

SECRET

6E

10 April 1964, 1135-1153 hours - Langley

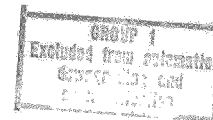
DCI, Mr. Manchester, and Mr. Chretien

GUEST (continuing): --a great many people did, and--

DCI: If I did put anything in the file -- I'm not sure that I did -- but subject to that review -- it will take a few minutes for the girls to get it. Let me give you a recount of my recollection.

It was Friday, the 22nd, and this was the Friday before Thanksgiving. I had planned to leave on a five o'clock plane to go the West Coast so that I could spend the Thanksgiving week in connection with some of our affairs there and also to visit my home, which is in Pasadena. Mrs. McCone was in Seattle and was going to join me that evening. My morning was consumed with a meeting with the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. And upon finishing with them, I came out to the building here and was having lunch in my alternate office with General Carter and the other principal Deputies, reviewing the discussion with the President's Board. Mr. Elder came in and said that the flash report had just been received that the President had been shot. He could not say whether it was an hysterical (rumor) or what it was. I immediately turned on the television, which was right in the room, and what you saw on all

SECRET



SECRET

stations was just a flash report the President's been shot, stand by -- you'll recall that. I picked up the phone and called the Attorney General, who said that he was at home and asked if I would come right over.

GUEST: You called him at his home?

DCI: Well I called him through the White House. When I got him at his home he told me he was at home and he asked if I would come right over. I put in one other call, and that was to Mrs. McCone in Seattle. I found her at a meeting and informed her of the rumor and told her to keep accessible to our operator and that we would keep her posted, and left at once for the Attorney General's home, which is only about a five minutes' drive from here, as you know. The Attorney General and Mrs. Kennedy were alone and they were in the library on the second floor. The Attorney General and Mrs. Kennedy and I, too, were speechless. I asked the Attorney General if he knew how seriously the President had been hurt, and he said no, did I. And I said I did not know. With that the phone rang in the library and he picked up the phone, and he said "Oh he's dead." This was the first news that he had received that his brother was actually dead.

GUEST: Do you remember his tone of voice?

2

SECRET

SECRET

DCI: His tone of voice was one of being just aghast, as though he had received unbelievable news.

GUEST: Did you know who was calling him?

DCI: I don't know who called him, no, and I didn't ask him. He talked for two or three minutes on the phone. During that time Mrs. Kennedy and I retired to the other side of the room to give him as much privacy as possible. He then -- he was very stoical about it -- he was obviously shaken to an unbelievable degree but retained his composure in a most remarkable manner, in my opinion. He called his brother -- that was the first call that he made. His brother was not in his office but was located within a matter of minutes, and he told his brother that the President was dead. They made arrangements then to notify various members of the family, with the Attorney General calling some and Senator Kennedy calling others. The Attorney General called his mother, as I remember. He also called Mrs. Kennedy's sister in London.

GUEST: You mean Lee - Mrs. John Kennedy's sister?

DCI: Yes, Mrs. John Kennedy's sister - Radziwill. There was almost nothing we could say to one another. We were seized with the horror of it, and it was hard to believe that such an incredible event could happen.

GUEST: Did others then arrive?

3
SECRET

SECRET

DCI: No, no one arrived for some time. We talked for sometime -- and telephone calls would come in. And finally Mrs. Kennedy -- Mrs. Robert Kennedy -- had a problem of picking up some of their children, because it was getting along about the time when they were out of school. The Attorney General insisted that she go on and do that, and that I would stay with him. She was reluctant to leave him, and made various protestations and tried to convince him that a substitute would do it - someone else could do it, but he insisted that it would be better for her and better for the children if she would pick them up as she did -- so she left.

The Attorney General and I then went out into his yard and we walked for a long time and talked about a great many things. This talk was punctuated by these phone calls that would come in. And if you know the layout of the grounds, he has a White House phone in the corner of the swimming pool and one in the corner of the tennis court. And we walked back and forth in that field, and he would go and take a call in one place or another. He had other problems. He talked with President Johnson and there was a question of the procedure for swearing in President Johnson.

GUEST: I'm aware of the problem -- do you want me to dig into?

4

SECRET

SECRET

DCI: Well, yes -- well Ting had his finger on it, I think. I'd like to find out what kind of a spooks that thing is.

He contacted his office -- and I've forgotten just who in that office -- to find out exactly who could or should administer the oath. He found that any Federal judge could do it, and he transmitted that information together with appropriate references so they could get the exact oath down to Dallas. He insisted that the swearing in be done immediately. I think President Johnson felt the same way. He did not want the country to go for the two hours and a half that President Johnson would be in the air without a President. And that was arranged. This involved several telephone calls. I suppose that I was there for two hours. During that time a Catholic priest came over -- probably his parish priest -- I did not know him, and I've forgotten his name. He shook hands with him and offered his condolence and then went away. There was nothing he could do. He obviously sensed that the Attorney General was deeply involved in the myriad of problems that arose almost at once, you know -- his concern over Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, his concern over the swearing in of the President. There was a period of half an hour, I suppose, that he was debating whether to fly to Dallas himself to return with the body and with Mrs. Kennedy. I urged that he not do that, stating that there was an element of time -- that the best

5
SECRET

SECRET

thing to do would be to bring the President's body up as quickly as possible, as quickly as it could be released, and he couldn't possibly get down there for three or four hours, by the time he got aboard a plane and got down there, and he would be out of touch all the time that he was in the air. He agreed with this, and as a result either decided or agreed with the decision that the body should be brought up with President Johnson and Mrs. Kennedy just as quickly as possible.

Throughout this ordeal -- and I think it was as severe an ordeal as a man could go through -- he never cracked -- he was steely -- and he was obviously deeply and seriously affected -- at no time did his voice crack, nor did he break down or lose his composure. This impressed me very, very much.

Then Mrs. Kennedy returned and others started to arrive -- one or two people came out from his office, and others were arriving, and so I left. I think I left about half past three, or it might be a little bit later than that -- I don't know the exact time.

GUEST: Mrs. Kennedy returned with the children.

DCI: Returned with the children.

GUEST: How was Mrs. Kennedy's (demeanor) during this period, do you recall?

SECRET

SECRET

DCI: How was her what?

GUEST: How was her composure?

DCI: She was composed - she was composed -- deeply affected and greatly worried about him. Both of them profoundly worried about Mrs. John Kennedy, and time and time again said, "Think of those two poor children -- how their father adored them and how they adored their father." The problems of State gave way to the inaudible due to coughing normal expressions of love and concern for loved ones that seizes any family in an hour of tragedy. So through those hours you saw careful attention to important matters of State on the one hand, and a type of grief and concern for the family, and for the loss to the family and to the mother, that comes with any ordinary family--

GUEST: The personal tragedy.

DCI: The personal tragedy.

GUEST: At the time that you first spoke to him on the telephone, had he heard the news elsewhere?

DCI: Yes, he'd heard the news.

GUEST: I had been told -- although I haven't checked this with him yet -- that J. Edgar Hoover had called him, and--

DCI: He might have. I don't know who called him.

SECRET

SECRET

GUEST: The gentleman who came into your meeting that Friday afternoon with the news -- to enter a meeting of that sort, I presume he was one of your aides or a member of your staff.

DCI: It was Walter Elder, my Executive Assistant.

GUEST: I see.

DCI: We were having lunch in this room, and his office is the office below my secretary's, and he came dashing in, and then I turned on the television right there.

GUEST: Did you at this time have any official concerns of your own with regard to this tragedy, in the early moments when it was not (clearly) known who had been responsible for this attack?

DCI: Well I had -- naturally, in that short drive, from here to there, you wonder who could be responsible for a thing like this. Was this the result of bigotry and hatred that was expressed in certain areas of the country, of which Dallas was one? Was this an international plot?

GUEST: Well the second, of course, would have been of great concern to you, officially.

DCI: Yes. Was this an international plot? What was this? And of course this was a question that plagued us day and night for a long time. I don't recall that I reached an immediate judgment (in) thought -- in other words, I don't recall what I (said).

SECRET

SECRET

GUEST: But then later the word came in that the accused assassin had been to Russia and had been identified with the Castro group, or had so identified himself. This then probably called for further--

DCI: Well, following this, then, of course we went to work in depth on this thing to determine whether Oswald had any association or was receiving direction from any external (brains), and the FBI of course were doing the same with respect to internal (brains). And there were days there where we didn't know. There were of course conflicting reports, and quite naturally when the main source of information was murdered, as he was the next day -- or two days later -- I've forgotten -- it was Sunday--

GUEST: Sunday, actually.

DCI: --as he was on Sunday, there were a great many conflicting reports of association, and so forth, that came to us. This is understandable, because nothing could be proven, nothing could be checked, so people get so convinced themselves that something is a fact that they feel that they must convey them. I know we had a great deal of

GUEST: I understand that before the ceremonies on Monday, before walking to St. Matthews, that you received what was described to me --

SECRET⁹

SECRET

and I know nothing about the Central Intelligence Agency, so this may be wrong -- an A1A, is that correct? -- at any rate, a high priority report that there would be an attempt on General DeGaulle's life as he was walking to St. Matthews, and that you relayed that to him with the help of ^{Mac} McBundy's French.

DCI: That's correct.

GUEST: ^{Mac} Mc didn't tell me this. It was another person.

DCI: I want to tell you that I don't think that we received any report of that nature that we would place, in retrospect, a top evaluation on as being absolutely dependable intelligence. We received several reports that morning of attempts that would be made on DeGaulle and on others, and while we could not evaluate the reports, I felt personally that if anything of that nature did happen it would so shock an already shocked world that every precaution should be taken to make it impossible. For that reason McBundy suggested that General DeGaulle, if for no other reason than respect for his friend who funeral he was attending, consider riding with President Johnson instead of walking. DeGaulle preferred to walk -- which was not an unexpected reaction.

GUEST: But when you said you'd received reports, surely if the report was important enough to be conveyed to General DeGaulle it had

SECRET

SECRET

greater substance than -- well, the kind of anonymous telephone calls that were coming in to the District police that day. A report here does have something behind it, doesn't it?

DCI: Well I think that we had no reports other than these telephone calls that the police were dealing with -- they were about the same.

GUEST: And you approached the General on the strength of these?

DCI: Yes, that's right. Our reports came out of New York, and they were ominous -- inaudible due to airplane noise.....

GUEST: Out of New York as an intelligence center perhaps relaying it from elsewhere -- they wouldn't necessarily be from New York sources.

DCI: That's right.

GUEST: Well is the phrase, then, A1A -- which means nothing to me -- is this correct or incorrect?

DCI: That's -- I don't know -- but I (can't comment) on any A1A.

GUEST: I see. Okay. But your official concerns here, and to the Central Intelligence Agency, did not prevent you from attending the official ceremonies in connection with the funeral at the rotunda and at the funeral?

DCI: No. I was at the White House, and I had a procedure set up so that all reports that were received were brought to me immediately while

11
SECRET

SECRET

I was at the White House waiting for the body to come down to the Capitol, and during that time I was in touch with Bundy and others concerning these reports. I think there were three or four of them. Three or four times my courier, who was in the basement of the White House with a direct line, sought me out of about a hundred people, I think, in the White House, to give me a message.

GUEST: And there were reports of threats on others besides President DeGaulle?

DCI: The reports centered principally around DeGaulle, but the reports were that we could expect attacks on others, including President Johnson.

GUEST: Is it inappropriate for me to ask whether a subsequent evaluation of these reports indicated that they were ill-founded or that the security precautions discouraged what may have been a very real attempt?

DCI: I don't think that we made a thorough and a formal evaluation. The security precautions were extensive. However, since there was no attempt made whatsoever to penetrate the security arrangements, we concluded that the reports were spurious and not dependable.

GUEST: Do you recall your own -- and I know you're busy, and this will be the last question -- do you recall your own emotional state

SECRET

SECRET

that Friday when you were with the Attorney General and Mrs. Kennedy at their home?

DCI: Yes, it was one first of shock. Second, a deep sadness over the personal loss of President Kennedy. And a very great concern over the country because of having thrust upon it the frightening problems of a new Chief Executive taking over. In retrospect I feel that my concern over this latter point -- that I had over-reacted, but that's because of the very great skill that has been demonstrated by President Johnson in taking over the reins of Government--

GUEST: Who was very soon in touch with you, I am sure.

DCI (continuing): --with a very minimum of trouble.

Yes, I saw President Johnson the next morning. I did not see him that evening when he arrived -- I saw him the next morning, and I saw him every day for a long time -- sometimes several times a day.

GUEST: Thank you so much, sir.

DCI: If you need any other -- if you want to talk again about it, I'll be happy to--

GUEST: Well thank you. I'll be with this for a very long time.

GUEST: (You covered everything) except perhaps one thing -- you remember when these reports were coming in you made available 102 of our security officers to stay at Secret Service to help out?

13
SECRET

SECRET

DCI: Yes, 102 or 103.

GUEST: Yes, I can check that exact--

DCI: Yes, check it -- because we threw all of our available resources into the security effort.

GUEST: Either Secret Service or State Security.

GUEST: I understand.

You were very kind, sir. Thank you again.

SECRET