

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

21 January 1964

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Recent Soviet Statements on Lee Harvey Oswald

1. In the period immediately following the assassination of President Kennedy many Soviet officials are reported to have expressed their private opinions that Oswald was the tool of an ultra right-wing conspiracy in the United States which inter alia plotted to murder the President, seize power, break relations with the Soviet Union, and invade Cuba. These officials believed that "only manics" would suggest that the assassination had been engineered by American leftists or by the Communist Party, USA.

2. Similar opinions were voiced in early December by two Soviet officials serving abroad. One, a diplomat who is regarded by his Western colleagues as "pedestrian" and who insisted that his views were those of the Soviet people and not necessarily those of his government, expressed fear that "unreasonable" anti-Communist feeling might arise in the United States because Oswald had been "somewhat connected with communism." The comments of the second official may have been intended for Western consumption. He said that news of the assassination had caused almost universal shock and grief in the USSR, but that the people had perceived the political implications of the act almost immediately and had begun to ask "what will happen now?" In his opinion, only one thing was clear: "Oswald was ill and completely crazy, both mentally and politically, and only extreme reactionary forces in the US could profit from the act he committed."

3. These sentiments continued to be reflected--directly and indirectly--in Soviet press and radio statements during December. As in November, allegations of a "right-wing plot" constituted the favorite theme. The number of commentaries appears, however, to have diminished rapidly after 30 November, when Ambassador Dobrynin turned over Soviet consular files on the accused assassin. In the USSR, public attention to the late President and particularly to Oswald dropped sharply after the convocation of the party central committee's week-long plenum on 9 December.

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By C. I. A.

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4. Early in the month, two commentaries repeated previous charges that federal and local law enforcement agencies were conspiring to obstruct justice and perhaps to cover the identities of those who arranged the assassination. On 4 December, Moscow Radio's international service quoted an Associated Press dispatch that the "exhaustive FBI report which is almost ready for the White House will point out that Lee Harvey Oswald killed President Kennedy alone without help." The broadcast further stated that the special investigating commission would have to rely on facts uncovered by the Secret Service, FBI, and the Dallas police, and therefore that not much should be expected to emerge from the commission's work. "One could not expect these police to testify against themselves or against each other." On the same day, the radio's domestic audience was told that "most world newspapers" believe Oswald to be "merely a person whom Dallas police are trying to charge with full responsibility for the murder" while protecting the real assassin. Allegations that the assassination was engineered by "right-wing extremists" were repeated on an international program broadcast on 6 December. In this instance, TASS correspondent Vladimir Vashedchenko filed a dispatch in which the claim that "racists and extremists killed the President" was used as a vehicle for a standard propaganda attack on "southern racists, Birchists," and the Republican party.

5. The extremists charge was also repeated by Pravda on 6 December. In its lead article--devoted to the Sino-Soviet dispute--the party mouthpiece stated that the President had been eliminated by the American extreme right wing in order to change the balance of political forces in the US and to "stir up anti-Communist, anti-Soviet, and anti-Cuban hysteria."

6. The official Soviet army organ Red Star added a new twist to the story in the middle of the month. Drawing upon his alleged lengthy residence in the United States, journalist Nikolay Karyev wrote on 14 December that the President had been a victim of "Murder Incorporated." He drew this conclusion on the basis of the modus operandi of the crime (a "characteristic operation of organized gangsterism"). Karyev speculated that "Texas oil millionaires" contacted the Chicago underworld in order to arrange the assassination. The first step in the plot, he alleged, occurred on 21 November, when "gangsters virtually isolated the President's bodyguards by getting them thoroughly drunk" in order to render them "virtually unable to protect their chief" the next morning. The "bandits" then killed the President, Oswald was taken into

custody, and was himself murdered by "Jack Ruby, a Chicago gangster." Karmy then stated the "fact" that "the killing of Oswald, the President's assassin--or a dummy--" was made possible by the police, who then took Ruby "under their protection." He concluded that no one in America would dare to point the finger at the powerful men behind the plot.

7. The Red Star article was the last major commentary to appear. On 17 December, Radio Moscow's international service used quotes from an article by Drew Pearson to imply that the FBI report was being suppressed by J. Edgar Hoover, who did not want the public to know his agency had "been unable to carry out its role in Dallas or had not cooperated with the Secret Service." The following day, the radio commented on plans to enter an insanity plea for Jack Ruby. According to Moscow, "It should be noted that Ruby's lawyers are trying hard to establish a link between Oswald and Communists and to use this as a mitigating circumstance for their client." Ruby is quoted as saying that he killed Oswald because "he felt the latter was taking part in a secret Communist conspiracy." These statements, in the opinion of Radio Moscow, were designed to divert attention away from those who organized Oswald's murder and to protect the real murderer.

8. As far as we know, Oswald has not recently been mentioned in Soviet public media, and the four latest commentaries on the assassination were--with the exception of a 26 December attack on the John Birch society--drawn almost wholly from the American press. On 19 December, US press services were quoted without comment on the Kennedy autopsy report and on the death threat made by a Texas student, and on 23 December, the same sources were used for a broadcast noting the end of the period of national mourning.

9. On 15 January a Foreign Broadcast Intercept Service report (attached) was received in English from the Prague International Wire Service (CTK) which, in turn, quoted "an ultraright wing Italian paper Secolo" (Il Secolo) as stating that, "President Kennedy fell victim to a gang of criminals linked with certain political circles in Texas." The report theorizes that "the gang agreed the time had come to do away with the man whom they considered to be the initiator of the policy which was contrary to their interests and the task of murdering the President was given

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