

# Memorandum

TO : Carl W. Belcher, Chief  
General Crimes Section  
Criminal Division

DATE: November 20, 1964

JJC:bf

129-11

FROM : Joseph J. Cella

SUBJECT: Return of items pertaining to the  
assassination of President Kennedy.

By letter dated November 7, 1964 J. Lee Rankin, General Counsel, President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, advised the Acting Attorney General that Marina Oswald and Robert Oswald have requested the return of the items belonging to Lee Harvey Oswald or to them that was in the possession of the Commission or the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Commission is of the opinion that a substantial number of physical items of evidence, particularly those pertaining to the actual assassination of the President and the murder of Patrolman J. D. Tippit should remain in the possession of the United States.

Transmitted with the above letter was a list of fifty (50) items which the Commission believes should be retained and the opinion of this Department with respect to the legality of such retention is requested.

Late in the afternoon of November 18, Mr. Rankin sent to the Department, at my request, copies of the following documents:

1. Letter of August 20, 1964 from J. Edgar Hoover to Mr. Rankin with attached copy of a translation from Russian of a letter, dated August 14, 1964, from Mrs. Oswald to Mr. Rankin.

2. Letter of September 17, 1964 from J. Edgar Hoover to Mr. Rankin forwarding a translation from Russian of the letter, dated September 9, 1964, from Mrs. Oswald to Mr. Rankin.

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3. There is also good reason to hold all these articles for a reasonable length of time for the reason that there may be some attack from some source on the Commission's findings and the original exhibits should be preserved.

In the final analysis, however, there are only a few items which pose much of a problem—the shirt (Item VI), bracelet (Item X), billfold (Item XLIII), wallet (Item XLIV), his transfer, etc. (Item XLV) and the blanket (XLVIII). These all were the property of Oswald. <sup>6/</sup> I think we are perfectly justified in retaining these items for a reasonable length of time but eventually they should be returned to the person or persons legally entitled to receive them. This is particularly true of the bracelet or bracelets, ring, belt, the billfold and the wallet.

I have no information as to whether the Book Depository Company desires the return of the cardboard boxes. Nor do I know whether the Irving Sports Shop wants the "tag repair" (Item XLVII).

Note

This memorandum may serve its intended purpose, namely, to form the basis for further discussion of the various items. No suggested response to Mr. Rankin is being submitted at this time.

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<sup>6/</sup> I assume the Government has photostatic copies of all documents in the wallet together with a copy of the Marine Group photograph from the billfold.