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Lee Harvey Oswald in New Orleans: A Reappraisal

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Louisiana has produced many famous native sons. None has achieved the notoriety and attention of Lee Harvey Oswald. Not even the “Kingfish,” Huey P. Long, managed to attract the continued attention and scrutiny of the public, the journalist, and the scholar to the degree achieved by Oswald. As the alleged assassin of President Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald has been studied, debated, and psychoanalyzed by a never ending host of writers. Their descriptions of the man range from a sexually frustrated husband to the assertion that the real Lee Harvey Oswald was murdered by the KGB in the Soviet Union and his place taken by a KGB agent.¹

Only twenty-four years old at the time of his death, Oswald led a complex life, many threads of which have not yet been unraveled. Included among those threads are Oswald’s career in the United States Marine Corps, his defection to the Soviet Union, his alleged ties with United States government intelligence agencies, and his highly controversial and very disputable accusation by the Warren Commission as the assassin of President Kennedy. One of the most enigmatic and least understood facets of Oswald’s career is that of his five-month stay in New Orleans during the spring and summer of 1963.

Lee Harvey Oswald was born in New Orleans on October 18, 1939. His father, a collector of insurance premiums, had died two months previously. The financial strain which resulted forced Lee’s mother, Marguerite, to go to work and to become one of Louisiana’s first applicants for aid to dependent children. Along with his

¹ The literature on Oswald is enormous, much of it of no value.

brother, Robert, and his half brother, John Pic, Lee was cared for mainly by his aunt and by babysitters. When he was three, he was sent to an orphans' home and remained there for several months. In 1944 Lee and Marguerite moved to Dallas where she remarried. In 1946 Lee spent the summer visiting relatives in Covington, Louisiana, and began grammar school there in the fall. He returned home in January, 1947, and attended school in Fort Worth. His record indicates that he was an average pupil, with no special problems of an emotional or social nature. One of his former teachers remembers him as a normal child.²

The Warren Commission attempted to depict Lee Oswald as an emotionally unstable child: "An indication of the nature of his character [when he was seven] was provided . . . when he was sent to New Orleans to visit the family of his mother's sister for two or three weeks." Lee refused to play with other children his own age and often complained of not being able to spend as much time as he wanted with his older brother and half brother. It is, in fact, not at all unusual for a young child to refuse to play with strange children in a strange city, nor is it unusual for him to want to play with his older brothers.³

In 1952 Marguerite, now divorced, and Lee moved to New York City, where he attended junior high school. Because of repeated truancy violations, Lee was placed in a Youth Home and underwent psychiatric examination. The psychiatrist found Oswald to be tense and withdrawn. Lee, however, did not exhibit any paranoid tendencies, nor did he display the potential for assassination. His intelligence was listed as "superior."⁴

Lee and his mother returned to New Orleans in 1954. After finishing the ninth grade at Beauregard Junior High, he attended Warren Easton High School for a few months but quit and went to work. It was in 1954 and 1955 that Oswald first began to study

² *Report of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy* (Washington, 1964), pp. 377-78; 669-73. Hereafter cited as *Warren Report*.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 670-75.

⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation, John F. Kennedy Assassination Files. Released December 1977 and January 1978. 98,000 pages of documents in Special Collections Room, Southeastern Louisiana University Library, Hammond, La. Section 51, No. 105-38341, Report of Special Agent John James O'Flaherty, December 3, 1963. Hereafter cited as FBI Files.

Marxist and socialist literature. But flying was one of his major interests and he joined the Civil Air Patrol Cadets and made the acquaintance of David Ferrie. His main interest, apparently, was the Marine Corps, for he tried to enlist when he was only sixteen years old. He was rejected and had to wait until his seventeenth birthday before joining the Marines.⁵

Lee Harvey Oswald eventually spent three years in the United States Marine Corps. Part of his service career was spent at the Atsugi Base in Japan, where he worked as a radar operator and had access to classified information about U-2 flights. He was also taught Russian by the Marines. These two aspects of his service career have given rise to much speculation about Oswald's possible connection with intelligence agencies. Since some of the evidence about this is still classified, it is impossible to determine the exact nature of Oswald's status.⁶

In September, 1959, Oswald received an honorable discharge from active duty in order to return to Fort Worth and care for his ailing mother. (After his defection to the Soviet Union, the discharge was changed to dishonorable.) Only a week after his return to Fort Worth, Lee Harvey Oswald went to New Orleans and booked passage on the *Marion Lykes*, bound for Europe. His destination was the Soviet Union, and he arrived in Moscow on October 16, 1959. In a public letter to the United States embassy, the twenty-year-old veteran renounced his American citizenship and applied for permanent residency status in the Soviet Union.⁷

Little is known about Oswald's two-and-a-half-year stay in the USSR. The latest theory is that the Soviet government obtained secret information from Oswald about United States radar technology and the flight patterns of the top-secret U-2 spy plane. The Soviets then used this information to shoot down Francis Gary Powers. Another theory holds that the real Lee Harvey Oswald was assassinated and his place taken by a KGB agent. The documentary evidence is too sketchy to verify these and other speculations about Oswald. It does make clear, however, that the

⁵ *Ibid.*, Section EBF, Document 377; *Warren Report*, pp. 678-80.

⁶ For the latest work on the subject, see Edward Jay Epstein, *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald* (New York, 1978).

⁷ *Warren Report*, pp. 690-93.

Central Intelligence Agency began taking a very serious interest in him.⁸

During most of his stay in the Soviet Union, Oswald worked as a metal worker in an electronics factory in Minsk. There he met, in March, 1961, Marina Nikolayevna Prusakova, the niece of a colonel in the KGB. One month later Lee and Marina were married at a civil ceremony in Minsk. Sometime in the fall of 1961, Oswald began making preparations to leave the Soviet Union. On June 2, 1962, the Oswalds left and arrived in Fort Worth two weeks later.⁹

In the Fort Worth-Dallas area, there was a small but closely knit Russian emigré community. Lee and Marina joined it and became friends with many of the members of the community. Among their closest friends were George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt, who had a long history of secret intelligence activities. Oswald worked several months as a sheet metal worker. Then he worked at Jaggars-Chiles-Stovall Co., a graphics arts firm, specializing in detailed map work. After working there a few months, Oswald was fired. Unable to find a new job and experiencing increasing marital difficulties, Lee Harvey Oswald moved to New Orleans on April 24, 1963.¹⁰

Oswald's five-month stay in New Orleans in 1963 is the subject of much dispute and controversy. The official Warren Commission version is that Oswald engaged in pro-Castro activities and disseminated Marxist propaganda. The other version is that beneath the Marxian surface, Oswald associated with and may have conspired with various right-wing organizations and individuals. Both versions will now be analyzed in order to determine which is the more accurate.

According to the Warren Commission, after arriving in New Orleans, Oswald remained for some time at the home of his aunt, Mrs. Lillian Murret. He spent most of that time looking for a job, answering many classified newspaper advertisements and filing an application with the Louisiana State Unemployment Office. On

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 691-702; Files of the Central Intelligence Agency on the Assassination of President Kennedy. 3,747 page collection, Special Collections Room, Southeastern Louisiana University Library, Hammond, La. Unnumbered Documents on Oswald's Foreign Activities. Hereafter cited as CIA Files.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Warren Report*, pp. 713-26.

May 9, Oswald was hired by the William B. Reily Co., makers of Luzianne Coffee. He then rented an apartment at 4905 Magazine Street and set up house with Marina and their daughter, June. For two months Oswald worked steadily, and the family led a normal and uneventful life.¹¹

On July 19, Lee Harvey Oswald lost his job because of inefficiency. He had spent long hours away from the coffee company, much of the time at a nearby garage, where he discussed guns with the co-owner of the garage. Oswald filed an unemployment claim on July 22, and would collect weekly unemployment checks thereafter. Although he did seek a new job, he was unable to find one. Much of his time was spent at home reading books he checked out of the public library or taking his family on outings to the park, the zoo, and the beach. Oswald frequently went crabbing, and had to teach Marina how to boil them in the manner New Orleanians love.¹²

During this period, according to the Warren Commission, Oswald began making plans either to return to the Soviet Union or to go to Cuba. He began to act more and more depressed, and on one occasion, Marina discovered him crying. Frequent arguments began to characterize the Oswald home life, especially about his habit of walking around the house nude. Although she was invited to return to Texas, Marina remained with Lee, for he did display affection for her and June, and would often speak of the new baby they were expecting.¹³

In July 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald began to assume the role of a political activist. On July 27, for example, he spoke about his experiences in the USSR at the Jesuit House of Studies at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama. Lee also organized a New Orleans branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, an organization devoted to promoting a favorable image of Fidel Castro and his Cuban communist regime. He wrote several letters to the national headquarters of the Committee and to the American Communist Party.¹⁴

¹¹ FBI Files, Section 53, No. NO100-16601. This 85 page report formed the basis for the Warren Commission's version of Oswald's activities in New Orleans.

¹² *Ibid.*; Priscilla Johnson McMillan, *Marina and Lee* (New York, 1977): pp. 307-81.

¹³ *Warren Report*, pp. 726-29.

¹⁴ FBI Files, Section 53, No. NO100-16601.

On August 5 Oswald visited a store managed by Carlos Bringuier, one of the leaders of the anti-Castro Cuban refugee community in New Orleans. Oswald told Bringuier that as an ex-Marine, he could assist in training Cubans for a guerrilla war against Castro. The next day, he returned to the store and gave Bringuier his "Guidebook for Marines."¹⁵

Several days later Bringuier saw Oswald passing out Fair Play for Cuba leaflets. Bringuier and his two Cuban companions started a fight with Oswald, and the four were arrested for disturbing the peace. On August 10, Oswald was interviewed in jail by Lieutenant Francis Martello of the New Orleans Police Department and by FBI Agent John Quigley. He told them that he was one of thirty-five members of the New Orleans branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and that he knew the president of the organization, A.J. Hidell. This was actually one of the many aliases which Oswald used. Oswald was released on bail and two days later pleaded guilty and paid a ten dollar fine.¹⁶

On August 16, Oswald and a companion handed out "Hands Off Cuba" propaganda in front of the International Trade Mart building. They were televised on local television for evening news programs. The following day Oswald was visited by William Stuckey, who invited him to appear on his radio show, "Latin Listening Post." A five-minute tape of the Oswald interview was played. Stuckey also arranged for a debate between Oswald and Bringuier. In the debate, broadcast on August 21, Oswald discussed Marxism and praised the Castro regime. Stuckey would later write that Oswald was well-mannered, cooperative, and intelligent in the debate.¹⁷

Sometime in August Oswald informed Marina that he intended to go to Cuba by way of Mexico. On September 17, he obtained a Mexican tourist card from the Mexican consulate. On the morning

¹⁵ *Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy*, 26 vols. (Washington, 1964), 10, 51-62. Hereafter cited as *Warren Commission Hearings*.

¹⁶ *Warren Report*, pp. 728-29.

¹⁷ The tapes of the interviews with Oswald are in "Interview With Lee Harvey Oswald in New Orleans, August 17, 1963," Truth Records, 1967; and in "Oswald: Self Portrait in Red," 2 record set, Information Council of the Americas, 1964; Stuckey's comments about Oswald are in FBI Files, Section EBF-1153, William K. Stuckey, Untitled description of his conversation with Oswald, 24 November 1963; this FBI file also contains the entire transcription of the Oswald radio interviews.

of September 23, Marina Oswald departed for Texas with Ruth Paine, a close friend with whom she and June would stay in Irving. The next night Lee Harvey Oswald left his apartment and on September 25 he took a Continental Trailways bus for Houston, the first leg of his journey to Mexico City.¹⁸

This, in summary, represents the Warren Commission's account of the activities of Lee Harvey Oswald in New Orleans during the spring and summer of 1963. The Commission failed to account for much of Oswald's time, thus leaving many gaps in its story of his visit to New Orleans. An attempt to fill those gaps has been made by Oswald's latest chronicler, Priscilla Johnson McMillan:

Taking Marina's recollections of her husband's activities, the testimony of the Oswalds' neighbors, the minimum number of visits Lee paid to the public library—occasions when he actually checked out a book (twenty)—his visits to the Louisiana Employment Office (sixteen), the times he went looking for jobs between July 22 and the middle of August (an unknown but considerable number), occasions when he was out picketing or at the radio station (five), his forays to printing establishments (perhaps a dozen), his visits to Winn-Dixie and his post office box, his trips with Marina and June to the Murrets' (four or five times), to Lake Pontchartrain, the zoo, the botanical garden, or just exploring the French Quarter, to say nothing of times when he spent the entire day reading in the public library or when Marina sent him to the movies so she could catch up on housework or have a little time to herself—all of these added together account for most of Oswald's time in New Orleans while he was not actually at work.¹⁹

Most of these "activities" of Oswald's are speculation on Ms. McMillan's part. There is, for example, no available evidence which indicates that Oswald ever attended a movie or actually looked for work after July 21 or that he spent "the entire day reading in the public library." Marina Oswald Porter's recollections of what Lee told her he was going to do hardly prove that he actually engaged in those activities.

It is difficult to describe with precision the exact nature and

¹⁸ *Warren Report*, pp. 729–31.

¹⁹ McMillan, *Marina and Lee*, p. 371.

extent of Oswald's activities in New Orleans that were not mentioned by the Warren Commission. Much of the evidence remains classified to this day, and the evidence that is available is incomplete. That evidence does, however, demonstrate that the Warren Commission failed to investigate fully many of the New Orleans activities of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Oswald listed the address of his Fair Play for Cuba Committee as 544 Camp Street. This is in the same building as the private detective offices of W. Guy Banister, a former FBI agent and New Orleans police official. A well-known leader of the right-wing extremist element in New Orleans, Banister was a member of the Minutemen, head of the Anti-Communism League of the Caribbean, and a founder of the Friends of Democratic Cuba. All three were militantly anti-Castro organizations. Banister was also closely associated with segregationist groups in the city. After his death in 1964, a search of his offices revealed extensive files on such topics as American Central Intelligence Agency, Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and Clay Shaw.²⁰

Banister and Oswald were seen together on numerous occasions. Once, the two were observed having coffee in Mancuso's Restaurant, located on the first floor of the Camp Street building. On another occasion they were seen in the restaurant with David Ferrie and Carlos Quiroga, a Cuban exile leader. Several times Oswald was seen entering Banister's second floor office. One of Oswald's co-workers at the Reily Coffee Company saw Oswald and Banister walking together on Camp Street. One person remembers seeing the two at a White Citizens' Council meeting. Two people remember Oswald as one of the participants in a discussion of the racial issue. The discussion, which took place on the campus of Louisiana State University in New Orleans, involved Oswald and Banister debating federal integration policies with a number of students.²¹

If Oswald was simply a pro-Castro Marxist, as the Warren Commission claimed, it is curious that he would have spent so much time in the company of Guy Banister. Banister's well-known

²⁰ Harold Weisberg, *Oswald in New Orleans* (New York: 1967), pp. 326-48; Jim Garrison, *A Heritage of Stone* (New York, 1970), pp. 94-101.

²¹ Weisberg, *Oswald in New Orleans*, pp. 349-52; Confidential Interviews.

extremist views, as well as his close association with anti-Castro and anti-Communist elements, hardly make him the ideal companion for Lee Harvey Oswald. Yet, all known accounts of Oswald and Banister together agree that the two men were friendly and cordial with each other and expressed similar political and social viewpoints.²²

Another New Orleans figure with whom Oswald associated was David William Ferrie, one of the central characters in the investigation into the assassination launched by District Attorney Jim Garrison. David Ferrie was a remarkable man. Among his avocations were flying, chemistry, human anatomy, hypnotism, offbeat religions, and political theory. A close associate and friend of Banister's, Ferrie, at the time of Oswald's stay in New Orleans, worked for attorney G. Wray Gill. He had previously worked as a pilot flying munitions and supplies to anti-Castro Cuban groups in Cuba and secretly flying refugees out of the island.²³

Ferrie was first associated with the assassination on November 23, 1963, when Jack Martin, one of Banister's employees, told the New Orleans police and the FBI that Ferrie and Banister were involved in the murder. Although Martin later retracted his statement, the FBI maintained intense interest in Ferrie. The Bureau interviewed him on November 25. Apparently the information Ferrie gave the FBI was highly sensitive, for only nine pages of the transcript of the interview have yet been released. The remaining thirty are still classified "Top Secret". Moreover in 1976 the National Archives revealed that an original statement of David W. Ferrie "transcribed in Commission Document 205" has mysteriously disappeared from the archives collection of Kennedy assassination source materials. The Central Intelligence Agency also investigated Ferrie. Portions of its reports have also been deleted.²⁴

David Ferrie was very active in the anti-Castro Cuban activities in New Orleans from 1959 through 1963. He and Lee Harvey Oswald were seen together several times in the summer of 1963.

²² Confidential interviews.

²³ Garrison, *Heritage of Stone*, pp. 101-9; Rosemary James and Jack Wardlaw, *Plot or Politics? The Garrison Case and its Cast* (New Orleans: 1967): pp. 39-47.

²⁴ FBI Files, Section 19, Document 1489; "National Archives—Security Classification Problems Involving Warren Commission Files and Other Records," *Hearings Before the House Subcommittee on Government Information* (Washington: 1976), p. 38.

Twice they were seen conversing in Mancuso's Restaurant. They were seen at a segregationist meeting in the late spring of that year. In August they were seen at a party in the French Quarter. According to two people who attended the party, Oswald and Ferrie discussed United States foreign policy, especially with regard to Cuba. Both men expressed strong disapproval of the failure to overthrow the Castro regime. A recently declassified FBI memorandum notes that as early as the evening of November 22, 1963, press accounts of the relationship between Ferrie and Oswald in New Orleans were being televised.²⁵

Clay Shaw was, of course, one of the main figures in the story of Oswald in New Orleans. Because of the lack of substantial evidence, the exact nature of the relationship between Oswald and Shaw remains a matter of speculation. The investigation by District Attorney Garrison's office resulted in the famous trial in which Shaw was acquitted of conspiracy to murder John Kennedy. Yet Garrison did produce some evidence linking Shaw with Oswald. The highly dubious testimony of such witnesses as Perry Raymond Russo, Vernon Bundy, and Charles Spiesel has justifiably been dismissed as unreliable. But four reliable witnesses did see Shaw and Oswald together in the small Louisiana town of Clinton in the late summer of 1963. New evidence recently made available includes two photographs, one showing Clay Shaw and David Ferrie together at a party, the other showing Shaw approaching Oswald as Oswald was passing out Fair Play for Cuba Committee leaflets in front of the International Trade Mart Building. Newly declassified CIA documents establish the fact that Shaw had previously worked as a domestic contact agent for the CIA. None of the evidence thus far available, however, provides any indication that Shaw and Oswald even knew each other, except for the testimony about the Clinton trip.²⁶

One feature of Oswald's five-month sojourn in New Orleans that

²⁵ FBI Files, Section 16, Document 1294, p.3; Confidential Interviews.

²⁶ *State of Louisiana v. Clay L. Shaw*, testimony of Edward Lee McGehee, John Manchester, Henry Earl Palmer, and Corrie Collins, 10–20 February 1969; the photographs are in F. Peter Model and Robert J. Groden, *JFK: The Case for Conspiracy* (New York: 1976), p. 77; CIA Files, Document 1326–1042, Memorandum of 28 September 1967, Report of Clay Shaw's Activities for the Agency; also "Memo for Deputy Director for Support," 1 May 1967.

has never been revealed is the fact that he made several trips to Baton Rouge in the summer of 1963. According to witnesses, Oswald accompanied a prominent leader of the White Citizens' Council and of other segregationist organizations to Baton Rouge six or eight times in July and August. These witnesses met Oswald, who was introduced to them as "Leon" Oswald. Oswald's companion, who was a personal friend of two of these witnesses, stated that he was employing "Leon" to do construction work for him. Oswald, however, was not dressed in work clothes; he was wearing what appeared to be "dressy clothes." Furthermore, Oswald and his companion engaged in discussions which included criticisms of American foreign policy as being "soft on Communism" and of United States civil-rights programs. On their last visit to Baton Rouge, the two men were accompanied by two "Latins," neither of whom said anything to them.²⁷

Shortly before he was shot by Jack Ruby, Lee Harvey Oswald was asked if Cuba would be better off now that President Kennedy was dead. Oswald's reply was that Cuba would be the same since Lyndon Johnson would follow the same Cuban policy that Kennedy had pursued. The FBI agent who asked that question of Oswald did not realize that he had touched upon one of the most significant aspects of the entire Kennedy assassination controversy. For the "Cuban Connection" with the assassination is still one of the most complex and mysterious features of the problem. It involves Fidel Castro, pro and anti-Cuban exile groups in the United States, CIA-Mafia assassination plots against Castro, and many other individuals and groups. The story of the "Cuban Connection" with the assassination is a topic beyond the scope of this article, but part of it does involve Lee Harvey Oswald and his Cuban activities in New Orleans.²⁸

Ever since the accession to power by Fidel Castro in 1959, New Orleans had been one of the nation's leading centers of anti-Castro activity. The ever-increasing flow of Cuban refugees into the city led to the formation of several anti-Castro organizations. One of these was the Crusade to Free Cuba, founded by three prominent New Orleans civic leaders. Two others were the Cuban

²⁷ Confidential interviews.

²⁸ *Warren Report*, pp. 609, 629.

Revolutionary Democratic Front and the Cuban Revolutionary Council. Prominent members of these organizations were Sergio Arcacha Smith, Carlos Bringuier, Carlos Quiroga, and associated with them were Guy Banister and David Ferrie. All three groups were sponsored by the CIA and were to form the New Orleans nucleus of the Bay of Pigs invasion force.²⁹

After the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the CIA, the Department of Defense, and the FBI continued to employ Cuban exile groups in New Orleans, Miami, and Dallas for anti-Castro movements. The basis of the plan was "to use Cuban exiles in operations designed to foment an internal revolution in Cuba." Several camps were established in Louisiana, camps where Cuban exiles were trained by CIA operatives in paramilitary techniques. For example, on July 24, 1963, ten Cubans arrived in New Orleans to join the training camp located near Lacombe. The FBI intended to use Carlos Bringuier as one of the leaders of the camp, located on the property of a brother of the former owner of a gambling casino in Havana. The Cubans, however, immediately began making preparations to launch raids against Cuba. The Kennedy administration ordered the end of these operations, and on July 31 the FBI raided the camp and seized over 2,400 pounds of dynamite and twenty bomb casings.³⁰

The available evidence indicates that the Kennedy administration had decided that the Cuban exiles were too dangerous to be trusted for these maneuvers and ordered a cessation of these covert operations. The camps were disbanded, and the Cuban refugee organizations were refused further government support. In August 1963 the CIA contacted underworld figure Sam Giancana and discussed methods of assassinating Castro. The agency also began plotting with AMLASH, the code name for a high-ranking Cuban official, about covert operations against the Cuban government. The Cuban exile groups in New Orleans were not informed of these developments and believed that the Kennedy administration had betrayed them. Therefore, they continued to plot against Cas-

²⁹ United States Senate, Report No. 94-755, *The Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: Performance of the Intelligence Agencies*, Book V., *Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities* (Washington: 1976): pp. 11-13. Hereafter cited as *Schweiker Committee Report*.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

tro and engaged in several guerrilla raids in Cuba. Fidel Castro was well informed about all these activities. In a September 7, 1963, public speech, he warned "United States leaders" that "they themselves would not be safe" if they continued to encourage terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders.³¹

The Warren Commission was unaware of these matters and failed to investigate beneath the surface of Oswald's New Orleans activities. The evidence strongly indicates that Oswald's Fair Play for Cuba Committee was, in fact, a fraudulent organization. Only two other possible members of the committee were found. One was a professor at Tulane University, well known for his socialist views. The name of the other possible member was never disclosed. The 544 Camp Street address of the committee had been rented by the anti-Castro Cuban Revolutionary Council.³²

Despite his ostensible Marxian and pro-Castro stance, Lee Harvey Oswald made frequent contact with the anti-Castro elements in New Orleans. His personal notebook contained the names of Carlos Bringuier and the Cuban Student Derectorate [*sic*], an anti-Castro organization. It also contained the listings of three stores catering to Cuban exiles and their addresses: 117 Camp Street; 107 Decatur Street; and 1032 Canal Street. He was often seen with Carlos Quiroga, an anti-Castro leader of the Cuban Revolutionary Democratic Front, which also had offices in the 544 Camp Street building. Early one morning in the last half of August, Oswald was seen in the Habana Bar on Decatur Street drinking with an anti-Castro Latin. One of Oswald's co-workers at the Reily Coffee Company remembers seeing him with a Cuban and discussing the desirability of overthrowing the Castro regime. Attorney Dean Andrews told the Warren Commission that Oswald came into his office several times with some Mexican "gay kids." Andrews also saw Oswald handing out "kooky Castro things" in front of the Maison Blanche Building on Canal Street. Oswald informed Andrews that he was being paid to pass out the literature.³³

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-21; 57-60.

³² FBI Files, Section 57, Document 583, No. NO44-2064, 12 December 1963.

³³ Notebook of Lee Harvey Oswald, p. 83, FBI Files, Section 58; Andrew's testimony is in *Warren Commission Hearings*, vol. 11, pp. 325-39; confidential interview.

During the summer of 1963, Oswald was observed meeting with FBI agent Warren deBrueys "on numerous occasions." The observer was Orest Pena, himself an FBI informer and an active member of many of the New Orleans Cuban exile groups. Pena testified before the Warren Commission that Special Agent deBrueys frequently attended meetings of the Cuban Revolutionary Council and was an active participant in the meetings. DeBrueys apparently was the FBI's New Orleans liaison man with the Cuban groups there. Pena stated that deBrueys threatened "I will get rid of your ass" if he ever mentioned their meetings. It is worth noting that no accounts of the DeBrueys-Oswald or the DeBrueys-Pena meetings are to be found among the 98,000 pages of recently released FBI Kennedy assassination files. DeBrueys subsequently has denied meeting Oswald and refuses comment on his contacts with Pena.³⁴

Many documents from the FBI files on the assassination suggest a very close relationship between the assassination and the Cuban matters. In one document, for example, a man stated that he sat near Oswald at an anti-Castro meeting in Dallas only a month before the assassination. Another document reveals that a leading anti-Castro Cuban from Miami met with Oswald in Mexico or Texas on November 1. On November 22, a man named [Carlos?] Quiroga told a large group of people that he had known that the assassination was going to take place. An unidentified Cuban told Gregory Basila, a pharmacist from San Antonio on November 21 that "Kennedy will be killed in Dallas tomorrow." An urgent telegram from J. Edgar Hoover to the FBI Legat in Madrid states that the Spanish intelligence had a report that "attributes president's assassination to Castro and claims that Oswald was acting as Cuban agent." A man who had previously obtained arms for Cuban revolutionaries heard reports in Miami that \$25,000 to \$50,000 was being offered to assassinate the president.³⁵

The files of the Central Intelligence Agency also reveal numerous

³⁴ CBS Reports Inquiry, "The American Assassins," Part Two, 26 November 1975; *Warren Commission Hearings*, vol. 2, pp. 353-62.

³⁵ FBI Files, Section 58, Document 646, 19 December 1963; Section 7, Document 535, 26 November 1963; Section 59, Report of Special Agent James J. O'Connor, Miami, 31 December 1963; Section 23, Document 1762, 24 November 1963; Section 21, Document 1643, 6 December 1963.

indications of possible Cuban involvement in the assassination. One diplomatic source told a CIA agent that he learned from a reliable source that the “Chicom” [Chinese Communists] and Castro were behind the assassination. A CIA source in Madrid heard a former Cuban journalist inform a friend early on November 22 that “Kennedy would be killed that day.” Another source told the CIA that a “Miss T.” heard Cubans talking about having the president shot. Still another source informed the agency that Chicom and Cuban sympathizers were responsible. According to another source, local Cuban officials “Appear happy about it [the assassination].” One Cuban stated, “He [Oswald] had nothing to do with Kennedy’s murder.”³⁶

On November 25, 1963, a Latin American, “D”, informed the American embassy in Mexico City that he was in the Cuban consulate there on September 17 and saw Oswald receive a large sum of money from a Cuban as his payment for assassinating the president. The Warren Commission claimed that “D’s” story was false since Oswald was in New Orleans that day. The Commission, however, found evidence only of Oswald’s being in New Orleans the next day. Oswald’s whereabouts from 9 a.m. on September 17 until 8 p.m. September 18 are unknown. The Warren Commission also did not know that the CIA later received further information that provided strong confirmation of “D’s” story that the Cubans paid Oswald to assassinate the president. The CIA also learned that on November 23, 1963, a Cuban-American, friendly to the Castro regime, and somehow “involved in the assassination,” had crossed the border from Texas into Mexico. It knew, too, that on the night of November 22, 1963, a Cuban flew into Mexico City and boarded a Cubana Airlines flight for Havana.³⁷

The evidence demonstrates that Lee Harvey Oswald led a “double life” in New Orleans. On the one hand, he posed as a Marxian socialist and a fervent supporter of the Castro regime. On the other hand, he associated with many people closely involved in segregationist and anti-Castro causes. He also met regularly with FBI agents and was himself the object of FBI and CIA surveillance.

³⁶ CIA Files, Document 533–206, 7 December 1963; Document 288–692, 3 December 1963; Document 347–115, 7 December 1963; Document 370–727B, 10 December 1963; Document 412–76, 27 November 1963.

³⁷ *Schweiker Committee Report*, pp. 28–30; 34–38; *Warren Report*, pp. 307–9.

Theories that Oswald was an agent of the American, Cuban, or Soviet governments are not supported by the available evidence. Considering the official Warren Commission-United States government position that Oswald acted alone and was not part of any foreign or domestic conspiracy, and was not associated in any way with agencies of the United States government, it is most suggestive that much FBI and CIA material on Oswald is still classified or has been censored for reasons of “national security.” For example, a December 31, 1963, telegram from J. Edgar Hoover to the FBI Legat in Bern concerning “Lee Harvey Oswald—IS [Internal Security]—Cuba” is totally censored. A memorandum on “Reported Connection of Lee Harvey Oswald With FPCC [Fair Play For Cuba Committee]” is completely censored. And a two-page FBI report on Oswald and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee is partially censored.³⁸

As indicated, there is substantial evidence of a possible link between these Cuban activities and the assassination of John Kennedy. The activities of Lee Harvey Oswald in New Orleans in the spring and summer of 1963 clearly provide an important link between the “Cuban Connection” and the assassination. The Warren Commission failed to investigate that link, and there is no available evidence to demonstrate that the FBI and the CIA followed up the many leads these agencies received on these matters. Because the Warren Commission neglected to investigate Oswald’s anti-Castro activities in New Orleans, it mistakenly concluded that his actions in that city fit the lone assassin-no conspiracy thesis. The evidence produced here does not prove that Oswald was part of a conspiracy to assassinate the president. It does, however, demonstrate that many questions about his New Orleans stay remain unanswered. Until all evidence about Lee Harvey Oswald is released, few will know whether the five months he spent in New Orleans were connected with the assassination of President Kennedy.

³⁸ For examples of censorship, see FBI Files, Section 57, Document 1216, 31 December 1963; Section 7, Unnumbered Memorandum for Mr. Sullivan Re: Fair Play for Cuba Committee; Section 18, Document 1343. Also see CIA Files, Documents 493–227, 538–801A, 1268–464–A, and 1280–466–B.