

Foreign Ties With Oswald Hinted by Johnson in 1969

By MURRAY ILLSON

Former President Lyndon B. Johnson indicated in an interview in 1969 that he felt "international connections" might have been involved in Lee Harvey Oswald's assassination of President Kennedy.

Mr. Johnson's suspicions were reported last night by Walter Cronkite on his C.B.S. news program, which showed portions of an interview with Mr. Johnson that had been deleted from the original broadcast at the former President's request on the ground of national security.

Mr. Cronkite said he was public because of a column written Thursday by Marianne Means of the King Features Syndicate.

Miss Means said that Mr. Johnson told her in confidence a year before he died that Oswald had acted alone in the assassination but was "either under the influence or the orders" of Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Miss Means explained that she was breaking the former President's confidence "because Johnson's opinion appears to debunk the current speculation that the Central Intelligence Agency might somehow have been involved in the Kennedy assassination."

No Longer Withheld

In his broadcast last night, Mr. Cronkite said that the disclosure by Miss Means no longer made it necessary for him to withhold the material that was deleted from the interview he conducted with Mr. Johnson at the LBJ Ranch in September, 1969.

Mr. Cronkite said that he had asked Mr. Johnson then whether he was satisfied that there had been no international conspiracy in the assassination of President Kennedy at Dallas in 1963. He then showed the portions of the interview in which Mr. Johnson said; "I can't honestly say that I've ever been completely relieved of the fact that there might have been international connections."

CRONKITE — You mean you still feel that there might have been?

JOHNSON — Well I have

not completely discounted it.

Mr. Johnson next expressed confidence in the competence, ability and honesty of the members of the Warren Commission that investigated the assassination, then added:

"But I don't think that they or me or anyone else is always absolutely sure of everything that might have motivated Oswald or others that could have been involved."

What Direction

CRONKITE—What direction does your lingering suspicion lead you . . . to Cuba, is that the area that you feel might have been involved?

JOHNSON—Oh, I don't think we ought to discuss the suspicions because there's not any hard evidence that would lead me to the conclusion that Oswald was directed by a foreign government. Or that his sympathies for other governments could have spurred him on in this effort. But he was quite a mysterious fellow and he did have connections that bore examination on the extent of

the influence of those connections on him, and I think history will deal with much more than we are able to now.

CRONKITE—How would it come out in history?

JOHNSON—I don't know.

In 1973, Leo Janos, a former Johnson aide, said that Mr. Johnson had told him a short time before his death that he had never believed Oswald acted alone in the assassination.

In an article published in The Atlantic Monthly, Mr. Janos wrote that Mr. Johnson had told him that "a year or so

before Kennedy's death, a C.I.A.-backed assassination team had been picked up in Havana." Mr. Janos added that "Johnson speculated that Dallas had been a retaliation for the thwarted attempt" to kill Premier Castro.

A year earlier, in December, 1972, Chief Justice Earl Warren, who headed the commission that investigated the Kennedy assassination, said that Mr. Johnson had cited rumors, later proved to be unfounded, that Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev and Premier Castro might have been involved in the assassination.

Autopsy Studied Again

WASHINGTON, April 25 (AP)—The Rockefeller commission investigating the C.I.A. has ordered a re-examination of the autopsy of President Kennedy in response to allegations that more than one assassin was involved.

Lieut. Col. Robert R. McMeekin, a pathologist at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, and Dr. Werner U. Spitz, chief medical examiner from Wayne County (Detroit), both confirmed today that they were part of a team of five physicians who studied the autopsy materials recently at the National Archives at the request of the commission headed by Vice President Rockefeller.

Colonel McMeekin said in an interview that the purpose of the examination was to determine whether the fatal head shot could have been fired from the front and not the rear, as the Warren Commission concluded.

He said he and his colleagues had not yet reported their findings to the commission, but he added that he found nothing to refute the Warren Commission's conclusion that the fatal shot was fired by Lee Harvey Oswald from the sixth floor of the Texas Book Depository in Dallas.

The re-examination apparently was prompted by allegations made both publicly and to the Rockefeller commission by the comedian-activist Dick Gregory that a film of the assassination clearly showed the President lurching violently backward after he was hit in the head, indicating that he was shot from the front.

Mr. Gregory and his associates have linked this evidence with a newspaper photograph purporting to show men resembling the convicted Watergate conspirators, E. Howard Hunt Jr. and Frank Sturgis, at the scene of the shooting to develop a theory that the C.I.A. was involved in the assassination.