

FBI

Spy Said He'd Kill Himself If Exposed, Then Did So

NYTimes

MAR 2 1976
Special to The New York Times

DALLAS, March 1—A Dallas newspaper said tonight that Norman J. Rees warned its officials only hours before press time Saturday night that he would kill himself if the paper ran a story exposing his alleged double-agent spying activities for the Soviet Union and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Dallas Times Herald printed the exposé in Sunday editions that went to press at 10 P.M. Saturday. Mr. Rees, a 69-year-old former engineer for the Mobil Oil Corporation, was found dead less than 10 hours later in his home at Southbury, Conn., the apparent victim of a self-inflicted gunshot wound of the head.

"From time to time," a statement by the paper said, "news-papers receive threats about stories from people attempting to protect their identities. In our judgment, if a story is

newsworthy and supported by the facts it is our policy to publish. In this instance it was decided that the story could not be suppressed, even in the face of Mr. Rees's threats."

Ken Johnson, executive editor of The Times Herald, said in the statement that the paper's story had been developed in a three-month investigation, and that Mr. Rees had twice flown to Dallas and allowed himself to be interviewed.

"On Saturday afternoon," the Johnson statement said, "just hours prior to the publication of the story, Mr. Rees telephoned. The Times Herald and

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asked if the story was going to be printed and would he be identified.

"When he was told he would be identified he said that such a disclosure left him no choice but suicide."

Mr. Johnson said that Mr. Rees had been "fully aware throughout our contact with him that we intended to identify him and to publish a full account of his espionage activities."

In its Sunday article, the paper said that Mr. Rees had admitted in interviews that he accepted money for technical oil industry information that he provided to Soviet intelligence agents from World War II through the 1970's.

Mr. Rees, it added, had "voluntarily undergone polygraph examinations" to substantiate his account.

The paper said that Mr. Rees also had reported that he had

acted as a double-agent for the F.B.I. from 1971 to 1975 after the bureau told him it was aware of his activities on behalf of the Russians.

Hugh Aynesworth, the investigative reporter who wrote the article, is said to have an excellent working relationship with a number of agents and former agents of the F.B.I. He would not say where he got his original data for the article, but it was reported that he had been able to verify it through several former agents of the F.B.I. and the C.I.A.

A spokesman for the F.B.I. said yesterday that the bureau's director, Clarence M. Kelley, had interviewed Mr. Rees on a number of occasions concerning his "contacts with foreign officials in the United States," but the spokesman declined to elaborate.

The Connecticut State Police said today that the investigation of Mr. Rees' death was continuing, but that no evidence had been found to contradict the belief that he had

taken his own life. He was said to have shot himself with a .38-caliber revolver in his condominium in Heritage Village, a retirement community in rural western Connecticut. His wife heard the shot and found the body, the police said.

According to The Times Herald, Mr. Rees received \$30,000 from the Russians over the years for the information he provided. The paper said that his most significant act of industrial espionage occurred in 1950 when he passed along a Mobil design for a new converter that increases the percentage of gasoline that could be derived from crude oil. He was said to have received a Soviet medal for the information.

At other times, Mr. Rees was said to have given the Russians plans for an American petroleum plant, designs for liquefied natural gas processes and the metallurgical compositions of pressure vessels. The Sicilian-born engineer was described as a specialist in metallurgy, piping and the design of tanks

and other holding equipment for oil under pressure.

The Times Herald article said Mr. Rees had described himself as a "Communist sympathizer" during World War II, when the United States and the Soviet Union were allies, and that he began helping the Russians in 1942, when he was employed by the M. W. Kellogg Company, a petroleum consulting concern that at that time was in New York City.

The paper said he had been approached by a fellow employee and asked to help the Russians. It said he had given plans for a gas refinery to his first Russian contact, a Red Army lieutenant named Lapidus.

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SOUTHBURY, Conn., March 1—The death of Norman John Rees early yesterday seemed a far-away thing today to many of the 4,500 residents of Heritage Village here.

Some residents of the community of California-style town houses said that they had never

heard of Mr. Rees. Others said they knew him only as a quiet, gentle man who did not mix much.

Mr. Rees's 31-year-old son John, a junior high school teacher from Ashfield, Mass., said today that his father had been "depressed about getting older and sick."

The development's security patrolman kept curious outsiders away today and declined to discuss reports that two strange men in a car had been staking out the Rees home for the last eight months.

The two residents who knew Mr. Rees best were Juanita and Eugene Kiernan, who live across the way. Mr. Kiernan said that he found the report of Mr. Rees's depression hard to believe. "He didn't seem depressed to me—he seemed in excellent spirits."

The report of Mr. Rees's past Communist sympathies also took him by surprise, he said. "Over the years, I got the impression he was a conservative man who voted Republican."