

Oswald Had Help in Planning Slaying, Sen. Russell Believes

BY DON OBERDORFER

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WASHINGTON—Sen. Richard B. Russell, who was a member of the Warren Commission which investigated the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, says he never believed that Lee Harvey Oswald planned the assassination alone.

"I think someone else worked with him (on the planning)," the Georgia Democrat said in one of a series of taped television interviews to be broadcast next month by an Atlanta television station.

"There were too many things—the fact that he (Oswald) was at Minsk (in the Soviet Union), and that was the principal center for educating Cuban students . . . some of the trips he made to Mexico City and a number of discrepancies in the evidence, or as to his means of transportation, the luggage he had and whether or not anyone was with him—that caused me to doubt that

he planned it all by himself," he said.

Russell appeared to be in accord, however, with the commission's conclusions that Oswald was the man who fired the shots at Mr. Kennedy, and that he acted alone. "I think that any other commission you might appoint today would arrive at that conclusion," he said.

Because of his doubts that Oswald planned the assassination alone, Russell said, he insisted on a disclaimer sentence in the final report before he would sign it. That sentence in the report, issued in September, 1964, says that "because of the difficulty of proving negatives to a certainty, the possibility of others being involved with either Oswald or (Jack) Ruby cannot be established categorically, but if there is any such evidence it has been beyond the reach of all the investi-

gative agencies and resources of the United States and has not come to the attention of this commission."

The majority of the seven-member commission, headed by Earl Warren, then chief justice of the United States, "wanted to find" that Oswald planned and acted alone, Russell said.

About 25 hours of interviews, which constitute the most extensive memoir yet available in the long public career of the 72-year-old Georgia Senator, will be condensed to three one-hour programs for broadcast on station WSB-TV in Atlanta Feb. 11, 12 and 13.

Rare Interviews

President pro tempore of the Senate and the chairman of its Appropriations Committee, Russell has granted only rare interviews in recent years. None of those published have delved so deeply into his relationship with Lyndon B. Johnson, his Senate protege and later his close friend in the White House.

The relationship between the two men has

been "one of the most peculiar in American history," says the Georgian in the taped interviews, evidently referring to their division of opinion on civil rights and many issues in later years, which somehow did not prevent a continuing close friendship.

AFTER MR. JOHNSON became President, he would frequently summon his old friend and Senate mentor to the White House in the evenings. "I'd go down and we'd have a highball and eat supper and talk about things and people," the senator recalled.

Many Mistakes

"He would call me about things, well, like the Dominican incident and things like that, the Panama Canal controversy. He never did stop advising with me on things like that. It was just on these domestic spending issues that he made so many mistakes . . . (he) made every conceivable mistake almost from the standpoint of administration and organization," Russell said.

Both Russell and Mr. Johnson were strongly opposed to U.S. military intervention in South Vietnam when it was first proposed in 1953. Once the U.S. became committed, Russell said in the taped interviews, he could not criticize Mr. Johnson for sending additional forces.

"My complaint with him was not for sending others in, but because we didn't go on and win the day by closing up the ports of North Vietnam. He let the timid souls in the State Department talk him out of that," Russell said. "He could have ended that war in six months any time."