

BLAKEY NARRATION: RUSSIA

Friday, September 15, 1978

Within hours of the arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald for the assassination of President Kennedy, officials began to speculate about the significance of Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in the fall of 1959 and his activities in that country until returning to the United States in June 1962. Specifically, the troubling question was asked whether Oswald had been enlisted by the Soviet secret police, ^{THE DREADED} ~~OF~~ KGB.

U. S. - Soviet relations had been turbulent during the Kennedy presidency. There had been major confrontations - over Berlin, where the wall had come to symbolize the barrier between the two super powers; and over Cuba, where the emplacement of Soviet missiles had nearly triggered World War III.

A nuclear test-ban treaty in August 1963 had seemed to signal detente, but in November, tension was building again, as the communists harassed American troop movements to and from West Berlin. And Cuba was as much an issue as ever. In Miami, on November 18, Kennedy vowed the U. S. would not countenance the establishment of another Cuba in the western hemisphere.

The Warren Commission considered Soviet complicity in the assassination and concluded there was no evidence of it. In

its report, the Commission noted that the same conclusion had been reached by Secretary of State Rusk and Secretary of Defense McNamara, among others. Rusk testified before the Commission on June 10, 1964:

I have seen no evidence that would indicate to me that the Soviet Union considered that it had any interest in the removal of President Kennedy...I can't see how it could be to the interest of the Soviet Union to make any such effort.

Then, in February 1964, a Russian saying that he was a KGB agent sought asylum in the U. S. and seemed to answer the question by categorically denying Oswald had been connected with the KGB. According to Yuri Nosenko, the self-proclaimed former KGB officer, he had been assigned in 1959 and 1963 to the KGB's American Tourist Section. This assignment, he said, had afforded him an opportunity to review Oswald's KGB file in those years.

^{Nevertheless}
~~But~~ Nosenko's assertion did not end the mystery. In fact, it only tended to complicate it, because some officials of the Central Intelligence Agency doubted Nosenko was a bona fide defector. Some went so far as to ^{suggest} ~~suspect~~ his defection was a KGB disinformation mission, an effort to mislead the American government.

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RXX?

Beginning in April 1964, hostile interrogations of Nosenko were approved and initiated. He was cut off from the world and confined to a single room. Every movement he made was monitored.

The hostile interrogations continued for over three years. Eventually, Nosenko was released from confinement, and a senior official was assigned to interview him anew. This time, interviews were conducted in a more friendly atmosphere. The official ultimately wrote a report detailing his conclusions. At the termination of this year-long process, it was decided that Nosenko was bona fide after all. He was given a substantial sum of money and hired as a CIA consultant, a position he holds to this day.

In its investigation of the Kennedy assassination, the Warren Commission was aware of the Nosenko issue, but it was able to make little of it and opted not to refer to it in its report. News accounts of the Nosenko matter have not been particularly informative, owing to the limited nature of the generally classified information that they were reporting. A book by Edward J. Epstein, Legend, the Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald, published in early 1978 did raise some questions about

Nosenko's information on Oswald, though Epstein did not have complete access to all of the FBI and CIA files on Nosenko. Apparently, he depended on second-hand accounts.

The ^{evidence} testimony to be taken today is directed toward the Select Committee resolving a twofold issue with regard to Nosenko. First, are his statements about Oswald credible? If so, the issue of Soviet involvement in the assassination is moot. If not, the converse does not necessarily follow. Nosenko can be a bona fide defector and still not be a valid source of information about Lee Harvey Oswald. Deciding not to believe what Nosenko told about Oswald does not, ^{therefore} necessarily lead - absent other information - to any conclusion about Nosenko's general bona fides or Soviet involvement in the assassination. Nosenko is only one possible source of evidence on this point. If he turns out to be good, he may be decisive; if he turns out to be bad, it may simply mean that there ^{is} are no good sources of information on ^{this} ~~the~~ point, ^{AVAILABLE TO THE AMERICAN GOVT.} and nothing definite can be said about the question. ^{BY THE AM. GOVT.} Consequently, because the ^{AS INDICATED TO THE STAFF} mandate of the Select Committee, was limited to determining the facts and circumstances surrounding the President's death, no examination of the general question of the bona fides of Nosenko has been made. That question properly lies within the jurisdiction of other bodies.

Second, what was the quality of the performance of U. S. government agencies in the Nosenko affair? The agencies,

public resolution

LOTS OF EMPHASIS

Can't think!

whose performance is in issue are the CIA, FBI and the Warren Commission.

Mr. Chairman, Nosenko has been given a new identity by the CIA, and the Agency, as well as the FBI, believes that to compromise it could put him in great personal danger. Consequently, he cannot, of course, testify before the Committee in this public session? He did, ^{OF COURSE} testify ^{IN PERSON} before two closed sessions of the Committee on May 19 and 20. In addition, he was deposed ~~by the staff~~, and extensive files were read, both at the CIA and the FBI. Interviews and depositions of other principals were conducted by the Committee or the staff. ^{while} Virtually all of the material reviewed either by the Committee or the staff is classified, ~~but~~ it is possible to tell the essential aspects of the Nosenko story without compromising ~~the~~ national interest.

OTHER PERSON, FILM, OR TAPE, ALTHOUGH ALL THOSE WERE CONSIDERED -

+ THE CIA + FBI HAVE COOPERATED W/ NSC BY DECLASSIFYING STUFF

(ALL PARAGRAPHS)

A ^{STAFF REPORT} summary of the Committee's investigation has been prepared by Assistant Deputy Chief Counsel ^{THE STAFF} Kenneth Klein, who was, on the staff level, in overall charge of this aspect of the Committee's work.

Before reading the staff report, Mr. Chairman, I would like to emphasize that the question of Yuri Nosenko as a bona fide defector is not for this Committee to answer. Our twofold purpose is to weigh Nosenko's credibility, as it bears on the career of Lee Harvey Oswald, and to evaluate the performance of federal agencies in the matter.

OTHER Q&A ARE FOR

OTHER BODIES.

STAFF REPORT = NO CONCLUSIONS, FOR ~~THE~~ COMMITTEE IN DEC -

(narration continues after Staff Report)

*WHY!
LAWYERS!*

Mr. Chairman, it is appropriate to note that a draft of the staff report just read was submitted to the CIA for declassification. Within two days, the CIA declassified the entire draft, requiring only a few minor changes and the deletion of the names of Agency personnel and sources.

The Committee provided both the FBI and CIA with copies of the report and asked the agencies if they wished to respond to the report at a public hearing on September 15. The FBI informed the Committee that no response would be submitted. The CIA has ^{made available to the C-} ~~sent~~ John Limond Hart as its official representative to state the Agency's position on the Committee's Nosenko report.

Mr. Hart is a career agent with the CIA, having served approximately 24 years. He has held the position of Chief of Station in Korea, Thailand, Morocco ~~and~~ Vietnam, as well as several senior posts at CIA Headquarters. Mr. Hart had considerable experience with Soviet intelligence and counter-intelligence activities while serving in various capacities in the United States and abroad. He has written two extensive studies on Soviet defectors, one of which, dated 1976, dealt with the handling of Yuri Nosenko by the CIA.

Mr. Chairman, appropriate.