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# The Friends of Democratic Cuba

By William Davy

January 20, 1961. New Orleans. As John F. Kennedy took the oath of office as the 35th President of the United States, two men entered the Bolton Ford Truck Center on North Claiborne Avenue and approached the assistant manager, Oscar Deslatte. They identified themselves as representatives of an anti-Castro fund raising group called the "Friends of Democratic Cuba." The older of the pair, described by Deslatte as "olive-complexioned with an athletic build and a scar over his left eye", spoke with a Cuban accent. He told Deslatte that the Friends wished to procure ten Ford Econoline vans, presumably for use in the upcoming Bay of Pigs invasion. Deslatte conferred with his manager, Fred Sewell, and prepared a bid form at a price of fifty dollars over cost for each truck. The Cuban gave his name as Joseph Moore, which Deslatte noted on the bid. However, Moore requested that his companion's name actually appear on the form. Above Joseph Moore's name, Deslatte wrote the name "Oswald."

The second man spoke up and said that he was in fact Oswald and confirmed that his name should be on the bid, as he was "the man with the money" and would pay for the trucks if purchased. Fred Sewell spoke with both men and would recall later the incident in detail six years later when interviewed by New Orleans Assistant D.A. James Alcock. "Oswald" he described as a thin young man about five feet seven inches and approximately 140-145 pounds.

As mentioned above, Moore was a powerfully built Cuban with a scar over his left eye. (It is appropriate to note the ubiquity of this Cuban throughout the build-up to the assassination. He has been identified as being in Oswald's company in Dean Andrews' office, he was seen in Guy Bannister's office by his secretary, he was taking pictures of Oswald during one of leafleting episodes at Maison

Blanche, Marcello attorney G.Wray Gill saw him in his own office accompanied by David Ferrie, and he even shows up in the Warren Report. Commission Exhibit 2370 is a statement of Harvey L.Wade who recalls seeing this individual with Oswald in Jack Ruby's *Carousel Club*).

Although only the surname "Oswald" appears on the bid, Sewell recalled that the young man also used the first name of Lee. Which of course is interesting, because at the time of his incident the real Lee Oswald was spending his last months in a radio factory in Minsk, having defected to the Soviet Union in September of 1959.

This point was noted several months prior to this incident by none other than the Director of the FBI. On June 3, 1960. J.Edgar Hoover issued a memorandum to the State Department advising them that "there is a possibility that an impostor is using Oswald's birth certificate."

Three years later, as the accused assassin's picture was plastered over every TV screen in America, Deslatte was struck by the resemblance, in both name and appearance, to the second man in the "Bolton Ford incident." After calling the local office of the FBI, Deslatte was visited on November 25, 1963 by Special Agents William F. McDonald and W.J. Danielson, Jr. Deslatte offered the original bid form to the agents, which they picked up with solenoid tongs and placed in between

two sheets of plastic. Danielson and McDonald dutifully prepared a brief one page report on the incident which was promptly buried, along with the bid form, in the National Archives never to be mentioned in any of the 26 volumes of the Warren Report.

But what of this organization, the Friends of Democratic Cuba? Ostensibly it was a group of New Orleans civic personalities incorporated for the purpose of collecting funds to aid the anti-Castro cause. The funds were to be channeled through the Frente Revolucionario Democrático (FRD). The New Orleans delegate of the FRD, Sergio Arcacha Smith, was to receive the collected funds, less a twenty percent cut, to be retained by the Friends of Democratic Cuba. However, no public collection of money ever took place.

The Friends of Democratic Cuba was strictly a dummy front. In fact, an informant for New Orleans D.A., Jim Garrison, revealed that the group was "an undercover operation in conjunction with the CIA and FBI which involved the shipment and transportation of individuals and supplies in and out of Cuba." (As a side note, this same informant revealed to Garrison's office that the FBI liaison was none other than Regis Kennedy, Hoover's point man with the anti-Castro community in New Orleans. Kennedy also questioned David Ferrie after his mysterious trip to Texas during the assassination week-

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It should also be noted that the FBI was looking for a Clay Bertrand almost immediately after the assassination and before Dean Andrews received his request from Bertrand to represent Oswald. This same informant further revealed that Regis Kennedy had confirmed the fact that Clay Shaw had done work for the CIA in Italy over a five year span).

As for the altruistic citizens who made up the board of the FDC, the list is a mixed bag indeed.

Martin McAuliffe, owner of a publicity agency that handled propaganda for Arcacha Smith's Cuban Revolutionary Democratic Front, was listed as president. However, McAuliffe would later state that he was asked by a FDC member if the Friends could use his name on their letterhead. "Next thing I knew I was down as president of the organization", he recalled.

Alfred Chittenden, the chief of the New Orleans Stevedores Union, was included, presumably because of his ability to obtain salary donations from his fellow union members.

The vice-president of the organization was Gerald F. Tujague, owner of Tujague Inc. Forwarding Company, an import/export firm. In the months between November 1955 and January 1956, Tujague employed a 16 year old messenger by the name of Lee Harvey Oswald. (Recall Hoover's memo on Oswald birth certificate. Could Oswald have supplied his birth certificate to Tujague as a prerequisite for employment?)

Grady Durham, another man in the Guy Banister menagerie of investigators, was also listed as an incorporator. Durham, an attorney who was first cousin to former Louisiana Governor, Jimmy Davis, was reportedly a frequent chess partner of the CIA liaison to the FDC.

Another incorporator was William Dalzell. Dalzell was a private investigator closely associated with Guy Banister Associates. Dalzell was a Navy veteran who also worked as a cryptographer for the Department of Defense. He later shows up in Ethiopia and Yemen as a petroleum advisor with the Agency for International Development, whose links to the CIA

have been amply documented.

According to Garrison's files, Dalzell also operated out of the American Embassy in Rome for a time and spoke about a half dozen languages, including Swahili. Some of his activities in the early 1960's included attempting to obtain weapons for revolutionaries in Honduras as well as a PT boat and submarine for the anti-Castro Cubans.

A CIA memorandum released in 1983, as a result of a FOIA request, indicates that Dalzell had at least three separate contacts with the New Orleans CIA office. Coincidentally, one of these contacts was on January 20, 1961, the date of the Bolton Ford Incident.

I have purposely omitted any lengthy treatment of the most infamous of the members of the FDC, Guy Banister. Banister is well known to most assassination scholars and with the release of several new books and articles in the coming months, researchers will no doubt learn more about Banister's ties to such New Orleans personalities as Ed Butler and Alton Ochsner of INCA fame, Guy Johnson who, like Banister, was ex-ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence), and of course Clay Shaw, David Ferrie, and Lee Harvey Oswald.

The Friends of Democratic Cuba disbanded within a month of its inception. A splinter group, the Free Voice of Latin America, was made up of essentially the same cast of characters. It too dissolved within a month. However, I think it is safe to say that their operations were ongoing.

In one of Jim Garrison's last interviews, he reflected on Banister, the FDC, and the Bolton Ford incident:

*"To select (January) 20th is something I think would be typical of Guy Banister. He was a hater. It's not just speculation, we know now Banister's organization was incorporated just a few months earlier, possibly with an objective related to Operation Mongoose. Operation Mongoose was preexisting, but the assassination operation itself might have been attached under a wing in some place."*

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