

## TESTIMONY OF MARTIN ISAACS

The testimony of Martin Isaacs was taken on April 16, 1964, at the U.S. courthouse, Foley Square, New York, N.Y. by Mr. Wesley J. Liebeler, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Martin Isaacs, having been first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

Mr. LIEBELER. My name is Wesley J. Liebeler. I am an attorney on the legal staff of the President's Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. Staff members have been authorized to take the testimony of witnesses by the Commission pursuant to authority granted to the Commission by Executive Order No. 11130, dated November 29, 1963, and Joint Resolution of Congress No. 137.

The Commission has also established rules of procedure governing the taking of testimony from witnesses, and under those rules of procedure each witness is to be furnished with a copy of the Executive order and joint resolution to which I referred, as well as with a copy of the rules governing the taking of testimony.

The Commission will provide you with a set of those documents.

Under the rules governing the taking of testimony, each witness is entitled to 3 days' notice before he is required to appear and give testimony. I don't know whether you actually received 3 days' notice or not, but—

Mr. ISAACS. They told me yesterday about it. It's quite all right.

Mr. LIEBELER. Each witness is able to waive that notice, and I presume that you do wish to waive it.

Mr. ISAACS. I waive, yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. Thank you, sir.

We want to inquire briefly of you today concerning any contacts which you or your office may have had with Lee Harvey Oswald and his family upon Oswald's return from Russia in approximately June of 1962.

Before we get into the details of that testimony, however, would you state your full name for the record?

Mr. ISAACS. Martin Isaacs.

Mr. LIEBELER. Where do you live, sir?

Mr. ISAACS. 1669 Grand Avenue, Bronx, New York.

Mr. LIEBELER. Where are you employed at the present time?

Mr. ISAACS. I am employed by the Special Services Welfare Center, Department of Welfare, City of New York, 42 Franklin Street.

Mr. LIEBELER. Were you so employed in June of 1962?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. When and where were you born, Mr. Isaacs?

Mr. ISAACS. I was born in Hungary, December 12, 1904.

Mr. LIEBELER. When did you come to the United States?

Mr. ISAACS. I was about 2 or 3 years old. I don't recall exactly.

Mr. LIEBELER. Are you presently a citizen of this country?

Mr. ISAACS. I am a citizen, yes; derivative citizenship.

Mr. LIEBELER. Your parents?

Mr. ISAACS. My father became a citizen, and, of course, I received derivative citizenship.

Mr. LIEBELER. How long have you employed by the department of welfare?

Mr. ISAACS. Since May 12, 1934.

Mr. LIEBELER. And this is the Department of Welfare of the City of New York; is that correct?

Mr. ISAACS. That is right.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you recall personally coming into contact with Lee Harvey Oswald and his family?

Mr. ISAACS. I do recall coming into personal contact; yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Would you give us the best recollection that you have concerning that event?

Mr. ISAACS. I was told by our intake, I believe it was, that the family was in

the Welfare Center. If I recollect correctly, I think the Travelers Aid Society sent them here. I am not positive about this.

My worker, Mr. Lehrman, as I remember, was not available at the time to go in and see the family. I believe he was in the field at the time. He is a social investigator in the Department of Welfare. I went in to ascertain whether I could expedite getting the information that would be needed to help this family return to Texas.

Mr. LIEBELER. You had been informed at that time that they desired to return to Texas?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes; the intake worker, I can't remember who it was at the moment—I am sorry, I don't remember the name of the worker who handled the family inside of our intake—told us that this family was in the office, and I think we obtained sufficient information at the time to make a clearance to determine whether the family is actually a repatriated family.

In many instances people come to us and tell us that they were repatriated when in effect they weren't. They are, in other words, sent here incorrectly to our office. When we clear, we find out that they are not repatriates, and so they must be handled in a different manner.

Mr. LIEBELER. When you say "repatriates," what do you mean, sir?

Mr. ISAACS. A repatriate is one who is a United States citizen, who was living abroad and finds himself, either because of economic circumstances or because of ill health unable to maintain himself there, and so they go—either they go directly to our Embassy in the country in which they reside or they are directed to go there or the Embassy learns about this from the government in which they live, and so they are helped to return to the United States. In some instances they ask to be returned. In other instances they are ordered to be returned. For example, if the person is mentally ill. In this case we did clear, and we ascertained that they were repatriates, and so the role that I played in this as I remember—using my memory here—

Mr. LIEBELER. Let me ask you this, if I may, Mr. Isaacs, before you go into that.

Mr. ISAACS. Yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you remember how you determined that the Oswald family was a repatriated family?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes. This is the way it was done: We get the information from the family. In this instance I think it was done by the intake worker. He got certain facts. I assume that Mr. Oswald gave them all these facts, that he went to Russia in a certain period of his life, and what happened there, and then when he returned and why he returned.

When we get all this data, we present that to our administrator, Mrs. Ruscoll, and she contacts the New York State Department of Social Welfare, who is the immediate representative, to determine these facts. The person that she would call is a Miss Elliott, Miss Lula Jean Elliott.

Mr. LIEBELER. She is with the New York State Department—

Mr. ISAACS. The Department of Social Welfare. Then Miss Elliott called the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and, of course, we understand that this is the means they used to get the information, and they call Washington, and when they have this information it is relayed back in the same way. And then the administrator tells us, yes, he is a repatriate. And in this instance, this is what actually happened, as I remember it. We were told that they were.

Now, we have a policy of calling whatever relatives are available to determine whether relatives could meet the cost of their return. In this instance he asked to be returned to Texas, and we did get enough information in our application blank to show that there was a brother—I believe it was Robert—who lived in Texas, and I made a telephone call to the brother. The brother was not in, and I spoke with his wife—I don't remember her first name—and I told her that Mr. Oswald was here with his wife and infant, and they wanted to return to Texas, and would they be able to raise sufficient funds to meet this cost. She was very happy, apparently, to learn that they had arrived already—evidently they had some advance notice—and she immediately said she will call

her husband and make arrangements to send this money—I don't remember the amount that was involved.

Mr. LIEBELER. Was Oswald present at the time you made this telephone call?

Mr. ISAACS. No, no. I make that call in my own office. We never make it in their presence.

Now, when I got this information, and she told me—her name was also Oswald, Mrs. Robert Oswald, we will say—she told me that this money would be sent. I went in, and this was the first contact that I had with Mr. Oswald. I—excuse me—

Mr. LIEBELER. You first called the home of Robert Oswald in Texas and spoke to his wife?

Mr. ISAACS. That's right.

Mr. LIEBELER. And she told you that she would call her husband and find out if they could make the money available? Did she then call you back?

Mr. ISAACS. I can't remember whether it was just that way. I'm uncertain about that. I'm sorry about that. I think that she said, "I will call him and send the money." I'm not positive, but I think that's the way it happened, because I don't remember her calling me back.

In any event, I gave her all the information, gave her my name. We always, in this kind of thing, because when the money comes in, they don't know to whom to direct the money. So I gave her my name and told her to send the money attention Martin Isaacs. When I went in and told the Oswalds about this—Mrs. Oswald, of course, cannot speak English—at that time.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you try to speak to her?

Mr. ISAACS. I tried to speak to her, but she couldn't speak a single word. And he told me that she can't speak any English. But when I told him that I contacted his sister-in-law, he was quite angered, he was really very upset, and told us, told me that he did not want to accept this money, that this was a brother who did not have a large income, and that we should meet this cost ourselves. And I told him what our policy was, that in all instances we are required by law to request that relatives or friends, if there are such friends available, meet these expenses, if they can.

Now, in this instance, his sister-in-law said that she would send the money, so we would have to accept this. He did not want to accept our decision on this. He insisted that he see the administrator of our office, because he wanted to protest my having made this phone call and asking for the money.

Mr. LIEBELER. You had done this without telling him—

Mr. ISAACS. That's right.

Mr. LIEBELER. That you were going to do it?

Mr. ISAACS. We as a rule do not have to ask these people. What we can do in some instances is to find out what the occupation of the relative is, which I think we got in our intake interview. You see, I'm not positive about this, again, because I think that the worker got his—the brother's name and address, whatever other information they usually get about relatives.

Anyhow, to expedite matters, we always do it just this way. This is not anything unusual with us. We call, and if we are lucky, and somebody—someone tells us that they can send the money, we use these funds to meet the transportation expenses to the place they are requesting to return to.

Let's see—you want me—excuse me. Did you want me to continue?

Mr. LIEBELER. Yes; please go right ahead and tell us.

Mr. ISAACS. Because he protested so vehemently, I went to the administrator, or Mrs. Ruscoll, the administrator, and asked her what we were to do about this matter, and she decided to interview Mr. Oswald herself.

I do know that Mrs. Ruscoll spent considerable time with Mr. Oswald, although I don't know just what had transpired between them.

Mr. LIEBELER. You were not present during that conference?

Mr. ISAACS. I was not present, yes, sir; during her interview with him.

Later, however, she informed me that she telephoned Miss Elliott of the New York State Department of Social Welfare, who instructed Mrs. Ruscoll to use these funds despite his protestations, which we proceeded to do, and Mrs. Ruscoll then notified him personally that these funds have to be used for the family's return fare.

Mr. LIEBELER. You did not have the final conversation with Oswald on that subject yourself?

Mr. ISAACS. I had no conversation with him—my conversation with him was quite brief. My conversation consisted of just telling him that we were using these funds. It was a most brief conversation, as I remember it.

Mr. LIEBELER. Now, did you have any other contact with Oswald after Mrs. Ruscoll told him that these funds had to be used?

Mr. ISAACS. I don't believe I did have any. I can't remember. What I did, I think, was to instruct the investigator to take him to some hotel downtown that he would have to stay at until arrangements could be made for his return the next day.

Mr. LIEBELER. So Oswald then, as far as you know, stayed in New York overnight that night?

Mr. ISAACS. As far as I know, that is what happened, and I think that the investigator was instructed to get him out the next morning, I believe it was.

Incidentally, Mr. Liebeler, we did not have to spend any money on him at all. He had some money on him when he arrived here. I don't remember exactly how much he had, but he said that he could meet the expense at the hotel, as I recall it.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you yourself prepare any reports on the Oswald case, Mr. Isaacs, as best you can recall?

Mr. ISAACS. When you say "reports," I would like you to be specific.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you dictate a memorandum?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes. My telephone conversation with his sister-in-law I believe was dictated in there. I don't remember now whether I indicated or not that he would not accept our decision. I might have put that in there to point up the fact that I reported this to the administrator.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you remember whether you had this difficulty with Lee Oswald immediately after you called Texas, or could it have been on the next day, do you remember?

Mr. ISAACS. I don't remember if there was a next day. I can't recall that at all, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. The best of your recollection is that you saw him just on one day?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes. I don't remember whether there was any other time that I saw him. I think he was in the office that one time.

Mr. LIEBELER. What is the address of your office?

Mr. ISAACS. 42 Franklin Street.

Mr. LIEBELER. And that is where Mr. Oswald came in at that time; is that correct?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you know whether Lee Oswald had talked to his brother, Robert, about this money that Robert was going to send to New York?

Mr. ISAACS. I don't recall whether he—not in my presence.

Mr. LIEBELER. And to the best of your recollection, you did not learn from any other source that he had talked to Robert Oswald about it; is that correct?

Mr. ISAACS. That is right, I think that is correct, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you have any conversation with Oswald as to his return from Russia?

Mr. ISAACS. I don't recall having such a conversation with him.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you recall being interviewed by the FBI in connection with this matter?

Mr. ISAACS. Oh, yes, sir; I do.

Mr. LIEBELER. I have a report of an FBI interview that indicates that you had told the FBI agent that you received the impression that Oswald had had difficulty in leaving Russia, but you recalled a statement by Oswald to the effect that he "caused so much trouble in Russia that they had to send me back home." Do you remember saying anything like that to the FBI agent?

Mr. ISAACS. I don't recall saying anything like that. Of course, this is what the intake worker had said, and this is what was circulated around in the office, but I don't recall having—I did not speak with Oswald, and I don't recall having gotten this from him myself.

Mr. LIEBELER. Had you heard statements in the office to the effect that Oswald had said that?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes; that's right.

Mr. LIEBELER. You understood that Oswald had made a statement such as this to the intake worker when he came into the office?

Mr. ISAACS. Probably he made that statement to the intake worker; yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Had you heard in the office that he had made that statement to the intake worker, or was it just conversation in the office, that Oswald—

Mr. ISAACS. I think it was conversation, rather than anything else, as I remember it.

Mr. LIEBELER. We have obtained a file from the New York City Department of Welfare which contains certain documents relating to the Oswald case, and I would like to mark as Exhibit No. 1 on the deposition of Martin Isaacs, April 16, 1964, at New York, N.Y., a document entitled "History Sheet," consisting of eight pages, fastened together with a clip. I have initialed the first page of this exhibit, Mr. Isaacs, and I would like to have you initial it next to my initials, if you would, so that we have no confusion as to the identification of this document.

Mr. ISAACS. Sure.

(Document entitled "History Sheet," consisting of eight pages, marked Exhibit 1.)

Mr. LIEBELER. This is, is it not, a document which was taken from the files provided by the New York City Welfare Department?

Mr. ISAACS. This is, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you recognize it as a type of report that is prepared at a time when a client appears in your office?

Mr. ISAACS. I do.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you recognize it as the history sheet relating to Lee Oswald?

Mr. ISAACS. I do.

Mr. LIEBELER. I show you a single sheet which is entitled "Resource Summary" and ask you if you recognize that as a form that is usually filled out by an applicant.

Mr. ISAACS. I do recognize this as a form that we use in the department.

Mr. LIEBELER. That particular form here appears to be a carbon, does it not?

Mr. ISAACS. What happens is that the original goes to the resource consultant. We have a special section of the Department of Welfare that receives these forms, and if it has any material on there that warrants further investigation the resource section conducts the investigation, but in this instance, as you will note, they said no resources in each place in the form, and we just filed this in our record.

Mr. LIEBELER. The original of that would have been filed in the records of the resource consultant; is that right?

Mr. ISAACS. I believe so, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. I will mark the single sheet entitled "Resource Summary" as Exhibit No. 2 on the deposition of Mr. Martin Isaacs, April 16, 1964, in New York, N.Y. I have initialed that document also, Mr. Isaacs, and ask that you initial it for the purposes of identification.

Mr. ISAACS. Yes, sir.

(Document entitled "Resource Summary" marked Exhibit 2.)

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you recognize that particular resource sheet as the resource sheet that was filled out in connection with the Lee Oswald case?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. I have marked as Exhibit No. 3 on the deposition of Mr. Martin Isaacs, April 16, 1964, in New York, N.Y., a memorandum from Lula Jean Elliott, senior welfare consultant, to Mrs. Ruscoll, supervisor of the special services welfare center, dated June 14, 1962, relating to the repatriation from the U.S.S.R. of Oswald, Lee, and family, consisting of wife and 4 months' infant. I have initialed the memorandum to which I have just referred and request that you do the same for the purposes of identification, down at the bottom.

(Witness complies.)

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you recognize this as memorandum from Miss Elliott?

Mr. ISAACS. Lula Jean Elliott.

Mr. LIEBELER. To Mrs. Ruscoll?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. That memorandum came from the files of the New York State Department of Welfare in connection with the Oswald case? You recognize that, do you not?

Mr. ISAACS. I do, sir.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you have any recollection of any other event that you yourself personally experienced with Oswald during this short contact that you had with him that you haven't told us about?

Mr. ISAACS. There was nothing else that I could remember that was different from what I had told you. It was just this flare-up with him, which was somewhat dramatic, and because it was I thought it merited bringing it to the attention of the administrator. We don't always request that an administrator get in on a situation with us, because she's not always available, and she as a rule does not want to get involved. But in this particular case because it was a repatriate, and we do deal with repatriates in a somewhat different manner—the Federal Government is involved, because they reimburse us 100 percent for all expenses—we did deem it necessary in this particular instance to bring it to the attention of the administrator.

But to answer your original question, there was nothing else that I can recall. I remember, just as they were leaving the office, walking in that direction to just see that they were going down the elevator—we assigned a worker—it wasn't Mr. Lehrman, as I remember; it was some other worker—to just go with them to the hotel and help them along with their luggage, et cetera.

The only other thing that I can remember was the administrator taking his wife into the office—the clients very rarely go into the interior of the office—and bringing her back toward her office. It's an office that's over a block long—or a block long—and later I learned that she brought her there because Mrs. Oswald wanted to breastfeed the child and—

Mr. LIEBELER. So the administrator took her back into the office? To feed the child?

Mr. ISAACS. Yes; to feed the child.

Mr. LIEBELER. What prompted you to call this case to the attention of the administrator? Was it, as you have indicated, simply that it was a repatriation case, or was it because of some peculiarity in the behavior of this individual, or was it a combination of those?

Mr. ISAACS. Well, I would say it was a combination. He was rather severe in his manner—for want of a better description at this time. He was insistent. He stomped around and simply would not accept the decision that this money would be forthcoming. And as a rule we don't get this kind of reaction from the clients that we deal with. They accept this kind of service that they get from us, and in fact they are very happy to receive it, and they are very grateful. In this case we had a different kind of attitude. It was one of resentment, and we couldn't, at least on my level I felt I couldn't insist that he take it until—rather accept the decision until I cleared with the administrator.

Now, even Mrs. Ruscoll found it necessary because of his—I assume because of the discussion that she had with him, she found it necessary to call Miss Elliott, and Miss Elliott did, of course, supervise our section, and her decision was to be final, and this is the decision we used.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you have any other information in respect of this incident or in respect of Oswald generally that you can think of at this time that you think might be helpful in connection with this report?

Mr. ISAACS. Well, I don't have any other information. All I can say is that when this incident occurred, it did not cross our mind that the—the name Oswald meant nothing to us. It did not cross our minds that this was the person, and when we were looking at this on TV and just hearing the story without actually getting a visual picture of Lee Oswald it still didn't register with us. It was after I had seen the picture on the screen and was horrified—well, we were horrified without having seen that, but the additional horror because it was somebody that you had actually met and helped to return to Texas.

At that point I called Mrs. Ruscoll and asked her if she knew who this Lee

Oswald was. She said she was calling Miss Bloomfield, who is her—the field supervisor, and they said that—Mrs. Ruscoll said that she's pretty certain that this is the person that we had met and helped to return to Texas, and it was that—I think it was that telephone conversation that was responsible for her having the case record pulled the very next morning by our central office. Miss Bloomfield works out of central office, and she—the case was no longer there, and she gave it to the commissioner, as I remember it, and, of course, then I read it in the newspaper that the commissioner had given this record to the FBI.

Now, beyond that, I really—I wish I could be more helpful, but I am sorry to say that this is all I know about the case.

Mr. LIEBELER. You have been very helpful, Mr. Isaacs. On behalf of the Commission I want to thank you very much for coming in this afternoon and giving us the testimony and producing the records that you have. It is another example of the way in which the City of New York has cooperated with the Commission and with the FBI in its work. We appreciate it very much.

Mr. ISAACS. We are only too happy to help.

---

### TESTIMONY OF PAULINE VIRGINIA BATES

The testimony of Pauline Virginia Bates was taken at 5:32 p.m., on March 25, 1964, in the office of the U.S. attorney, 301 Post Office Building, Bryan and Ervay Streets, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. Albert E. Jenner, Jr., assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. JENNER. Mrs. Bates, will you stand and be sworn, please?

Do you solemnly swear in your testimony which you are about to give, to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mrs. BATES. I do.

Mr. JENNER. It's Mrs. Bates, is it not?

Mrs. BATES. It's Miss. I'm not married. It's optional—I have been. My name is Pauline.

Mr. JENNER. Pauline Virginia—isn't it?

Mrs. BATES. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. This is Pauline Virginia Bates.

Mrs. BATES. I am Albert E. Jenner, Jr. I am a member of the legal staff for the Presidential Assassination Commission and have been authorized by the Commission to depose you—take your deposition, make inquiries of you with respect to the subject matter of the inquiry of the Commission.

Did you receive, oh, last week, I would think, a letter from J. Lee Rankin, general counsel for the Commission?

Mrs. BATES. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. And enclosed with that letter is a copy of the Executive order of President Lyndon B. Johnson on November 29, 1963, Number 11130, and a copy of the Senate Joint Resolution, Number 137, authorizing the creation of the Commission, together with a copy of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission?

Mrs. BATES. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. And, Mrs. Bates, you appear voluntarily at our request?

Mrs. BATES. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. The Commission, as you have noted from those enclosed papers, has been ordered, directed to inquire into all facts and circumstances surrounding, leading up to, and those appearing after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the President of the United States, and any contacts on your part with any of the parties.

We understand that you, during his lifetime, had some contact with Lee Harvey Oswald and I think, in fact, transcribed some manuscript notes of his?

Mrs. BATES. They weren't transcribed; they were copied.

Mr. JENNER. You copied them?

Mrs. BATES. Uh-huh.