time was William Morgan, a former sergeant in the U.S. Army who had become a major in Castro's army. That August Morgan received considerable press coverage when he lured some anti-Castro rebels into a trap by pretending to be a counter-revolutionary.

Delgado recalled that Oswald wanted to emulate Morgan. They began talking about going to Cuba to join the revolutionary forces as officers and "lead an expedition to some of these other islands and free them too." They talked about how they would "do away with Trujillo." With Delgado's help, Oswald learned some elementary Spanish.

After the Cuban government started sending hundreds of Batista supporters before the firing squad, Delgado lost his enthusiasm for Castro, but Oswald defended him. He argued that in all new governments some errors were bound to occur, but he was certain that these people had been investigated prior to their executions and that the American press wasn't publicizing those investigations. For Delgado, leaving for Cuba had been barracks talk, mostly, but Oswald still wanted to go. He asked Delgado for ideas about how an Anglo-American like himself could, in Delgado's phrasing, "get with a Cuban, you know, people, be part of that revolutionary movement," and Delgado suggested he get in touch with a Cuban embassy. He believed that Oswald later made contact with the Cuban consulate in Los Angeles and received mail—perhaps pro-Cuban literature—from there. But for some reason Oswald abandoned the idea of going to Cuba, at least for the moment.

Delgado also remembered that Oswald had no use for religion—"He used to laugh at Sunday school . . . mimic the guys that fell out to go to church. . . . Oswald told him that "God was a myth or a legend, that basically our whole life is built around this one falsehood." The Bible was simply "a novel." Oswald preferred *Das Kapital* and other political books like George Orwell's *Animal Farm.* Through Delgado, we are able to see that Oswald had little sense of irony. As he described *Animal Farm* to Delgado, the farmer represented the imperialistic world, and the animals were the workers or socialist people, and "eventually it will come about that the socialists will have the imperialists working for them." When he was asked if Oswald had explained that after the pigs took over the farm they became like the farmers, Delgado replied, "No; just that the pigs and animals had revolted and made the farmer work for them." Oswald had read the book literally and obviously missed Orwell's point.

Nelson Delgado's name appears in many conspiracy books, but

mainly because he testified that Oswald was a poor rifle shot when he was in the Marines:

> Q. Did you fire with Oswald?
> A. Right; I was in the same line. . . . It was a pretty big joke, because he got a lot of "Maggie's drawers" [a red flag indicating the shot had missed the target], you know, a lot of misses, but he didn't give a darn.
> Q. Missed the target completely?
> A. He just qualified, that's it. He wasn't as enthusiastic as the rest of us. We all loved—liked, you know, going to the range.

The key element in this account is that Oswald wasn't enthusiastic—he didn't give a darn. He scored just one point above the score necessary to qualify. As a raw recruit he had done better. And according to a report in *Time,* his Marine rifle-score book showed him "making 48 and 49 points out of a possible 50 in rapid fire at 200 yards from a sitting position, without a scope."

In the spring of 1959 Oswald struck up an acquaintance with Kerry Thornley, another young radar operator, who would be so impressed by Oswald that he would write a novel about him after his defection. As in the case of Delgado, Oswald became interested in Thornley after Thornley seemed to agree with some of his ideas—beginning with an admiration for the new Cuban leader. They met at a bull session during which Oswald learned that Thornley, too, was an atheist. "What do you think of communism?" Oswald asked him. When Thornley replied he didn't think much of it, Oswald told him, "Well, I think the best religion is communism." At first Thornley felt that Oswald was merely playing to the crowd, but he later decided that Oswald sincerely believed "communism was the best system in the world." Although he noticed some gaps in Lee's knowledge, Thornley considered him to be "extremely intelligent," and was surprised on learning after the assassination that Oswald had never finished high school. He thought the news media underestimated Oswald's understanding of Marxism:

> I certainly think he understood much more than many people in the press have seemed to feel. I don't think he was a man who was grasping onto his particular beliefs . . . trying to know something over his head, by any means.