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MEMORANDUM

April 7, 1964

TO: Mr. Thomas Erlich, Special Assistant to the
Legal Adviser, Department of State

FROM: John A. McVickar, Principal Officer, American Consulate,
Cochabamba, Bolivia

SUBJECT: Lee Harvey OSWALD

This is in response to the request contained in your letter of March 27, 1964, to further develop the suggestion contained in my memorandum of November 27, 1963, that there was a possibility that (in coming to the Soviet Union and attempting to renounce his citizenship) Oswald was "following a pattern of behavior in which he had been tutored by person or persons unknown." Although I now regret that I made no notes on this even then unusual case, the following points seem to me to lend weight to my suggestion, especially considering the youth and relative inexperience of the subject:

(1) As I recall it, Oswald stated that he had come almost directly to the Soviet Union after being discharged from the Marine Corps in New Orleans and that he took a ship from New Orleans to Helsinki. Since he arrived in Moscow in mid-October, 1959 and was discharged from the Marines in September, 1959 (as I recall), he would have to have made a direct and competently arranged trip. He would have to have known the not too obvious fact that Helsinki is a usual and relatively uncomplicated point of entry to the Soviet Union (one that the Soviets might well choose for example if arranging the passage themselves).

(2) Oswald obtained a Soviet visa and apparently very promptly. This point may be important: it depends on what kind of a Soviet visa he had, and I do not know. If he had obtained a "tourist visa," he could have probably gotten it rather easily through a travel agent, but he would have had to either buy a \$30.00 per day "individual tour" or he would have had to join a group. I do not think or recall that he did either. If he had obtained any other sort of Soviet visa, probably a "regular visa", he would have had to obtain it from either the Soviet Embassy in Washington (presumably by mail from New Orleans) or from the Soviet Embassy in Helsinki. In my experience, Soviet "regular visas" (i.e. those other than issued to tourists, or to officials and diplomats) were hard to come by. Such "regular visas" were ordinarily issued only after checking with Moscow, and after some investigation of

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the reasons given for the visit by the applicant, usually a process of months duration. A Soviet "regular visa" issued to a person (in Washington or in Helsinki) on short notice would only be to a person already known to the Soviet authorities.

I repeat, I do not recall what sort of a visa Oswald had, but I believe that it would be significant if it indeed was a "regular visa" and not a "tourist visa." If it is still available, an examination of his passport could provide the answer. Or perhaps, Consul Richard E. Snyder, who handled the case at the time of Oswald's arrival, might remember or might have noted it in the record.

(3) Oswald evidently knew something of the procedure for renunciation of citizenship when he came into the office. This seemed a bit unusual, since it was so soon after his first departure from the United States on his first trip abroad traveling as a private citizen. (He had apparently been abroad in the Marines, but would be unlikely to have gained much experience in travel and citizenship documentation in that status.) I do not recall the way that he framed his demand for renunciation, except that it was truculent and insulting, but it seemed to me that Oswald understood that he had a legal right to renounce in the consular office and was rather insistent upon doing it.

(4) Oswald's application to remain in the Soviet Union made in Moscow was, again in my experience, relatively quickly accepted by the Soviet authorities. For example, in other "defector" cases of which I had some personal knowledge, the Soviet authorities were rather cautious about definitely permitting persons to remain permanently before they had investigated and interviewed them thoroughly. Not that the authorities were reluctant to take them in if they thought they might be useful, or even if not too useful, but they tended to be bureaucratic and cautious. Oswald was accepted and sent to Minsk only about seven days (as I recall) after his arrival in Moscow. This seems short to me, if his application in Moscow was indeed the first time his case came to the attention of the Soviet authorities concerned with these matters; but it does not seem too short, if they had known about him months before. However, even if they had already had a file on him, he would still probably have had to come to Moscow for interviewing and final approval at headquarters.

(5) At the time, Oswald seemed surprisingly confident, competent and determined about what he was doing, considering his age and experience.

(6) Oswald's expressed willingness to tell the Soviets what classified information he may have learned in the Marines doesn't necessarily argue the point that he had advance help, since he could have easily thought it up himself. The statement seems irrelevant except perhaps as a means of shocking the consular officer into prompt action.

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(7) I am afraid that I remember only very little of the actual statements in Communist terms which Oswald made to justify his desire to renounce his citizenship. I recall he said that he wanted to renounce "because he was a Marxist". I think he said bitterly that he had learned what the "class struggle" meant during his difficult youth in the U.S., and that he had learned about "capitalist imperialism" while overseas in the Marines (in Okinawa, I think). As I said in my previous memorandum, it seemed to me then that he was using words that he did not fully understand, but this does not necessarily mean that he was taught to say them...he might have read some books himself.

(8) A last point not related to my contact with Oswald in 1959: Oswald's reported statement that he had been permitted to belong to a rifle club and practice target shooting while in Minsk seems odd to me. My impression was that in the Soviet Union such a privilege would not have been usual. But this is mere speculation.

Finally, however, I think I should raise a question which may tend to offset some of the above points: If we suppose the Soviets might have arranged his trip to Russia, why would they have permitted Oswald to come to the American Embassy to renounce his citizenship? I see no answer to that, except that perhaps he was still being treated in a very tentative way and therefore being allowed to behave in a more or less "normal" fashion vis-a-vis the U.S. Government. The principal effect of renunciation would have been to make his legal return to the U.S. more difficult and it is not known to be a requirement for becoming a Communist or residing in the USSR.

I hope that the above comments are of some assistance. It seems to me that the only concrete point is the Soviet visa: its type, and its date and place of issuance.

cc: Mr. Robert I Owen, EUR/SOV, Dept of State