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MEMORANDUM

March 27, 1964

TO: J. Lee Rankin
FROM: W. David Slawson

SUBJECT: Senate Internal Security Subcommittee; Possible Use of Their Mexican Informant

On Tuesday, March 17, 1964 I called Mr. J. G. Sourwine, Counsel for the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee. I referred to a memorandum in a file which Mr. William McManus, formerly with Mr. Sourwine's staff, had sent to the Commission on January 28, 1964, in which there was a reference to an "Al Tarabochia," a man known to the subcommittee who, in turn, claims to know someone who has access to confidential information about the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. I told Mr. Sourwine that the Commission would like to utilize this informant and that for this purpose we would like either to be told his name or given other means by which we could make contact with him. Mr. Sourwine asked me why we wanted to use the informant. This question struck me as strange, since the reasons must have been obvious, but my reply was that we of course had knowledge that Oswald had been in Mexico not too long before the assassination and that he had made contacts with the Cuban Embassy, so we naturally wanted to find out as much as possible about these contacts. Mr. Sourwine said he would take the matter up with Senator Eastland.

That afternoon Mr. Sourwine called back and asked that I send him copies of the memorandum from Mr. McManus, since he could not find this memorandum in his files. He said he would like the memorandum if possible by the following morning because he was having a conference with Senator Eastland around noon time and could then present the whole problem to him for an early solution. I therefore sent Mr. Sourwine a letter dated March 18, inclosing a copy of the memorandum in question, and had it hand-delivered to him on the morning of March 18.

cc: Mr. Rankin's File
Mail Room Files
Mr. Slawson

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I heard nothing further from Mr. Sourwine and therefore I telephoned his office on Thursday morning, March 26. He was not there. He returned my call that afternoon and the conversation went roughly as follows:

He apologized for the delay, saying that he had been unable to reach Senator Eastland about this matter because the Senator had been so busy and sometimes out of town. However, he had just seen Senator Eastland and their decision was that although they wanted to cooperate in every way with the Commission, they did not feel that they could disclose their informant to us. He said that they would be happy to give us a letter to this effect, signed by the Senator. Mr. Sourwine added that they would be happy to convey to the informant any specific questions we had and convey back his answers to those questions. Mr. Sourwine also added that Mr. Tarabochia's reluctance to disclose the identity of his informant was "understandable." I agreed and said words to the effect, "Am I to understand, then, that it is Mr. Tarabochia's reluctance to disclose the identity of the informant which is the basis for Senator Eastland's refusal to do so?" Mr. Sourwine replied, "No, the decision is the Senator's, not Mr. Tarabochia's."

I said that I was not authorized to give a decision at the present time, that the decision on something of this importance would have to be made by Mr. Rankin or the Commission itself. I added that it was my opinion that if we did decide to forward questions through Mr. Sourwine that they would be of the most general nature, rather than specific. Mr. Sourwine replied that general questions might be hard to handle. I asked Mr. Sourwine whether his informant could handle a question such as, "give us all the information you have on what the Cuban Embassy knows about Oswald, his visits to the Embassy and anything else which might relate to the assassination of President Kennedy." Mr. Sourwine's reply was that although such a question was very broad, it probably could be handled. He then repeated his willingness to give us a signed letter from Senator Eastland. We closed off the conversation by my saying that he should do nothing whatever on this matter until hearing further from me or Mr. Rankin. Mr. Sourwine agreed.

In view of the subcommittee's reluctance to give us direct access to their informant, I recommend that we convey

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to Mr. Sourwine the very general kind of questions that I mentioned during the telephone conversation and hope that we get as much information as possible from the informant. Forwarding specific questions to the informant would carry the strong disadvantage of disclosing to the informant and to everyone who worked with him, the particular problems that were worrying us and the particular areas in which we felt we were deficient in our knowledge.

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