

MEMORANDUM

January 24, 1996

To: Jeremy Gunn

From: Doug Horne, Joe Freeman [Revised 2:30 PM]

Subject: Soviet assistance to Warren Commission and HSCA

In response to your request for an expeditious overview of this topic, we refer you first to the HSCA Report (pages 100 and 103, attached).

Warren Commission

The HSCA indicated that the Soviet government turned two sets of documents, totaling approximately 140 pages, over to the Warren Commission. The brief HSCA reference to these transfers are consistent with the chronology contained in the DOS cable recently relayed to the ARRB: one batch of documents turned over in Nov. 1963, shortly after the assassination, and one turned over in March of 1964, forwarded in response to a formal request by the Commission transmitted to the Soviets via Dean Rusk and the State Department (CE 984, pp. 399-401, Warren Commission Volume XVIII). The Soviet response is reflected in CE 985 and CE 986 (pp. 403-539, Volume XVIII) and included copies of original documents (in Russian) as well as translations of other documents. The HSCA described these papers as "routine" and "official" and noted pointedly: "None of them appear to have come from KGB files" (HSCA Report, p. 100).

HSCA

The HSCA made its own efforts to obtain Soviet government files that the Committee assumed had not been turned over 14 years earlier in response to the Warren Commission's request. The Committee's summary of the Soviet reply is reflected on page 103 of its report: "In response to a Committee request relayed by the State Department, the Soviet Government informed the Committee that all the information it had on Oswald had been forwarded to the Warren Commission." The Committee clearly did not believe this to be true, though it was realistic about the practical realities involved -- in a HSCA Report footnote, the Committee noted: "The Soviet Government, it could be argued, would have little to gain and much to lose by turning over its files. While the Committee recognized the logic of this argument, it regretted that the Soviet Government, in the interest of historical truth, did not cooperate" (p. 103). The HSCA further concluded that the Soviet government likely was in possession of KGB surveillance of Oswald and Marina while they were living in Minsk, and that it was also quite likely that the KGB interviewed Oswald and that the Soviet

government was withholding that file (HSCA Report, p. 103).

An examination of the Committee's source documents reveal the following chronology of its efforts to obtain the cooperation of the Soviets:

March-April, 1978. HSCA staffer Tiny Hutton, at Robert Blakey's request, has a series of contacts with Alexander Rozanov of the Soviet Embassy regarding the Committee's search for additional information from Soviet files (HSCA Files 006303, 006429, 006866, 007498 014873). These informal approaches by Hutton were unsuccessful, leading the Committee to request State Department assistance. DOS gave the Committee the name of Ikar Zavrazhnov.

May 8, 1978. HSCA staffer Gary Cornwell and Chief Counsel Bob Blakey meet with Ikar Zavrazhnov, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy. At this meeting, Blakey gave the First Secretary a detailed list of the kind of information the Committee was looking for and believed should exist (HSCA File 014873).

June 1, 1978. Blakey goes back to meet with Zavrazhnov again, this time with HSCA Committee member Congressman Bob Edgar. They were joined by an apparently more senior Soviet official, Minister Counselor Vladillen Vasev. Blakey's Outside Contact Report of the meeting is instructive. Speaking "unofficially", Vasev informed Blakey and Congressman Edgar that the Committee's request presented him with "serious problems." If the Soviet government answered *some* questions, Vasev argued, "they might find themselves having to answer other questions and, in the final analysis, no one would be satisfied with their responses anyway." Blakey's OCR dryly notes that they also discussed such issues as the Second World War, the raising of children and the neutron bomb (014783).

July 11, 1978. Chairman Stokes, Blakey and others hold a meeting with House Speaker O'Neill regarding the non-cooperation of the Soviets (009880). It seems Blakey wanted to proceed with a Congressional resolution calling on the Soviets to cooperate, thinking this would give the Soviet government the face-saving cover it would need if it were to hand over material it had not handed over before. Others at the meeting (representing the House Foreign Affairs Committee, we believe) had a strong preference for exhausting all State Department avenues first. The second course of action was decided upon.

July 26, 1978. Chairman Stokes sends a letter to David Newsom, the State Department's Undersecretary for Political Affairs, officially requesting State

Department assistance. This letter followed a meeting with Newsom the same day, and was sent at his recommendation (010222).

August 9, 1978. Newsom replies to Stokes, indicating that a U.S. Embassy official in Moscow contacted a Soviet official on July 31st and August 1st, and that “the Soviet representative responded on behalf of his government that all relevant documents concerning Oswald had already been transmitted to the U.S. Government and that no further documents could be made available to the U.S. side.” (010079).

Date presently unknown. In what must have been a last-ditch effort to embarrass the Soviets into cooperating with the Committee, the full House of Representatives apparently passed a resolution (also in 014873) calling on the Soviets to cooperate with the Committee, and the State Department duly cabled this resolution to Moscow.

Norman Mailer's *Oswald's Tale*

The government of Belarus provided author Norman Mailer access to transcripts of electronic surveillance of the Oswalds' apartment in Minsk, as well as reports written by then-KGB agents who conducted physical surveillance of Oswald's movements in Minsk. Author Mailer is of the opinion that the KGB must have conducted formal interviews with Oswald but records of such interviews, if they exist, were not provided him; in fact, officials continue to deny such interviews took place.

Freeman: e/wp-docs/0124962

File 4.1.4