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BACKGROUND FOR ASSASSINATION

Months have now passed into the swift stream of history since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The people of the United States emerging, still somewhat dazed, from a deep sense of personal loss. This feeling was as real and deep in most of those who opposed the President's political views as in those who shared them. Because it is the nature of American politics, good and reasonable men are expected to differ with one another and on this very divergence, our strength is drawn and our system flourishes. It was that, while political assassinations seem to occur as a matter of course in many parts of the world, Americans were startled, not only by the great human tragedy but by the ultimate affront to the Constitution of the United States and the orderly processes of government we have come to expect.

The facts, thoroughly aired in newspapers around the world, indicate the guilt of Lee Harvey Oswald, to a moral certainty. However, if there were a chance that Oswald might reveal his motive, it died with him and, as a consequence, Americans are asking questions and propounding theories about the act and the man.

When first notified that President Kennedy was dead, President Lyndon Johnson immediately considered the possibility that his assassination might have been part of a plot of attack against our country and its leaders. He decided that news of Mrs. Kennedy's death be withheld a few minutes so he could get to Love Field, a more secure location with immediate access to transportation and communications. He has first thought of political assassination in the traditional concept. In the light of historic Soviet use of assassination, the President's reaction was both logical and wise.

The Nature of Political Assassination

Americans are aware that murders occur, as acts of individual passion or premeditation, as acts of mob violence, as the calculated acts of crime syndicates. At the same time, because for many centuries they have had no real

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were carefully reconnoitered. Attempts were made to obtain most suitable weapons, special weapons were designed, the operation was rehearsed, escapes were properly prepared, etc.

To throw off the police, there were diversionary plans. Terrorists who were caught were, as a matter of routine, denounced by the party as dissidents, crackpots, or agents provocateurs; furthermore, false testimony was fed into the police system. In one instance, a terrorist was indicted for murder but clear-cut evidence exonerating him was withheld until after the trial had begun. Thus, the whole accusation of terrorism was discredited, and the real culprit was never caught.

The Communists also used their infiltration capabilities to great advantage. Thus, pictures of suspected terrorists were stolen from the files, and once, after the chief of a T-group was arrested, an unsuccessful attempt was made to murder him.

It appears that there has not been much of a change in standard operating procedures except that efficiency and know-how have been improved. We know that the terror technique has not been abandoned. To give merely two examples: a Soviet agent by the name of Khokhlov was ordered to murder a Russian refugee politician in Germany. Instead he defected, told his story, and turned over to the West a whole arsenal of Soviet weapons especially designed for assassination purposes. In 1959, Stepan Bandera, Ukrainian leader, was murdered by means of a gas pistol that simulated a heart attack. The murderer, Bogdan Stashynsky, confessed and was convicted. The German Federal Republic, on April 23, 1963, lodged a formal protest in Moscow and stated that his and the 1957 assassination of another Ukrainian politician "were committed upon instructions of official Soviet organs." In other words: there are T-groups or M-agencies. It is a fact which should be clearly recognized in the United States. It is significant that on his own admission during the trial in Karlsruhe, Germany in October 1962, Stashynsky let it be known that after the Bandera murder he was slated to be trained at an assassin's school in the USSR for assignment later on the North American continent.

A political murder instigated by an intelligence service will be planned to approximate the "perfect crime". Every suitable deception and concealment technique will be used. If "imperceptible murder" is not feasible or desirable, one of the following methods is used: a) The assassin is given a cover story or "legend." b) The assassin, unless he can be reliably hidden, will be destroyed, preferably in such a way that his second murder cannot be traced back to the organizations (for example, he will be slugged by an infuriated cell mate). c) The assassin will be described as a "loner" and a "psychopath" whose deed was not politically motivated: perhaps he was seeking personal revenge. In many of these undertakings, including the fabrication of "legends" and the manipulation of operatives, the murderer himself may be unaware that he is being maneuvered.

Despite the most perfect planning, things usually do not go as intended. Individuals who may be suitable to carry out complicated and daring assassinations are not usually easy to deal with, and in most cases do display psychopathological tendencies. Hence they will do things which they should not have done. This danger can be minimized only if extremely well-trained, fully disciplined secret agents are employed to carry out cover operations.

The greatest danger is that the murderer will be caught and his nationality discovered. Hence nationals of the country where the crime is to be perpetrated must be used and this creates additional difficulties, among them the possibility that the assassin's political beliefs may be disclosed. On the other hand, the use of natives who are unstable, offers the advantage that it permits the branding of the murderer as "insane." The recruitment of a would-be murderer from a hostile party usually does not work, hence a good cover story to confuse the assassin's political loyalty is required. It usually is easy to assert that the man was expelled from the party.

With this background, let us examine Oswald's stay in the Soviet Union.

The Passport

Lee Harvey Oswald joined the Marine Corps late in October 1956, when he just had turned 17. At some time prior to his entry into the service, he became interested in Communism. On or shortly after September 1, 1959, he applied for active duty, claiming that his mother needed him, obtained an American passport and a Russian visa, and departed from New Orleans, arriving in Moscow on October 13, 1959.

He was released from the Marine Corps on September 11 and joined his mother for the one night he spent with her in Fort Worth. He would then have been free to make his preparations to leave the country from September 12 onward. By September 19 he was able to write his mother from New Orleans that he had booked passage on a ship to Europe. Starting by ship, the trip would have taken something like fifteen days. Thus to have reached Moscow by October 13, Oswald must have left New Orleans no later than October 1, and may have left as early as September 26. Thus, we can assume that to prepare his trip, he had the time span of September 12 to 30 at his disposal. September 12 was a Saturday. Oswald had obtained his passport on September 10. The Russian embassy at Washington, therefore, could not have received his passport with visa application earlier than September 11.

Oswald may have applied for his visa to enter the Soviet Union either before or after receipt of his passport. In either case, the handling must have been unusual to say the least. As a matter of routine procedure, every application for a visa to enter the Soviet Union is processed through a central file in Moscow known familiarly by U. S. agencies as "the black box." In 1959, this procedure required at least 30 days and, in most cases, 60 to 90 days. In almost every

with his mother on the telephone but hung up on her. On October 31, he held a press conference at the Hotel Metropole, and explained his defection. In Moscow, 20-year old boys do not arrange press conferences on their own initiative. This conference must have been arranged for him and somebody in addition to granting authorization, must have taken care of the bill. Yet, unlike the cases of other defectors, this press conference was given no publicity on the Soviet radio.

To understand this turn of events, we must ask ourselves: what benefit could the Soviets draw from Oswald? A 20-year old Marine might have been significant as a source of intelligence, but a Marine who embraced Communism must have been a potential propaganda sensation. Accordingly, when the Soviets learned about him, the propagandists would have been interested. Presumably, they decided to build him up as a defector. This explains why Mme. Fortseva was handling his passport arrangements at the ministerial level, and also explains why he was rushed to apply for his citizenship.

After Oswald arrived in Moscow, we may be sure that he was interrogated by the Commissariat on State Security (KGB) and the military intelligence. The initial interviews and his own work preferences may have speedily convinced the intelligence officers that this man's value did not lie in a short-lived propaganda stunt but in entirely different fields. If, for example, he was to be used for intelligence purposes, then his renunciation of U. S. citizenship was stupid.

As soon as Oswald's potential intelligence usefulness became apparent, one of those disputes must have arisen, typical for the secret services of all countries, between the propagandists and the secret operators. While this struggle was being resolved, Oswald was left hanging in the air.

It is possible that while the matter was being considered, Oswald lost his nerve and attempted suicide, as was reported, or perhaps feigned a suicide attempt. This attempt supposedly took place at the Hotel Metropole late in October. For a schizoid type like Oswald, this is not really likely. It has been said that he experienced financial troubles, yet, upon his release from the Marines, he had \$1,600 of which he gave his mother \$80. The trip to Moscow hardly cost more than \$500. Living costs would have hardly run over \$500, and were presumably far less, especially if, as is probable indeed, his hotel bill in Moscow was being paid for him. Thus, he had at least \$500 left, and no emergency existed. It is likely that he just was waiting and spent his time sight-seeing.

The Soviet authorities, of course, knew that Oswald had visited the Embassy on October 30. This may have warned them about the danger of a defection. The propaganda people who undoubtedly still were in control, saw a chance to make their claim stick, and the press conference was hastily convened. Two days later, on November 2, a Monday, Oswald turned his passport over to the U. S. Embassy and wrote an affidavit affirming that his "allegiance" was to the

Soviet Union. Thus he did precisely the opposite of what he should have done if he were to be used for covert rather than overt purposes.

This must have brought the inter-service dispute to a boil, and the intelligence people obviously won. Their first step was to suppress all publicity about Oswald, his defection and the press conference. The second step probably was to inform him that citizenship would not be granted formally and have Oswald, or somebody else, tip off the Embassy that he would not be made a Soviet citizen. On November 14, Oswald disclosed that he had been refused Soviet citizenship (surely a speed record for processing a citizenship application) but asserted that he was a Marxist and "through" with the U. S.

The third step was to get Oswald out of Moscow. Insofar as the Soviet intelligence service was concerned, the job now was to get every particle of information out of Oswald, not merely on electronics and call signs, but also on Marine Corps procedures, officer personalities, on fellow Marines and their possible utilization as agents, on exact plans of military installations, and many other subjects -- a job of interrogation which could easily take months, especially if Oswald had been alert and had used his years in the Marine Corps to prepare himself for this series of interrogations.

It is inconceivable that such interrogations did not take place. The argument that the Soviet authorities recognized Oswald to be an unstable character and therefore refused to grant him citizenship, does not hold water. In the first place, Oswald was far less unstable than many of the typical left intellectuals who frequently pester the Soviets. Second, they have not in the past objected to, but on the contrary, have recruited schizoid personalities. Third, Oswald's character defects, if any, could hardly have become known under the conditions of his early interviews and initial interrogations. Fourth, if the Soviets did not like him, they could have, after prolonged interrogations, simply gotten rid of him; he could have died of "pneumonia". Finally, they might have expelled him, irrespective of whether he was interrogated or not. But to refuse him citizenship, and still allow him to stay and work in Russia, and then two and a half years later permit him to depart with a Russian wife and child, is utterly contrary to fundamental Soviet procedure. No case remotely similar exists before or after Oswald.

Life in Minsk

According to all available information, Oswald dropped out of sight shortly after his press conference. Allegedly, he went to Minsk where he was given a job in the sheet metal shop of a radio plant. His salary supposedly was 80 rubles (\$88.80) a month. This just cannot be true. In the first place, there is no doubt that Oswald would have been "debriefed" for quite a long time, perhaps for three months. It is entirely possible that for deception purposes, he was given a so-called job in industry. In fact, such a procedure would be logical since the U. S. Embassy might be interested in his whereabouts and activities. He did not know anything about sheet metal working but he did have knowledge that may have quali-

him as a specialist. Even if he just qualified as unskilled labor, it is inconceivable that the Soviets would have paid him a salary which is far below minimum income and on which he clearly could not live. Despite this extreme poverty, which would not have allowed him to eat, we learn that he posed for portrait photography, made a trip to Kiev, travelled in the country side around Minsk, enjoyed a social life, and even enjoyed a great deal of recreation - not with that salary one would expect him to concentrate on "moonlighting."

The puzzle may be explained in a simple way: 80-rubles was just his pocket money, his room, board, laundry, etc. were being paid for - in other words, he was living in some sort of a community. There are clues about the type of community this may have been.

While in the Soviet Union, Oswald is reported to have joined a rifle club and practiced marksmanship. Now, there are no amateur "rifle clubs" in the sporting sense in the Soviet Union. It has now been established, however, that Oswald did belong to a hunter's sovkhos, membership in which is normally reserved to those who are hunters by profession. While participating in this group he did not use a rifle but was permitted to use some other type of weapon.

In July, 1960, Oswald wrote the Marine Corps asking to be discharged as a reservist so that he could accept Soviet citizenship. This fact requires a little re-interpretation. It makes the story less pat but more realistic.

The incident shows that in November 1959, the Soviets had not rejected Oswald application for citizenship forever. They probably told him that as soon as he proved himself, they would consider the case seriously. If they wanted to pump him for his information and obtain full co-operation, this would be a logical procedure.

Assuming Oswald's debriefing was over by March or April, the chances are that intelligence people were debating what to do with him. They may have kept him in a safe house or they might have told him to prove his proletarian convictions and go to work: this may have been the period when he was working in the sheet metal shop.

As this period of no-decision continued, Oswald probably felt that he should force events. The letter to the Marine Corps probably was to impress the Soviet authorities with his devotion to the Soviet Union.

From the point of view of the intelligence service, the letter was a mistake because it reduced Oswald's potential usefulness as a spy. Oswald may not have realized this. If Oswald was to be developed as a sleeper, this step probably strengthened the group within Soviet intelligence who opposed the plan, if only because Oswald's temperament did not qualify him for assignments with long periods of inaction.

The Exit Visa

On January 2, 1962, Oswald wrote to his mother that he had "pretty good news," he and his wife would receive their visas about the middle of February 1962 and would arrive in the U. S. by March 1, "give or take a month or so." In this letter he instructed his mother to contact an international rescue committee in order to obtain \$800 for transportation. "Do not, of course, take any loan, only a gift. And don't send your own money." Oswald enclosed a letter from the U. S. Embassy which his mother was to use in her efforts.

Several points stand out: (1) He did have a letter from the Embassy which means that he must have contacted them about his return trip some time before he wrote his mother. (2) He had, in fact, written his mother as early as August 19, 1961 saying he expected an exit visa soon and had been to Moscow to go to the Embassy. (3) Later, he obtained only \$435.71 from the Embassy, hence he must have had another \$400 or so to pay passage for his wife. (4) He was remarkably well informed about rescue committees which information he may have obtained from the Embassy but more likely from other quarters. The fact is that for years the U. S. Embassy did not provide this type of information, for the simple reason that many of those committees had been branded as espionage organizations by the Soviets.

With respect to timing, it seems that the letter was written after two other letters. In the August 19th letter, he talked about mushroom picking with his wife, at the not inconsiderable distance of 50 miles from Minsk: "everybody does this in the fall." In the other letter, he announced the news that he was "going to be a papa." Presumably he could have made this announcement as early as August 1961 but this letter was actually dated November 1.

In the November 1 letter, he referred to his mother's intent to come to the Soviet Union. He did not recommend this step, adding "in my case." And this particular phrase may have indicated that the plan to return to the U. S. had been firm and up.

Subsequently on January 2, he announced that the exit visas would be granted by the middle of February, and implied that he was to leave as soon as he got the visas.

This raises a most important question: why would the Soviet authorities announce to him a month and a half in advance that they will grant him a visa? If they wanted him to go, why not let him go right away? There is no precedent that Soviet authorities ever provided such advance notices, and indeed what would be the purpose? If a visa was promised some time in late December or early January for mid-February, some sort of assignment was involved which Oswald was to complete before leaving. It was hardly a matter of sheet metal working, but this precise pre-dating would make a lot of sense if it was anticipated that Oswald would be completing a course preparing him for his return to the United States.

Interestingly enough, late in January 1962, i. e. after he knew that he would get

The expeditious handling might have occurred if the Soviets just had made this sort of a decision: "Oh, well, Oswald is no good, let him go, good riddance. His wife should not have married him, but let her go, too." Soviet authorities do not decide in this manner. Any such decision based on humanitarian grounds would have taken several years. Since the exit visa was forthcoming rather promptly, the Soviet authorities must have wanted Marina to accompany Oswald. It was their decision that she go.

Whether Marina herself was indoctrinated and assigned a specific mission, is of course, conjectural. Her limited ability to speak English, might suggest that her training had not been completed or that the Soviets planned to use her in an "innocent status." At any rate, since the assassination, she has not been reluctant to give a public impression that she, for one, seems certain that Lee Oswald was the killer of President Kennedy.

We can assume that the FBI treated Oswald as a potential espionage agent on his return to the United States. The press has reported that by November 22, the Bureau had determined that he was not potentially dangerous as a spy or saboteur and, therefore, they were not keeping close tabs on him. Yet, the report that Oswald was in a hunters' sovkhos, though not a professional hunter, indicates that he received some sort of special consideration or training.

The Soviets have made almost desperate efforts to shed themselves of Oswald. The Communist Party, U. S. A. almost immediately issued a formal statement denying that Oswald had ever had any connection with the C. P., U. S. A. (and this is apparently quite true.) But the Communist Party seemed stuck with Oswald's self-identification with Marxism. They then made great efforts to cast serious doubts on Oswald's guilt but despite great liberties with both fact and logic, particularly in the Communist-oriented National Guardian, these efforts were crushed beneath the weight of scientific evidence. The Soviets, meanwhile variously charged that Oswald has really been an American spy, an agent of the State Department or the CIA. The Soviet Army publication, Red Star, even went so far as to charge the President's assassination to "Murder, Incorporated." Now the Communist and front group publications are hinting darkly that Oswald was really an FBI informant.

The President's assassination itself and Oswald's background in Russia bear some of the earmarks of the traditional Soviet style political murder yet, while there must still be a great deal of speculation and conjecture, the evidence does not imply that Lee Oswald shot President Kennedy on Soviet orders nor does it tend in any way to disprove the likelihood that Oswald acted completely on his own. Indeed, the evidence presented to date tends to confirm this likelihood. While it is quite possible that the Soviets intended to use Oswald some day as an assassin or terrorist, there is no reason for assuming that they expected to profit from the assassination of President Kennedy at this particular moment in history. Still, his deed was a product of the Cold War. Lee Harvey Oswald would not have assassinated the President of the United States except for the mental conditioning of revolutionary communism.