

Oswald Ties With Cuba Disclosed by Ex-Marine

Suspected Assassin Studied Spanish, Hoped to Join Castro Revolutionaries

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WASHINGTON — A verbatim interview between a Marine buddy of Lee Harvey Oswald and a staff member of the Warren Commission relates that the suspected assassin had ties with the Fidel Castro regime while still in the military service — more than four years before the Nov. 22 slaying of President John F. Kennedy.

A copy of the interview further discloses that the witness, Nelson Delgado, a specialist fourth class now serving in the Army at a New Jersey missile site, told the staff counsel the FBI "badgered" him for what he believed was an attempt to distort the nature of his testimony.

The official transcript, obtained by the Herald Tribune, also brings to light other unsuspected and little known facets of Oswald's background, as told to the commission.

Learned Spanish

1—Oswald took lessons in Spanish from Delgado—who was born in Brooklyn of Puerto Rican parents—with the intention of going to Cuba to join the Castro revolution and was soon able to conduct a normal conversation in the language.

2—While a private in the Marine Corps, Oswald kept a copy of Das Kapital, the Communist Party gospel, in his barracks quarters and regularly received a newspaper printed in Russian.

3—Despite previous reports to the contrary, during his Marine hitch Oswald was a poor rifle shot, was uninterested in gunnery, and was frequently reprimanded for not keeping his weapon in good order.

Asked during the inter-

view, "... in your opinion Oswald was not a good rifle shot; is that correct?" Delgado replied it was.

Officers Annoyed

The document adds new dimension to the complex character of Oswald. In it Delgado relates how Oswald, an avowed atheist, ridiculed Marines who attended church on Sunday, and how he irritated his officers by flaunting his knowledge of international affairs.

This testimony was given by Delgado, a former Marine corporal, while being interrogated on four separate occasions by the FBI and reiterated in an appearance before Wesley J. Liebeler, a staff counsel for the Warren Commission. The panel of inquiry, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, was appointed Nov. 29 by President Johnson to make a comprehensive investigation of the assassination.

Complying with orders sent him the previous day, Delgado reported to Liebeler on April 16 in Room 511A of the U.S. Courthouse in Foley Square, New York City. In essence, his testimony recapitulated, with clarification, what he had earlier told the FBI — plus the contention the agents sought to deflate his story, particularly his statements that he taught Oswald to speak adequate Spanish and that Oswald was not an expert marksman.

During the lengthy ques-

tion and answer session Delgado said he met Oswald at the Marine base in late 1958 and that the two struck up a close acquaintanceship over their common interest in the guerrilla campaign then being waged by Castro.

Delgado recalled, "he was commenting on the fight that Castro was having at Sierra Madres (sic) at the beginning, just about the turn of '59. When I went on leave, it just so happened that my leave coincided with the first of January, when Castro took over. So when I

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got back he was the first one to see me, and he said, 'Well, you took leave and went there and helped them, and they all took over.' It was a big joke. So we got along pretty well. He had trouble in one of the huts and got transferred to mine."

Delgado told of "dreams" he and Oswald shared of going to Cuba and becoming officers in Castro's army.

Grand Ideas

"... So we were all thinking, well, honorable discharge, and I speak Spanish and he's got his ideas of how a government should be run. You know, the same line as Castro did at that time."

Question—Oswald.

Answer—Right. So we could go over there and become officers and lead an expedition to some of these other islands and free them, too, you know, from—this was really weird, you know, but—

Q—That is what you and Oswald talked about?

A—Right... and we would talk about how we would do away with Trujillo, and things like that, but never got no farther than the speaking stage.

"But actually when he started, you know, going along with this, he started actually making plans, he wanted to know, you know, how to get to Cuba and things like that. I was shy-

ing away from him. He kept on asking me questions like how can a person in his category, an English person, get with a Cuban, you now, people, be part of that revolution movement.

Practiced Language

"I told him, to begin with, you have got to be trusted—right? In any country you go to you have got to be trusted, so the best way to be trusted is to know their language, know their customs, you know; so he started applying himself to Spanish, he started studying. He bought himself a dictionary, a Spanish-American dictionary. He would come to me and we would speak Spanish. You know, not great sentences but enough. After a while he got to talk to me, you know, in Spanish."

Delgado said that Oswald "kept on asking me about—how he could go about helping the Castro government. I didn't know what to tell him, so I told him the best thing that I know was to get in touch with the Cuban Embassy, you know... I told him go see them.

After a while he told me he was in contact with them."

Q—With the Cuban Embassy?

A—Right. And I took it to be just a—one of his, you know, lies, you know, saying he was in contact with them, until one time I had the opportunity to go into his room, I was looking for—I was going out for the weekend, I needed a tie, he lent me the tie, and I seen this envelope in his footlocker, wall-locker, and it was addressed to him, and they had an official seal on it, and as far as I could recollect that was mail from Los Angeles, and he was telling me there was a Cuban consul. And just after he started receiving these letters...

At Cuban Consulate

Delgado testified that after Oswald had returned from a trip to Los Angeles he confided he had been to the Cuban consulate there.

"Did he later tell you that he had been to the Cuban consulate?" Delgado was asked. "Yes," he answered, "but I thought it was just his, you know, bragging of some sort."

Q—This conversation that you and Oswald had about going over in Cuba and helping Castro was just barracks talk.

A—Right.

Q—You didn't seriously consider—

A—No, but that's when I started getting scared. He started actually making plans, and how he would go about going to Cuba, you know, and where we would apply to go to Cuba and the people to contact if we wanted to go, you know, but—

Q—So you got the impression that he started to get serious about going to Cuba?

Castro Went Red

A—Yes, and about this time Castro started changing colors, so I wasn't too keen on that idea, myself.

Q—Did you talk to Oswald about this change in Castro's attitude and his approach?

A—Right. He said that was all due to bad newspaper reporting, that we were distorting the true facts, because we were mad, because now we wasn't getting the money from Cuba that we were before.

Turning to the apparent discrepancies in the FBI report and Delgado's story, Liebler asked, "Did you get the impression that the

agent was trying to get you to change your story?"

A—Yes.

Q—He was trying to get you to back away from the proposition that Oswald understood Spanish?

A—Well, am I allowed to say what I want to say?

Q—Yes, I want you to say exactly what you want to say.

A—I had the impression now, wholeheartedly, I want to believe that Oswald did what he was supposed to have done, but I had the impression they weren't satisfied with my testimony of him not being an expert shot.

Q—First of all, you say you got the impression the FBI agents that talked to you didn't like the statement that you made about Oswald's inability to use the rifle well, is that right?

A—Right.