

Oswald Calls to Embassies Reported Taped by C.I.A.

By NICHOLAS M. HORROCK

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 20—The Central Intelligence Agency secretly tape-recorded two telephone conversations between Lee Harvey Oswald and the Cuban and Soviet Embassies in Mexico City some eight weeks before President Kennedy was shot to death on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, Government sources familiar with the events said today.

The call to the Soviet Embassy, according to the sources, alerted the C.I.A. to the presence of Oswald in Mexico City, and on Oct. 10 the agency warned the Federal Bureau of Investigation. There is no indication that the F.B.I., which was investigating Oswald for

his pro-Castro activities, ever followed up on the information.

The call to the Cuban Embassy, the sources said, was not associated with Oswald until after the death of Mr. Kennedy. A Federal commission headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren found that Oswald, acting alone, had slain the President.

To Avoid Publicity

The calls were reportedly placed by Oswald on a trip to Mexico City in late September and early October, 1963. The events of this trip have never been fully made public and have been the subject of speculation for more than a decade.

The reports of the calls are the latest developments in the increasing speculation about the Warren Commission's conclusions. Evidence that the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. may have been less than candid with the commission has added to the questions surrounding the as-

Continued on Page 49, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

sassination and has led to more calls for a reopening of the inquiry.

The Mexico City trip was given scant treatment in the Warren Commission report because publication of information about it might have exposed "sources and methods" of the C.I.A. and impaired national security, intelligence officers and commission staff sources have said.

In response to inquiries about the matter from The New York Times, the C.I.A. issued an unusual public statement on the matter. It would not confirm that there were any tape-recorded conversations but said:

"On October 9, 1963 Central Intelligence Agency headquarters received information that a person named Lee Oswald contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City in late September or early October, 1963. In transmitting the information on 10 October 1963 Central Intelligence Agency headquarters said Lee Oswald was probably identical to Lee Henry (sic) Oswald, a former radar operator in the United States Marine Corps, born 18 October 1939 in New Orleans, who defected to the Soviet Union in 1959 and who subsequently made arrangements to return to the United States with a Russian wife.

From F.B.I. Reports

"This biographical data was based upon Federal Bureau of Investigation reports provided to Central Intelligence Agency following Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union.

"This information was also provided to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Department of the Navy, the United States Ambassador and his staff in Mexico and to the Representative of the F.B.I. in Mexico.

"Following the assassination of President Kennedy, Central Intelligence Agency records revealed that a person believed to be Oswald was in contact with the Cuban Embassy on 27 September 1963 for the purpose of receiving a transit visa for use enroute to the U.S.S.R.

"In addition a number of photographs of individuals believed to be in contact with the Cuban and Soviet Embassies in Mexico City were received from the Central Intelligence Agency station in Mexico and were compared with pictures of Lee Harvey Oswald by C.I.A. officers in Mexico City and C.I.A. headquarters and by United States authorities in Dallas, Texas.

"It was determined that none of these photographs was the



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Lee Harvey Oswald

photograph of Lee Harvey Oswald. Their determinations, and the raw data upon which they were based, along with the reports of his visit to the Soviet Embassy, were made to the Warren and Rockefeller Commissions as were all other materials relevant to the investigation of President Kennedy's death."

Three staff members of the Warren Commission were assigned to investigate the Mexico City trip and other matters involving the C.I.A.—William T. Coleman, now Secretary of Transportation; Howard P. Willens, a former Justice Department official now in private law practice, and W. David Slawson, a law professor in California.

Mr. Coleman said in a telephone interview that he was "disturbed" about the possibility that United State security might be harmed by recent disclosures of F.B.I. and C.I.A. activities. But he acknowledged that he and other staff members had received information from the C.I.A. on Oswald's activities in Mexico, and they did not run counter to the commission's conclusion that Oswald, acting alone, killed President Kennedy and a Dallas police officer, J. J. Tippitt.

Sure Others Learned

Mr. Coleman said he was sure that J. Lee Rankin, the Warren Commission's chief counsel, had been informed of the C.I.A., Mexico City data and that "at least two or three commission members" knew. He could not remember if the commission had ever discussed the matter in executive session. Mr. Willens and Mr. Slawson declined to make public comment.

Sources familiar with the contents of the tapes said that Oswald had been seeking a transit visa from Cuban officials and that he had been "rebuffed." One source said that the call to the Soviet Embassy had been an effort to get help in furthering his application at the Cuban Embassy.

These sources said there had

9-21-75
NHT

been no "conspiratorial" tone to the conversations and one source called them "benign." Moreover, the sources said, the C.I.A. had information that the Cubans were suspicious of and unsympathetic to Oswald. One source said the Cubans regarded Oswald's behavior in returning to the United States from the Soviet Union and then asking to go back as "strange."

Asked if anything said might have "triggered" Oswald, a Castro supporter, to take "retaliation" against President Kennedy, one source said he thought not but said that he thought Oswald had been "frustrated" by the Cubans.

Known by F.B.I.

The F.B.I. acknowledged at the Warren Commission hearings that it had received information from the C.I.A. about Oswald's Mexican contact with the Soviet Embassy on Oct. 10, 1963. Former F.B.I. agents involved in the investigation said the bureau knew that Oswald had been trying to return to the Soviet Union.

Under bureau operating procedures at that time, the F.B.I. followed up on any unexplained visit by an American citizen to Communist embassies and consulates. It would have been particularly watchful in the case of Oswald, who had defected once.

The bureau jargon for such unexplained visits was "bogies" and agents were sent to interview the person on why he or she had been in contact with the Communists. The only reason this was not done in Oswald's case, these sources said, may have been because he was already under an F.B.I. security investigation in connection with pro-Castro activities.

The bureau's formal response to these questions was to refer to the Warren Commission report. In the report it was noted that James P. Hosty Jr., special agent of the Dallas field office, attempted to interview Oswald about his Cuban activities on Nov. 1.