got the 700 rubles from the Red Cross but actually he knew that it was coming from the MVD. (Exhibit 37). In addition, two "Red Cross" representatives met him upon his arrival in Minsk and apparently assisted his settling there. (FBI Exhibit 36). In an undated letter which Marina says she got on the day Oswald said he shot at General Walker, Oswald states, *inter alia*, "We have friends here [i.e., in the United States]. The Red Cross also will help you. (Red Cross in English)." (FBI Exhibit 32). This raises the additional question whether the American Red Cross, or at least its branches which assist immigrants (if any such exist), might not be infiltrated by Russian intelligence. An inquiry along these lines would of course be an extremely delicate matter.

4. If Oswald's "Historic Diary" (FBI Exhibit 36) was not written contemporaneously, we would have important grounds for suspecting its authenticity or at least its accuracy. Tests to be run by appropriate experts on this document should include:

(a) A check to determine whether the reference to a hotel bill of 2200 rubles and a railroad ticket costing 150 rubles in the January 7 entry are consistent with the timing of the Russian currency reform.

(b) Ink and paper tests to determine whether the daily entries were written at different times, chronologically, and whether they were written with American or Russian materials.

5. Oswald's writings and Marina's testimony contain references to Oswald being away from his Minsk home occasionally for trips or meetings with the "Minsk Gun Club." If Russian Intelligence was training Oswald without Marina's knowledge, this might have been the cover for doing so. Any light that the CIA could shed on this would of course be helpful, and Marina herself should be questioned again on this point, in more detail.

6. Russia never granted citizenship to Oswald, despite his strong urging and despite the obvious propaganda advantage granting him such "full asylum" would have involved. A Russian Embassy official in Washington, D. C., has been quoted as saying the grounds for refusing citizenship to Oswald were his "instability." The State Department should be asked for a memo on this, in particular, whether the refusal to grant citizenship under these circumstances is usual or unusual. If it turns out to have been a deviation from normal practice, it might be evidence of an intent on Russia's part that Oswald be sent back to the U. S. later, for a purpose.

II

Unresolved Inquiries in Re Oswald's Stay in Mexico.

The trip to Mexico suggests inquiries along the following lines:

1. Establishment of the earliest date when there was public knowledge that President Kennedy was going to Dallas, Texas, not only in Dallas and New Orleans, but also any place where the news could have reached Cuban or Russian sources. The material we have examined so far establishes the earliest date in Dallas as September 26, 1963 (Secret Service Exhibit 6A).

2. An establishment of the earliest knowledge of the route that the motorcade would use in Dallas, Texas. The material we have examined so far establishes November 19, 1963 as the earliest release of this date in Dallas.

3. What induced Oswald to go to Mexico?
4. Did he visit the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City?
5. If he visited it, whom did he see there?
6. In connection with 4 and 5 above, the last document in FBI Exhibit Number 57, Soviet Embassy file re Oswald, might be of some significance. The letter from Oswald to Consular Division, Embassy U.S.S.R., Washington, D. C., is dated November 9, 1963. The relevant part of the letter is:

"This is to inform you of recent events _____ meetings with comrade Kustin (preceding words not legible) in the Embassy of the Soviet Union, Mexico City, Mexico.

"I was unable to remain in Mexico indefinitely because of my Mexican visa restrictions which was for 15 days only. I could not take a chance on requesting a new visa unless I used my real name, so I returned to the United States.

"I had not planned to contact the Soviet embassy in Mexico so they were unprepared, had I been able to reach the Soviet Embassy in Havana as planned, the embassy there would have had time to complete our business.

"Of course the Soviet embassy was not at fault, they were, as I say unprepared, the Cuban consulate was guilty of a gross breach of regulations, I am glad he has since been replaced."

Attached to the letter is an envelope the postdate of which at first looks like November 2, but on closer inspection it is probably November 12.

7. The last quoted paragraph of the aforementioned letter of November 9, 1963, whether the person who was the Cuban Consulate in Mexico City on October 3, 1963, was in fact replaced between October 3, 1963, the date on which Oswald left Mexico, and November 9, 1963, the date on which the letter was purportedly written. If so, we should try to find out how Oswald got this information and how it came to him so quickly.

8. So far, all of the materials which we have read are relatively blank on what Oswald did in Mexico. Other than the time and means of his arrival and departure, we know of only two occurrences in the approximately eight days he spent in the country. He registered at a "small second-class hotel, called the Hotel del Comercio in Mexico on September 27, 1963," and apparently left on October 2, 1963. Second, he visited the Cuban Embassy, where he asked for a Cuban visa for the purpose of

travelling there on his way to Russia, and was refused. The Cuban clerk said she refused on the grounds that a visa for his purpose could not be issued without the Russians first issuing a visa for entry to their country. (FBI Report, page 70). Any and all leads which might close the gaps in our knowledge ought to be followed. In particular, as was already mentioned on the second page of this memorandum, inquiry should be made of any pro-Castro, Communist or other similar groups in the Mexico City area as to whether Oswald was in contact with them during this trip. In addition, Marina should be questioned further on anything Oswald might have said on his return which would give any clue on who besides the Cuban Embassy he might have seen in Mexico.

III

Oswald's Relationship With the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D. C.

A third line of inquiry should be Marina's and Oswald's relationship with the Soviet Embassy in Washington. Oswald arrived in the United States on June 13, 1962, and by July 1, 1962, Marina had written a letter to the Soviet Embassy in Washington asking how she should register for her "resident permit." An investigation should be made to determine whether this is the normal procedure whenever a Soviet citizen takes up residency in the United States, particularly where, as in the case of Marina, her American residence was assumed to be permanent. (We should check the terms under which she left the Soviet Union as to whether her leaving was considered permanent.) We also assume that someone at the CIA has, and will continue, to check each letter between the Oswalds and the Soviet Embassy, as well as those between the Oswalds and the Soviet citizens, to see if there is any possibility that they were written in code, likewise for the letters between Oswald and the various American Revolutionary and/or front organizations.

IV

Information to be Obtained from the Soviet Government.

Of course, one of the immediate projects that we should turn our attention to is the request which we are to make of the Soviet government for additional information. The nature of the letter will be finally resolved on political considerations, we have no doubt, but some of the information we would like includes the following:

1. In FBI Exhibit Number 57, in a letter dated July 9, 1962, from N. Reznichenko, Chief of the Consular Section in the Washington Russian Embassy, Marina was asked to fill out the form card No. 118. In a letter dated August 15, 1962, to N. Reznichenko, Marina states that she sent the form card No. 118. In the material turned over to us, there is no form card No. 118.

2. The file which the Soviet government would have on its relationships with Lee Oswald during the time he was in Russia.

3. The file which the Soviet Union would have on Lee Oswald's work record while at the factory in Minsk.

4. The file which the Soviet Union would have on the letters and other documents which Marina and Oswald submitted to the Soviet Union to get permission to leave the Soviet Union in 1962.

5. Is there a Comrade Kontin in the Embassy of the Soviet Union in Mexico City, what are his duties and what contact, if any, did he have with Lee Oswald?

6. Any file which the Soviet Union would have in connection with Lee Oswald's visit to Mexico.

7. The Soviet Union's explanation for the payments which Lee Oswald received while in Russia.

V

Related Areas of Inquiry to Which We Do Not Intend to Give First-Priority Attention.

There are two other areas of inquiry which in part deal with Oswald's foreign activities but unless we have further instructions from you, we do not intend to make an intensive inquiry at this time. The sources of further factual investigation here do not threaten to disappear, as is the case in Mexico, for example, and we therefore feel we can explore these problems later. Also, to our mind, the possible errors, if any, in the State Department's handling of Oswald and Marina, are less important than the other aspects of the problem.

One question is how the State Department let Lee Oswald get back into the country, particularly when it is fairly clear that he had attempted to renounce his American citizenship. The State Department memorandum, on first reading at least, seems to explain this matter satisfactorily, but further analysis is probably in order. In particular, although the Department's action may have been proper under existing law, perhaps our final report could recommend amendments to the immigration statutes in this respect.

Secondly, in view of Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in 1959, we have some problem with the fact that when he applied for a new passport in September 1962, in New Orleans, Louisiana, he got it within a day and apparently there was nothing in his file in Washington which should have caused the issuer to be alerted.

VI

Miscellaneous

The State Department should be requested to present an analysis of what if any motives the Russian or Cuban governments might have had on or shortly before November 22, 1963, for wanting President Kennedy assassinated, or -- what may be more likely -- what motives certain factions in these governments might have had to bring about the President's death. For example, it is conceivable that the "conservative" faction in the internal power struggle known to be going on in the Kremlin might have felt that the growing rapport between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev was a threat to their ambition to return to power, either because the rapport would reflect too favorably on Khrushchev or because it might in their opinion mislead Khrushchev into acting to Russia's disadvantage.

In addition, we would like to know why the Secret Service's "PMS" files, in view of Oswald's history, didn't contain him in some category as a potentially dangerous person?

Review Report
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F-28 #5