

General Walker's Warning: Ruby Might Talk

On October 5, 1966, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals granted Jack Ruby a new trial, citing the fact that Ruby's statements to the police shortly after the shooting should not have been admissible. The death sentence was reversed, and the venue was changed to Wichita Falls, Texas. When the sheriff of Wichita Falls arrived to transfer Ruby, he noticed that Ruby was ill and refused to move him. Ruby was taken to Parkland Hospital on December 19, 1966, and was diagnosed with pneumonia. Shortly after that, it was determined that Ruby had cancer in both lungs.

On December 28, 1966, nine days after Jack Ruby entered the hospital, General Walker wrote to Billy James Hargis and expressed his fear that Ruby might talk, and then Walker issued a warning. The information was buried in the third paragraph of a letter following a trivial discourse about a briefcase Hargis had given him, his regrets that he could not attend a function with Hargis and his family, and his libel law suit. The letter was discovered by the author and revealed here for the first time. Walker wrote:

Another peculiarity—with de Mohrenschildt returning to Dallas

from Haiti as Rubenstein is allegedly dying with cancer (and might talk)—de M. made a front-page spread; and our informant produced his address and whom he is staying with—not good.

A warning. When Rubenstein leaves the hospital in a box (the only way he will come out), there is no further “block” to returning the blame on the right wing. The books and press will gradually pick it up again. RFK must have it—it must be done, as insurance and assurance—an RFK political necessity.

The letter concluded with seven unrelated paragraphs about the business matters of the Christian Crusade.²⁶⁷⁵

The letter and comments are extraordinary. Walker is not completely sure Ruby is dying of cancer, deeming it only an allegation. History regards Walker as a near victim of the president’s assassin, not a confederate. As such, Walker has no need to be concerned about George de Mohrenschildt, the Russian who had an early relationship with Oswald—and may have known that he was not the true Communist the Warren Commission concluded he was. De Mohrenschildt suspected Oswald was involved in the Walker shooting incident from the beginning and asked him how it was that Oswald had missed him. In turn, Oswald gave de Mohrenschildt the photo, taken before the shooting, of him standing in the backyard holding his pistol and rifle, and the Communist newspapers, which was inscribed with the words, “The Hunter of Fascism. Ha, Ha, Ha.” The inscribed comments suggest that Oswald was letting his friend know that the shooting was a hoax. If so, Walker had plenty to worry about regarding de Mohrenschildt and what he might say on his recent return to Dallas. Otherwise, as Oswald’s near victim, Walker would have had no need to take the extraordinary step of using an informer to determine where de Mohrenschildt resided and with whom. De Mohrenschildt’s return and interview in the newspaper was, as he put it in his letter to Hargis, “not good” for Walker.

Walker’s worry and warning that Ruby might talk is astonishing. It is inconceivable that Walker meant anything else in the message to Hargis other than that he would murder Ruby before he allowed him to leave the hospital (and presumably leave Dallas for Wichita Falls for his re-trial, where Walker had no power). As long as Ruby was in Dallas, the comment suggests, Walker could block him from talking. With Ruby out of the Dallas County Jail, and on his way to the change of venue for re-trial in Wichita Falls (which was scheduled for February 1967), then the block on his talking was off. Only a guilty man makes the type of remark Walker made to Hargis. (As we shall see in the next chapter, during the Clay Shaw trial, Walker relayed his concerns about Marguerite Oswald in another letter, and had informers watching her very closely. He embedded the remarks, similarly, in an otherwise ordinary letter to another close associate.)