

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

Tolson	
Belmont	
Mohr	
Malley	
Sullivan	
Branigan	
Evans	
Gale	
Rosen	
Tavel	
Trotter	
Tele. Room	
Holmes	
Gandy	

TO : MR. TOLSON

DATE: 5/21/64

FROM : A. H. Belmont

cc Mr. Belmont
 Mr. Mohr
 Mr. Malley
 Mr. Sullivan
 Mr. Branigan

SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION

Mr. Malley and I went over to see Mr. Lee Rankin, General Counsel of the President's Commission, shortly after 11 a.m. today. I took with me a copy of the transcript of the Director's testimony before the Commission, with the corrections we had made as to typographical errors, et cetera. I told Mr. Rankin we would be glad to go over the transcript with him, as it was apparent that the reporter who took down the testimony had made some mistakes and had even left out some of the thought in the testimony; that this was understandable as the Director spoke at a rapid rate. We mentioned that Mr. Redlich of the staff had called Mr. Malley this morning to state that he thought there were some corrections that needed to be made in the testimony, inasmuch as he had been present when the Director testified and the transcript was not entirely accurate.

Mr. Rankin suggested that I leave the transcript with him so that he could go over it personally, and he said that he would be in touch with me by Monday, 5/25/64, in the event there was a need to discuss any changes. I told him that, of course, there had been no changes in the substance of the Director's testimony. Rankin said that the transcripts of testimony will be published and, consequently, he wanted to be sure that the testimony properly reflected the Director's thoughts. He asked if the Director had gone over it, and I told him that he had and that the testimony, as we had corrected it, properly represented the Director's testimony. He reiterated that he thought it was important, as the testimony would be made public, that it should properly represent the Director's thoughts.

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Mr. Rankin requested that we advise the Director that he, Rankin, felt that the Director had done an excellent job in testifying before the Commission. Rankin further said, "As you know, the Commissioners like the Director."

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With reference to that portion of the testimony dealing with the Director's suggestions on the security of the President, and the memorandum of 12/2/63 which we sent a copy of to the Commission, Mr. Rankin remarked that the Commission had not previously advised us of the fact that a request had been made of Secret Service for a copy of the memorandum we had given to Secret Service, and the request had been denied, on the instructions of Mr. Jenkins of the White House. I told Mr. Rankin that,

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in view of this, it would be necessary for us to advise Mr. Jenkins that we had subsequently furnished a copy of this memorandum to the Commission. He agreed, and suggested that we advise Mr. Jenkins that the Commission had requested the Director's views on the security of the President at the time the Director testified, and had requested that a copy of this memorandum be made available to the Commission; that in view of the fact that the FBI was, of course, under instructions to cooperate fully with the President's Commission, the Director furnished a copy to the Commission. Mr. Rankin said that if there are any repercussions from the White House, such repercussions will then be directed at the Commission, rather than at the FBI.

Mr. Malley inquired of Mr. Rankin as to whether the Commission would furnish us a copy of the testimony of the two Dallas police officers relative to their alleged conversation with Special Agent Hosty on 11/22/63, while Hosty and Lieutenant Revill were on their way to the office of Captain Fritz. Mr. Rankin stated that the Commission has been rigid in its rule that the testimony of witnesses will be made available only to the witnesses themselves, and it is up to the witnesses whether they make the transcripts available to anyone else. He did remark that he, Rankin, felt that the statements of Revill and Detective Brian were a put-up job, particularly as Brian did not back up Revill's statement. He said, further, that Brian told the Commission that Revill had asked him to put some statements in Brian's memorandum which Brian felt he could not do. Rankin said there was a division of feeling on the part of the commissioners as to whether the police officers were telling a true story. Rankin said that Brian further admitted that he had dictated another memorandum which had been destroyed, presumably because it had been filled with handwritten corrections.

In the discussion on getting copies of the transcripts of testimony of witnesses, Mr. Rankin said that Secret Service had requested a copy of my (Belmont's) testimony, and the Commission had refused to furnish it, in line with its policy. I inquired why they wanted it and Rankin said Secret Service is floundering somewhat with the problem of what to do with the information we have sent over to them, and is seeking to establish criteria on what information they want. Therefore, they would like to see what criteria we are using in disseminating this information. Rankin said he told Secret Service that they should ask the Bureau if they want this information. I told Mr. Rankin we had not received any request from Secret Service.

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Mr. Rankin again mentioned his feeling that some persons, in Secret Service are attempting to unload on the Bureau, on the basis that if the Bureau had given them information on Oswald they would have acted upon it. I asked Rankin whether this was Mr. Rowley's position, and he said it was not.

During the Director's testimony, Allen Dulles brought up the subject of a book, "The Red Roses of Dallas," by Gun. We asked Rankin whether he had this book, and Rankin furnished us a copy. The author is Nerin E. Gun. It is 215 pages long, was printed in France, and is in the French language. We have sent it to the Domestic Intelligence Division, with the suggestion that they check with Central Intelligence Agency and see if there is an English edition, so that we will not have to wrestle with the French language.

With reference to the proposed trip to Dallas, which was scheduled for last weekend, and rescheduled for this weekend, Mr. Rankin advised this morning that he is considering holding a conference of FBI and Secret Service representatives, and his own staff, to decide whether such a trip is necessary, and to try and curtail the amount of work to be done in Dallas if such a trip is made.

I must say that, from talking with Mr. Rankin today, as well as on previous occasions, his approach on this whole matter is objective and fair, and he has been very friendly. During the discussion he advised that some of the Commission members had indicated that the present duties of Secret Service should be turned over to the FBI, at least in the field of protecting the President. He said that he had pointed out that the Director traditionally has taken the position that the FBI should be kept a small organization and its duties and responsibilities should be limited, as he (the Director) felt it is highly undesirable to center too much power in any one agency, or to develop what might be termed a national police force. I told Mr. Rankin he was correct in this, and over the years the Director had sought to avoid the concept of a national police force or the centralization of power. Mr. Rankin said this has not come to the point that it is an issue, but it might be that members of the Commission would again raise this point during the conclusion and recommendation phase of their report; in this case Mr. Rankin would see to it that the Director was consulted by the Commission. I suggested to Mr. Rankin that the simplest way to handle this, if it does become an issue, is for the Commission to send a letter to the Director, and I was sure he would express his views forthrightly and succinctly.

Mr. Tolson

ACTION:

I will advise you as soon as Mr. Rankin informs me of the results of his review of the testimony.

We will attempt to get an English version of the book, "The Red Roses of Dallas," and review it, and furnish our comments to the Commission.

If you agree, Mr. DeLoach will advise Mr. Jenkins that a copy of our memorandum of 12/2/63 was furnished to the President's Commission, and the circumstances surrounding this.

Handwritten notes and signatures:
- "W. DeLoach" with a signature
- A large, stylized signature or mark
- A checkmark symbol