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MEMORANDUM

Nov. 27, 1963

To: Mr. Thomas Ehrlich

From: FSO John A. McVickar

Subject: Lee Harvey OSWALD

You asked me to submit a written memorandum regarding anything I knew personally about Oswald and his dealings with the American Embassy in Moscow in 1959, 1960 and 1961.

First I should note that, while I was one of two officers in the consular section of the Embassy during this period, I did not myself handle the case and my contact with it was therefore peripheral. Moreover, to the extent that anything I have to say here conflicts with the record as reported by the Embassy at the time, the latter should be taken as nearer fact.

In addition to myself I know of the following other persons who were in contact with Oswald in Moscow:

- 1.) Consul Richard F. Snyder, who handled the matter during 1959-61 and who is I believe now in Japan.
- 2.) Consul Joseph Korbury who handled the case after 1961 for the Embassy and who is now assigned to the Foreign Service Institute of the Department.
- 3.) Mrs. Vera Deane (Stanley) Brown, who acted as the confidential secretary for the consular section during most of this period and who is now an employee of the Department of Agriculture.
- 4.) Miss Priscilla Johnson, who was at the time a correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance in the Soviet Union. She had a long interview with Oswald in his hotel in an effort to get his story and to persuade him to return to the United States.
- 5.) Mr. Rud Korngold, UPI correspondent, who is I believe still in the Soviet Union.

In my memory the following is a general description of the case: Oswald came into the Embassy immediately after his arrival in the Soviet Union from the United States. He turned in his passport and said that he wanted to renounce his American citizenship and remain in the Soviet Union. His passport was retained, but his renunciation was not accepted. He remained a few days in Moscow staying at the Metropole Hotel and was in contact with the Soviet authorities and with at least the two American correspondents named above (4) & (5). He then disappeared and was next heard from some weeks later from Minsk where he said he was working in an electronics plant. He eventually wrote again and said that he had married a Soviet girl.

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and wished to return to the United States. He still later came to the Embassy for an interview in this connection in July, 1961. Many months later the Soviet Government finally gave him and his wife permission to depart and the Embassy was authorized by the Department to renew his American passport and to give his wife an immigration visa, whereupon they departed for the United States. I believe that this was in the spring of 1962, but I am not sure of this since I myself departed from Moscow in September, 1961.

My personal contact with the matter was actually only at the time that Oswald first came to the Embassy in October, 1959. At this time I shared the same office with Mr. Snyder and was present in the room during his interview with Oswald. As I recall the interview may have lasted an hour or so. Oswald was extremely arrogant, truculent and unfriendly to Americans in general. He wanted to divest himself of his citizenship forthwith. His reasons were not too clear, but he gave the impression of being very angry about something or things which had happened to him during his childhood or during his duty in the Marine Corps. He said, however, that he was a "Marxist" and that he had become disgusted with American "imperialism" as he had observed it in operation in the Far East while in the Marines. He gave evidence of some education in the rudiments of Communist dogma and he apparently had some knowledge of the legalities involved in the renunciation of citizenship. He also did state that while in the Marines he had worked with radar and that he would turn over everything he knew about it to the Soviet military authorities. In the minds of those concerned at the time, this statement tended to extinguish any sympathy one may have felt for a confused and unhappy young man. Mr. Snyder did not accept his renunciation of citizenship on this occasion because it is not prescribed procedure to permit those things to be done hastily. Moreover, there had been a case immediately previous in which a man had renounced his citizenship and then wanted it back a week later. (This case involved one Petrulli, who as it turned out had a medical record of mental illness). I recall having a few words with Oswald at the time, but I don't remember what was said. After Oswald left the Embassy on this occasion I had no direct personal contact with the matter, but followed it in conversations with my colleague, Mr. Snyder, and with the above named correspondents. As to fact, I have nothing further to add except what appears in the records or what may be better obtained from other parties involved.

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Based on my impressions of Oswald, as I recall them, and on my general experience in consular work in the Soviet Union, I have these comments:

I recall thinking at the time that Oswald was behaving with a great deal of determination and purpose for such a young and relatively uneducated person. He was certainly very independent and fearless in a rather blind way and it seemed to me that he could have acquired all these ideas himself and could have planned his prompt trip to the USSR after release from the Marines and his attempted renunciation of citizenship. On the other hand, there also seemed to me to be the possibility that he was following a pattern of behaviour, which he had been tutored by person or persons unknown. For example, in discussing Marxism and the legalities of renunciation he seemed to be using words which he had learned but did not fully understand. His determined statements in rather long words were not entirely consistent and not in a fully logical sequence. I am sorry that I do not remember examples but only this impression. Of course, this could have been because he had surely studied books himself without understanding what they meant, or but it seemed that it could also have been that he had been taught to say things which he did not really understand. In short, it seemed to me that there was a possibility that he had been in contact with others before or during his Marine Corps tour who had guided his actions and encouraged him in his actions.

In regard to his sanity, of course, not being an expert in this field one cannot say much. However, it did seem to me that his unqualified distaste for America and Americans was irrational in that it exceeded anything that could possibly have been justified. And this was my impression at the time and is not a mere projection of present feelings into the past. Furthermore the reasoning which he gave for this feeling was by no means clear and his thinking seemed quite muddled. I am not sure what a "persecution complex" is in the technical sense, but he seemed as though he might have one.

In conclusion, I may add that to the best of my memory I recognized the photographs which I have seen of Oswald in the newspapers as the same man who came into the Embassy under that name in October, 1959.

JAM:vicars:11/27/63.

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