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February 14, 1971

Mr. Leslie Whitten  
1612 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Whitten:

Thank you for your letter of February 2, and for the copies of your columns.

As you requested, I am enclosing the US News & World Report article on the assassination attempt against Castro. For more on Reinaldo Gonzales and Antonio Veciana, see items 4, 5, 7, 9, and 12 of the enclosed notes which I have prepared.

Warren Commission Exhibit 3148 establishes the link between Gonzalez and the parents of Sylvia Odio.

As general background on the Odio incident, I am sending you pages 321-325 of the Warren Report and pages 376-387 of Sylvia Meagher's book, Accessories After the Fact.

You asked about other information I might have concerning attempts on Castro's life. Items 3, 6, 8, and especially 11 of my notes are relevant. I found that there was rather little reported in the NY Times, and some in the London Times. I expect that, starting with the indexes to these papers, and checking for reports in the Cuban government or exile press, one could gather quite a bit of detail about the many attempts that occurred in 1961-63.

What I have sent you is only a small fraction of the available information on the Odio incident. There are many flaws in the Warren Commission's account; I doubt that I could detail them in alletber or that you would have time for them all now. The section from Mrs. Meagher's book is very perceptive, but she based it on what the Warren Commission chose to publish and had access to only a small fraction of the unpublished data in the Commission's files: I have dozens of such pages now. Also, there is an extensive analysis of the Odio incident in Chapter 11 (pages 251 ff.) of Oswald in New Orleans, by Harold Weisberg.

I would like to comment on two interpretations of the Odio incident which might strike you at first as the most plausible ones, but which I find quite unlikely:

(1) I doubt that Odio made her story up. Although she definitely was having mental and emotional problems, and some of her associates attacked her credibility, her account has stood up very well. Some visit like that she described probably took place. (Hall and Howard, credited with the visit by the Warren Commission, were engaged in anti-Castro activities in Dallas, noted at the time by the FBI.) Although I doubt that Odio was fabricating consciously (or even unconsciously), others may have deliberately deceived her by falsely introducing someone else as "Leon Oswald."

(2) It is also very unlikely that the incident happened just as Odio told it: i.e., that Oswald came to her apartment in the presence of anti-Castro activists, that he made the remarks attributed to him about killing Kennedy, and that he later did so. Superficially the Odio incident fits in with the hypothesis that Oswald was involved in an anti-Castro plot that backfired. However, I do not think that the hypothesis - apparently advanced by some of your sources in the CIA - that Oswald was recruited by Fidel Castro to kill Kennedy is tenable. Leaving aside for the moment the arguments that the real Oswald was not at Odio's (and some of the arguments used by the Commission in concluding that he was not there are good ones), I would like to emphasize that he was almost the worst possible candidate for the job. There were certainly many Castro agents around without his poor marksmanship and general incompetence, but most significantly as early as August 1963 - well before the Odio incident - Oswald was well known



as pro-Castro, both to the public and to various police agencies. He had publicly identified himself with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, whose direct links to the Cuban government had been recently exposed. Your articles cited the efforts of the CIA to make sure that its assassination teams could not be directly linked with the US government. Certainly Castro would have taken similar precautions - the use of Oswald would have been almost suicidal. Any pro-Castro agent considering the recruitment of Oswald for such a job could easily have anticipated the strong anti-Castro reaction which did occur. (As you may know, blunting of the pressures for a reprisal against Cuba was one of the reasons Earl Warren was persuaded to serve on the Commission.)

The correct explanation of the Odio incident probably involves a web of intrigue and counter-intrigue. I do think that all available information should be gathered before any conclusions are reached. Let me suggest some leads that I have not had the time or resources to pursue:

- \* I have FBI reports of interviews with many of Odio's anti-Castro associates in Dallas and elsewhere. Often the FBI was interested only in her credibility, not her associations and activities; they seem to have had no interest in the Gonzalez link. Some of these people should be questioned.

- \* One Reinel Gonzalez, age 48, has recently been involved in criminal anti-Castro activities in Los Angeles. He may well be related to the person involved in the 1961 assassination attempt. I have some citations to articles in the LA exile papers, which might have relevant background on the senior Gonzalez.

- \* I have not checked the 1961 Cuban press for reports on Gonzalez. I think that some of these papers can be found only at the Library of Congress; the Hoover Institute has a good partial collection, but I don't know enough Spanish to make proper use of it.

- \* In addition to the many pages from the Warren Commission's unpublished files which I have, there are others which I have not yet been able to obtain.

- \* Although I have worked only with public documents, there are several Warren Commission critics who have done their own investigating of the Odio incident. Harold Weisberg (Route 8, Frederick, Md. 21701) has quite a bit of such information which I am sure he would be willing to discuss with you.

- \* In particular, Hall and Howard have been interviewed. They are talkative, under the right circumstances, but not reliable. Attempts should be made to get more information from them.

There is a great deal of persuasive evidence that Oswald's relationships with various government agencies were - to put it mildly - not those of an authentic pro-Castro activist. The Warren Commission took very seriously the allegations that Oswald was an agent of the FBI or CIA, but failed to rebut them adequately; I could show you relevant evidence that was effectively withheld from the Warren Commission by the agency involved. Thus, I would suggest that your sources within the government who feel that Oswald was a fanatic pro-Castroite may not be reliable on this matter.

As far as I know, only a few people know of the Odio-Gonzalez link documented in the enclosures. I think that it is important, and that as thorough an investigation as possible should be made before it is further disseminated or used publicly. As you can see, no simple explanation seems likely. I urge you to take advantage of the work that already has been done on the Odio incident, and give me and other Warren Report critics the opportunity to provide confirmatory or contradictory evidence about whatever conclusions you may draw. I would like to hear your views on this matter, and on how I might be of further assistance. Of course, if you happen to be in this area soon, I would be glad to meet with you and discuss my information and opinions in more detail.

Sincerely yours,

Paul L. Hoch