

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel
President's Commission on the
Assassination of President Kennedy

SUBJECT : Soviet Hunting Societies

1. In the Soviet Union there are both civilian and military hunting societies which are amateur recreational or sports organizations. The former are organized by republic and subordinate political subdivision; the latter by military district. Civilian hunting societies are affiliated with the All-Union Society of Hunters, an organization probably under the jurisdiction of the Directorate of Game Preserves and Hunting of the Ministry of Agriculture. According to his membership card Lee Harvey OSWALD belonged to a civilian hunting society - the Byelorussian Society of Hunters and Fishermen.

2. A Soviet citizen may join a Hunting Society by being sponsored by friends who are members, or by joining through the hunting group at his place of employment. Membership in hunting societies is open to any person over the age of eighteen who is in good health and who has no criminal record. Each society reviews applications for membership which it receives. An applicant's place of employment is contacted and may or may not approve the granting of membership depending on the applicant's work record. The membership fee was reported in 1953 to have been 60 rubles. Membership booklets issued to members of civilian hunting societies contain hunting permits or licenses. Thus, membership in a society brings with it the right to hunt.

3. In addition to, or in place of, formal membership in the Hunting Society, a Soviet citizen may join the "hunting group" at his place of employment, if such a group exists. As a general practice Soviet factories support recreational groups to accommodate employees who have a mutual interest in some sport or hobby such as chess, swimming, or hunting. Members of a hunting group are able to go on group hunting outings at no cost to themselves, since the plant provides transportation and equipment. Group members do not normally own their own weapons since a hunting gun is a fairly expensive item for a factory worker to purchase. For those who do not own their own weapons the hunting group makes weapons (shotguns only) and ammunition available.

4. Any Soviet citizen may purchase a shotgun, but only members of a Hunting Society are entitled to purchase a rifle. All hunting guns must be registered with the militia by the owner immediately after purchase, and the seller presumably also registers the sale with the militia. Hunting Society members must also register their weapons with the Society. Purchases of weapons may be made at state sport stores upon display of a Society membership card, or possibly may be made directly from an arms factory upon forwarding the membership card number. In the latter case the weapon can be picked up at the post office only upon presentation of the membership card. Any legally acquired weapon, and ammunition for it, may be kept by the owner in his home. Any citizen may purchase shotgun shells, but bullets and cartridge loading materials may be purchased only upon presentation of the purchaser's Hunting Society membership card showing militia registration of his rifle. The foregoing regulations are believed to apply also to foreigners residing in the Soviet Union.


Richard Helms
Deputy Director for Plans

COMMISSION EXHIBIT No. 2670