

5/16/77

Harold--the attached memo and document assume added importance in light of your 5/11 to Les Whitten and the Anderson column that I have not yet seen. I think your friend Les would be interested in this 6/4/64 memo about the conversation with Rocca and might be even more interested in the story that was "withheld" from the WC in such a manner that the WC published it, as CE 1348. Were the 26 volumes withheld from the Commission?

Note that Willens and Rankin initialed the memo on 6/4/64. This is in the latest archives release, so you may have a copy already.

Howard *HR*

May 12, 1977

MEMO re Rocca, CIA and Castro Role
by EDWARD ROFIMAN

Today I received some of the latest Archives release and there is one memo of considerable interest to me, especially in light of Raymond Rocca's May '75 memo to the Rockefeller Commission. The document is a memo of June 4, 1964 from Slawson to Rankin, Willens and Redlich in re his phone conversation with Rocca at the CIA.

The two were talking about a book by a London newsman named Eisenberg published 2 months before the assassination which alleged that right wing elements in the US were planning JFK's death. Rocca drew Slawson's attention to the fact that the publishing date of the book coincided with the time Castro allegedly made his remark at the Brazilian Embassy in Cuba, as Slawson puts it, "to the effect that 'Two can play at this game.'" Slawson's formulation of the press accounts reporting Castro's remark is interesting because he pretends that Castro was referring to the Bay of Pigs and "subsequent guerrilla activities financed by the CIA which had resulted in the deaths of many Cuban citizens." The emphasis is mine, for the actual AP story by Daniel Harker had a significantly different twist. (By the way, the Commission did publish the story, as CE 1348). Harker quotes Castro as saying "US leaders should think that if they are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe." (emphasis mine)

Also note that Slawson declined to make a "formal request" for a report on this matter. I will write to Archives for whatever followup there was.

Recall now how Rocca stressed precisely this story--as it appeared in the N.O. Times-Picayune, which is CE 1348--in his May '75 memo to the Rockefeller Commission, criticizing the WC for not having left a "wider window" for the contingency. Evidently, Rocca was pushing the story on the WC back in '64 and his 1975 memo seems to reflect his disappointment that the WC did not accept the bait he offered it.

This is also significant in light of the crap in the Church committee's report to the effect that the CIA kept info from the WC which prevented the WC from adequately investigating the Castro angle.

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June 4, 1954

To: J. Lee Rankin
Howard F. Willens
Norman Redlic

From: W. David Blawson

Subject: Telep one conference with Mr. Rocca of Central
Intelligence Agency

About a week or two ago I telephoned Mr. Rocca and drew his attention to the fact that my examination of the documents furnished to us by the Russian Government, including the medical documents, which had not arrived at that time, showed that a high percentage of the signatures other than the Oswalds' was said to be illegible by the State Department translators. I asked Mr. Rocca that the CIA examination of these documents specifically take this observation into account and comment on it. I said that my opinion, as a lawyer, was that at least a percentage of illegible signatures might have been intentional, in order to prevent the CIA from checking back on actual persons and places when it sought to authenticate these documents. However, I also wondered whether the alleged illegibility was in some cases simply a reflection of the translators' reluctance to work too hard. Mr. Rocca said that he would bring this matter to the attention of those who were analyzing the documents.

Commission document No. 1011, which is the CIA report on the Soviet documents, came to my desk today. It does not comment on the matter mentioned above. I telephoned Mr. Rocca to ask him about this. His reply was that he had interpreted my request as simply that the CIA translators do their best to read and translate all signatures. I repeated that we were not so interested in that as we were in the general analysis of what if any significance could be attributed to the high percentage of illegible signatures. I told him that since talking to him the first time I had made a personal check and found that out of the 9 signatures appearing on the non-medical documents 6 were illegible or at least stated to be illegible by the translators. (Actually the percentage is even higher. Two of the documents which contained illegible signatures contain two illegible signatures each, so the ratio is actually 10 to 1 rather than 6 to 1.)

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Rocca said that he now fully understood my concern and would bring it to the attention of the "higher ups." I told him that we would be happy to make a formal request if this was desirable, and he said that perhaps it would be, but he did not think so. He said that he would ask for a formal request from us later if he or others at CIA thought it was necessary. He told me that the CIA translators had commented that the illegibility of the signatures was the usual thing in Russian documents. He said that he got the impression from talking to them that this is a recurring problem. Apparently the average Russian official has so many documents to sign that his signature soon becomes a scrawl. However, Rocca did not purport to be an expert on this, and he agreed with me that a more formal analysis is called for.

(I note here for the record that the following documents contain at least one illegible signature each: 1 A, 3 A(1), 3A(2), 5 A (3), 6 A, 7 A, 9 A, and 1 B. 3 A (1) and 5 A (3) contain two illegible signatures each. The following documents contain no signatures at all other than Marina's or Lee Oswald's: 2 A, 4 A, 5 A, 2 B, 3 B, 4 B. The single legible signature other than an Oswald signature is contained on document 8 A. The foregoing includes only the non-medical documents. There are so many signatures on the medical documents that I have not tried to itemize them, but it can be seen by a glance through them that they also contain a high percentage of illegible ones.)

While on the telephone with Rocca he brought up the New York Times article on conspiracy theories contained in the Times of June 1, 1964. He made specific reference to the book by a London newspaper man by the name of Dennis Hiscob mentioned in the Austrian newspapers. This book was published about two months before the assassination and contained an assertion that the right wing elements in America were at that time planning the assassination of Kennedy. He said that the CIA has already put procedures in motion to get the book and to obtain further information about the author. The New York Times, as you are probably already aware, describes this as a "striking coincidence." Rocca believes that this may be correct but, of course, cannot be sure. He drew to my attention the fact that the publishing time of this particular book appears to have been almost exactly when Castro was supposed to have made his remark in the Cuban Embassy in Brazil (or the Brazilian Embassy in Cuba, I have forgotten at this point) to the effect that "Two can play at this game." According to the Miami newspaper which published this allegation, Castro was referring to the Bay of Pigs invasion and subsequent guerrilla activities financed by the CIA which had resulted in the deaths of many Cuban citizens.

Poona said that either he or Mr. _____ could report to us on the results of the inquiry on Eisenberg, either formally or informally. He asked us whether we wanted to make a formal request for such a report. I replied that I did not think it was necessary in view of the fact that I now know that CIA was looking into the matter and would give us a report. I told him that I would make a note of our conversation and might remind him of it at a later time if we had not yet heard from him or _____.

WWSlawson:amc
6/4/64