

MEMORANDUM

September 18, 1996 (Revised 9/19/96)

To: Jeremy Gunn
cc - David Marwell, Brian Rosen
NARA (Steve Tilley, Matt Fulgham, Kris Wilhelm)

From: Joe Freeman

Subject: More on Congressional Records (SISS and HUAC)

Introduction

I have spent some time this week looking at Warren Commission (WC) records with an eye toward what they might show regarding contemporaneous Congressional investigations (and records) of the assassination. I found nothing dramatically new. But I was able to confirm some of what we already believed we knew, and in the process dug up a couple of modest leads for further investigations of Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS) and House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) files.

Early on, the WC sent out a generic letter to a wide gamut of federal agencies (including at least some Congressional committees), requesting that they forward any relevant information they might hold regarding Lee Harvey Oswald or Jack Ruby. It follows that, to the extent that Congressional committees had information or files relevant to the assassination, they might have subsequently forwarded them by letter. Therefore, I first examined Entry 3 of the WC files: *Register of Letters Received ("Incoming Mail Log")*. I found references to two incoming letters from Senator James Eastland, Chairman of both the full Senate Judiciary Committee and SISS (dated 1/28/64 and 4/6/64).

I also found references to two letters from Congressman Edwin Willis, Chairman of HUAC (dated 2/3/64 and 2/24/64). (All four log entries are attached.)

Upon attempting to locate the actual correspondence referenced in the logs, I was able to find two of the four in Entry 11, *Records Relating to "Governmental Agencies Involved*, namely the 2/3/64 letter from HUAC Chairman Willis and the 4/6/64 letter from Senator Eastland (attached). These letters were in a folder in Entry 11 containing Congressional correspondence.

House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

Willis' 2/3/64 letter states that the Chairman has already instructed his Staff Director to send all relevant materials from the Committee's public files to the Commission (the Staff Director would be

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Francis J. McNamara, who wrote to the Review Board on 6/3/96). He also offers to forward from the Committee's investigative files (if he gets a subpoena) "an inter-office communication, dated prior to the assassination, which relates to activities of Oswald, as reported to a staff member by telephone." This is presumably the memo Kris Wilhelm has already located, re: Ed Butler and the Oswald radio debate in New Orleans (McNamara recounts getting the call from Butler in his letter to the Review Board). Willis goes on to tell Chief Justice Warren:

"The Committee has had a most active interest in this matter from the very beginning. The day following the assassination... I directed the chief investigator of the Committee to proceed to Dallas...Circumstances have been such that a full-scale Committee investigation of the assassination was never undertaken, although one was under active consideration for some time...Committee information on the matter is rather limited [but] certain of the facts in its possession may be useful to the Commission."

Willis' letter confirms the recollections of Francis McNamara, re: the Committee's having sent their investigator (McNamara names him as Donald T. Appel) to Dallas in the immediate aftermath of the assassination (though McNamara -- presumably by mistake -- states that Appel was sent to New Orleans before mentioning that Appel was only a few feet away from Ruby at DPD when Oswald was killed).

Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS)

Eastland's letter of 4/6/64 represents the tail end of an exchange that began, presumably, with Eastland's letter of 1/28/64 (which I didn't find, though it is referenced in the incoming correspondence log). His 4/6 letter references previous correspondence from the Commission, which led in turn to an examination of records in Entry 26, *Reading File of Outgoing Letters and Internal Memorandums*. A 3/27/64 WC memo from David Slawson to J. Lee Rankin sheds some light on the correspondence history (attached). A SISS file seems to have been delivered with Eastland's letter of 1/28 (by a William McManus of the SISS staff who, by 3/27, has apparently become a "former" member of the staff). This file contained a memo which referenced a SISS investigator (or perhaps regular informant), A.L. Tarabochia, who in turn knew an unnamed individual with confidential information, re: Cuban embassy in Mexico City. On 3/17/64, Slawson called SISS Counsel J.G. Sourwine about gaining access to the informant. Sourwine couldn't find the memo which mentioned Tarabochia, so he called Slawson back and asked him to send a copy back to him so he, Sourwine,

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could talk to Eastland about it. Slawson did so, with a cover letter on 3/18 (attached). Slawson followed up on 3/26 and was told by Sourwine that Chairman Eastland was uncomfortable allowing the Commission direct access to the Committee's informant, offering instead to forward the Commission's questions to Mr. Tarabochia who would, in turn, ask them of his source. Whereupon Slawson kicks the whole issue upstairs to Rankin with his memo of the next day. Rankin then writes Eastland on 4/3/64 (attached), asking that the Commission be put in touch with Mr. Tarabochia's source or, failing that, that the Committee forward the Commission's questions. Eastland replies briefly on 4/6, confirming the Committee's refusal to put the Commission directly in touch with the source, but promising to forward questions (attached). Though Eastland promises to "transmit to you whatever information the inquiry may produce," I found no further correspondence on the matter in the Warren Commission files I examined.

I subsequently did a database search on "Tarabochia" and got several hits. In running these down, I located the first page (only) of a 1/27/63 memo from Tarabochia regarding a report that Jack Ruby had plotted President Kennedy's death in Cuba prior to the assassination. This page was contained in a referred but unclassified document located at NARA II. Most importantly for our purposes here, **this memo references *other* reports by the same author -- regarding the same "case" -- dated 11/28/63, 12/3/63 and 1/8/64.** Since the single page of the memo I have seen does not seem to reference Mexico City or the Cuban embassy there, it is possible that the memo Slawson and Rankin were expressing interest in was not this one, but one of the three others referenced in the 1/27/64 memo.

Checking further into Tarabachio, I found that Gaeton Fonzi, in *The Last Investigation*, references him as a "Miami-based investigator" and "strong right-winger who worked for the Senate Internal Security subcommittee" (p. 80).

Clearly, then, a SISS file appears to have been forwarded by the Committee on 1/28/64. As SISS had interviewed both Ruth Paine and Ed Butler almost two months previously, one wonders whether or not (and if not, why not) transcripts of this testimony was included in the file accompanying the 1/28 letter. It is possible that the Tarabachio/Mexico City-related memo from the file forwarded by SISS was filed in the WC's Entry 9 records -- *Records Relating to "Key Persons"* -- under "Oswald, Lee H., Post-Russian Period" which contains a subcategory (3-1) entitled "Trip to Mexico" (it is even possible, though unlikely, that Eastland's 1/28 letter could be filed there). This file has not yet been checked.

Also relative to SISS records, I came across a curious letter in the WC's Congressional correspondence folder from SISS staffer Robert C. McManus to Commissioner Allen Dulles. In the

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letter, McManus quotes from "an inter-office memorandum, dated Dec. 18, 1963" -- also penned by Mr. McManus -- in which he apparently makes a case for Castro's likely involvement in the assassination.

Possible Follow-Up

Contingent, as always, upon resource constraints, Mr. Appel (HUAC's investigator who was sent to Dallas) could be located and, if alive, asked if he generated any records about his trip to Dallas after returning to Washington (Mr. McNamara states in his letter to the Review Board that it would have been inconsistent with standard Committee policy not to have done so). Either with or without this contact, the confirmation (in Willis' letter) that Appel made such a trip argues for a renewed search of HUAC files for such records as Appel may have generated upon his return. Beyond this specific instance, however, Willis' letter also suggests there is probably not much more to be gleaned from HUAC files than what NARA staff have already identified. Still, minutes of Committee meetings held in the immediate aftermath of the assassination should probably be checked, as they may contain references to or information about Mr. Appel's trip to Dallas. Chairman Willis' letter of 2/24/64 (referenced in WC logs but not found in the Commission's records) should also be searched for. Lastly, as I mentioned to NARA's Steve Tilley not long ago, there are CIA records which indicate that Chairman Richard Ichord of the House Internal Security Committee (as HUAC was subsequently renamed) wrote Archivist James B. Rhodes about accessing various WC records on 3/16/72. The context of the request is unclear from the records I've been able to review to date, but this also warrants a review of relevant HUAC/HISC files.

It would also make sense, I think (in light of the Eastland-WC correspondence discussed earlier), to have another go at SISS/Judiciary Committee files. It seems likely that more than one of the Tarabochia memos was forwarded by Eastland with his 1/28/64 letter. Both the letter and any such memos should be located. McManus' memo of 12/18/63, while less interesting, is clearly an assassination record and, therefore, should be located if possible, especially since it obviously suggests the possibility of other such memos. (These comments, re: SISS, are in addition to potential SISS assassination records referenced in my memo of 9/13 to Jeremy Gunn.)

Finally, the information/records referenced here raise the issue of whether we need to communicate back to Max Holland (Eastland Subcommittee records) or Francis McNamara (HUAC records) on what we have found to date.

Freeman e:\wp-docs\091896

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Files 4.21.9 Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS)

4.21.9 House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)