

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: July 13, 1966

SUBJECT: Further on Oswald and Kennedy Assassination

REFERENCE: Memorandum this subject of December 25, 1965

PARTICIPANTS: Elena Garro de Paz, Mexican writer  
Charles Wm. Thomas, Political Officer

COPIES TO: AMB, DCM, P, P/R, L, CED, CR/T (2)

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1. Sna. Paz described some developments which may have some bearing on her claim that she saw Lee Harvey Oswald at a party at the home of her cousin, Rubén Durán, when Oswald was in Mexico prior to the Kennedy assassination.
2. She stated that her writer friend, Carlos Solorzano, is quite well acquainted with Cuban Ambassador Joaquín Hernández Armas. She said Solorzano was apparently not particularly leftist but that his brother, Alfonso, was a communist. Ambassador Hernández had told Solorzano that he would very much like to meet Sna. Paz. Solorzano accordingly arranged a party at his own home on June 30, 1966, and invited both of them. Also present were Tito Montañana and his wife; Elvira Vargas, the leftist journalist with Novedades who is a close personal friend of President Díaz Ordaz; Emanuel Carballo, the pro-Castro writer; Joaquín Díaz Canelo, head of the publishing firm called Editorial Mortiz; and Juan Soriano, the painter. She said Soriano was probably invited to make her feel at ease, since he is a friend of hers and was the only anti-communist there besides herself.
3. During the evening, Ambassador Hernández, whom she described as intelligent and cultured, concentrated his attention on her and did his best to flatter her by lauding her literary productions. In addition, he expressed great interest in her friend, Carlos Madrazo. He issued a personal invitation to her to attend the annual literary festival of the Casa de las Americas in Havana. She explained to him that she was not a Fidelista and that she wouldn't go to Havana unless Juan Soriano went with her. Hernández then invited Soriano to attend as well, but the latter loudly denounced the Castro regime over the objections of the others present, who urged them both to attend the festival.
4. Later, her friend, Victor Rico Galán, the pro-Castro journalist, who, she says, personally dislikes Ambassador Hernández, warned her not to go to Cuba alone.

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REVIEWED BY D. ZISCHKE GROUP 3 - 9/21/81 - Downgraded at 12-year intervals, not automatically declassified.

PORTIONS DERIVED AS INDICATED

5. On July 4, a driver from the Cuban Embassy delivered to her home on Calle Alencastre in Lomas Virreyes an envelope containing two letters and some printed matter from the Casa de las Americas in Havana. The first letter, written last October, gave her address as Vermont 33, and the second letter, written in April, gave her address as Vermont 39. The envelope for the first letter, with the above address, was marked for return to the sender, which was the Cuban Embassy here. The second envelope, which contained the whole package, had no address as it was hand-carried to her home (see attachments).

6. Sra. Paz stated that the only possible reason the letters were addressed to her at Calle Vermont was because she spent several days at the Hotel Vermont immediately after the Kennedy assassination (see referenced memo). The correct address of the hotel, however, is Vermont 29. She concluded the Cuban Government carried that street and number, with a minor error, as her regular address.

7. Since Manuel Calvillo had taken her to the hotel ostensibly to protect her from the communists, this raised the question of how the Cubans obtained that address. She stated that as far as she was aware, the only people who knew she had been at the Hotel Vermont were Manuel Calvillo and two close friends of his, Ernesto de la Peña and Margarita Michelena. Two other friends of these three who might have learned of it are Eunice Odio and June Cobb. She said she had always been very suspicious of all three of these people because they had gone out of their way to cultivate her when she returned from Europe in 1953 and had made such a point of being outspoken professional anti-communists. She remembered that many years ago Margarita Michelena was a communist. She now wondered whether Calvillo and perhaps the other two as well were Cuban agents. She stated again that Calvillo was a close personal friend of Moe Polonares and Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, and that guards, presumably from Gobernacion, had been placed outside her home when she had returned from the Hotel Vermont. In fact, since Calvillo's recent dismissal from his position at the Secretariat of Education (for leaking information to the press about the Fondo de Cultura Economica), he had shown her two personal telegrams from President Diaz Ordaz assuring him that another job would be found for him in the near future. She added that she had told Calvillo that she had gone to the US Embassy at one point to tell what she knew about her alleged encounter with Oswald. To add to her suspicions, she remembered that what appeared to be a gunman who often accompanied Calvillo and Polonares was a Spanish refugee named (fnu) Valencia. She said Valencia's first wife was a Russian communist he had married during the Spanish Civil War. She had subsequently taken their children and returned to the Soviet Union.

8. She thought it possible that the Cuban Embassy had now deliberately given her the letters from the Casa de las Americas with the Vermont Street address in order to frighten her. She was already concerned about what appeared to be three gunshot that had been fired through her upstairs

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rear bedroom window while she was out of the house about three weeks ago. She said that with all the leftists in town accusing her of being an agent of the FBI and the government irritated with her because of her support for Carlos Madrazo, she did not feel entirely safe living alone with her daughter. She said her brother was now sleeping at the house to ease their anxiety.

9. Finally, Sna. Paz stated that she had recently encountered her cousin, Lydia Durán, and that the latter had been very friendly and wanted to meet her again. She said Lydia was very poor and had a small job with Difusion Cultural at the Anthropological Museum.

Attachments:

As stated (to P/R, L, and CBD only)

P: CWThomas:hag

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HERNANDEZ, Amador -- A- Director of Education for the State of Chihuahua

BI, ED, C

B- A friend of Elena Garro de Paz who was cultivated for her protection because of his membership in the political party of power.

C- None

AZCUE, Eusebio ---- A- Subject is the Cuban Commercial attache to Mexico.

B- Attended the party given by Ruben Duran which Oswald allegedly attended.

C- Reflects that Subject had contact with Oswald at the Cuban Embassy and that an argument between Oswald and Subject occurred because Subject could not issue Oswald a visa to go to Cuba, at the direction of the Cuban Government.

HERNANDEZ Armas, Joaquin - A- Subject is the Cuban Ambassador to Mexico.

B- Subject is a close associate of a communist friend of Elena Garro de Paz.

C- None

Information Obtained from Sources

A- Department of State Records

B- Mr. C.W. Thomas' Correspondence

C- The Warren Commission Report.

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Dec. 25, 1965

Lee Harvey Oswald and Kennedy Assassination

REFERENCE: Memorandum of Conversation, December 10, 1965

Elena Garro de Paz, Mexican writer  
Charles Wm. Thomas, Political Officer

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AMB, DGM, P (2), P/R, L, CED, CR/T (2)

On December 25, Sra. de Paz again discussed at considerable length her alleged encounter with Oswald. Also present, as they were at the original conversation on this subject, were my wife and Sr. de Paz' daughter, Elena. Some further information on this subject was given subsequently on January 9, 1966. During this latter conversation, Sra. de Paz admitted that she had gone to the Embassy on an earlier occasion with her daughter and mother-in-law and had talked to two Embassy officers (presumably from the Legal Attaché's Office) about this matter. She said since the Embassy officers did not give much credence to anything they said, they did not bother to give a very complete story. The following information supplements and in some instances corrects that given in the memorandum of December 10.

1. Lydia, Horacio, and Rubén Durán are all cousins of Sra. de Paz. Silvia Durán is married to Horacio, who is a rather weak man. Horacio was converted to communism by Ricardo Guerra. Sra. de Paz has never had anything to do with Silvia, whom she detests and considers a whore. Rubén was born in the United States and served in the US Army during the war. He still goes to the US from time to time but has no relatives or particular connections there. Lydia also travels occasionally to the US. The party in question was held at the home of Rubén Durán.

2. She believes that the date of the party was about September 2 or 3, 1963. It was a few days before the visit of the Soviet astronaut, Gagarin. She believes it was a Monday or Tuesday because it was an odd night to have a party.

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CIA...*

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(September 2 and 3 do, in fact, fall on Monday and Tuesday.) She cannot conveniently reconstruct the date from her calendar because it is in a desk which is now stored away with a lot of other furniture blocking it.

3. At the party, the man who assumes was Oswald wore a black sweater. He tended to be silent and stared a lot at the floor. Of his two young American companions, one was very tall and slender and had long blond hair which hung across his forehead. He had a gaunt face and a rather long protruding chin. The other was also rather tall and had short, light brown hair, but he had no real distinguishing characteristics. All three were obviously American and did not dance or mix with the other people. The three were evidently friends, because she saw them by chance the next day walking down the street together.

4. Although Sra. de Paz had returned from an extended stay in Europe only in June or July, she had already met Ruscho Azcue and knows positively that he was at the party. On another occasion (it was not clear whether before or after the party in question), she attended a party where she saw, among others, Ruscho Azcue; Enilio Carballido, the pro-Castro writer; and a Latin American Negro man with red hair. (These last two were not at the Durán party as was mistakenly stated in the December 10 memorandum.) Carballido and Azcue, along with some others, were in a heated discussion on that occasion about President Kennedy, and they came to the conclusion that the only solution was to kill him. Sra. de Paz said that Carballido is known as a Castro agent in Mexico. He has been to Red China, the Soviet Union, and many times to Cuba. Following the assassination of Kennedy, he spent about a year in Cuba. When he returned, he got a job teaching at Rutgers University through Dr. José Yanguaz Aparal, who was formerly with the Rockefeller Foundation in New York and who is now a professor at Rutgers. Carballido is presumably still there. The day after the assassination, Eleanita Paz encountered Sra. de Paz in Sanborns. On seeing her, Sra. de Paz turned and hurried out of the store. Azcue was immediately called back to Havana after the assassination, and his wife followed him shortly thereafter.

5. Others present at the Durán party in addition to her and her daughter were Horacio and Silvia Durán; Lydia Durán; Sra. de Paz' philocommunist sister, Dava Guerrero; General José Jesús Clark Flores and his mistress, a Guatemalan woman; a medical doctor from Dalinde Hospital; a young American couple, both fat and blond, who were spending their honeymoon in Mexico; a 40-year old Mexican woman in a red dress; and a rather strange man who claimed to be Mexican but did not look or talk like one. His first name was Alejandro and he subsequently wrote Eleanita several love letters. She claims she turned these in to the American Embassy. Ricardo Guerra, a communist, and his wife, Esmerio Castellanos, a writer, were both supposed to come to the party but declined to come, according to Sra. de Paz, when they learned that she would be there.

6. On Saturday, November 23, 1963, the day after the Kennedy assassination, Sr. de Paz' brother drove her and her daughter at about 3:00 p.m. to the Cuban Embassy. Her brother was embarrassed by their behavior and drove a block up the street to wait for them after letting them out. The two women then went inside the gate and shouted "assassin" and other insults.

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7. Later that day, they were visited by a friend, Manuel Calvillo, who said that they were in serious danger from the communists and that he would take them to a small hotel where they would be safe for a few days. (It was not clear whether he said he was acting under orders or not.) Calvillo was known around town to be an undercover agent for the Secretariat of Cuba and to be a personal friend of Jose Palomares and Gustavo Diaz Ordaz; accordingly they believed and trusted him. Among other things he said was that Sylvia Durán had been arrested. This was not public information at that time.

8. Since she could not remember the name of the hotel, Sra. de Paz took me to the part of town where she remembered it to be, and we found it. It is the Vermont Hotel, located at Calle Vermont 29. It is one and a half blocks west of Avenida de los Insurgentes just south of the Vidueto. She stated that the hotel is owned by someone from San Luis Potosí and is used by businessmen from that area. She and her daughter did not personally register at the hotel. She thinks Calvillo registered them as relatives or friends of his from San Luis Potosí. Although modest, it is a modern and comfortable-looking hotel. They stayed there until the following Friday and hardly left their room.

9. It was not until after they were in the hotel and saw the newspapers and the photographs of Oswald that she and her daughter both came to the independent conclusion that he was one of the young Americans at the Durán party. When Calvillo visited them at the hotel, she told him she wanted to report to the American Embassy what she knew about Oswald's connections with local communists and with Azcue. Calvillo said she shouldn't go because the American Embassy was full of communist spies. When she returned to her house the following week, guards were posted outside it.

10. When she saw her sister, Dora Guerrero, after returning home, the latter was terrified because of Oswald's presence at the Durán party. She had come to the conclusion independently that it was Oswald whom she had seen there. Sra. de Guerrero was also very angry with the Durán's because she thought they had become involved in the assassination plot for money. Despite being a philocomunist, she was an admirer of President Kennedy's because she is also a patriot and a monarchist. About two months after the assassination, Sra. de Guerrero was called in by two communists, whom she refuses to identify, and was warned with threats never to reveal to anyone that she had been to a party with Oswald. She remained so terrified that she would not accompany Sra. de Paz to the American Embassy to tell what she knew of Oswald.

11. A short time after the assassination, Emilio Carballido, the pro-Castro writer, took the Duráns to Jalapa, Veracruz and kept them out of the way for a while until the initial shock of the Kennedy assassination wore off. Carballido has connections with the University of Veracruz Press.

12. Also shortly after the assassination, an American woman named June Cobb came and spent several days in Sra. de Paz' house. She was sent by their mutual friends, Enrica Gálio, a Costa Rican who is now June Cobb's roommate and who was formerly the mistress of Vasquez Amoral when he was with the Rockefeller Foundation,

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July 25, 1969

MEMORANDUM

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SUBJECT: Investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico

1. While serving as Political Officer in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City from 1964 to 1967, I became quite friendly with the Mexican play-right, Elena Garro de Paz. An intelligent, witty, and outspoken woman, I found her a very useful if sometimes biased source of political gossip and personal history on significant Mexican personalities. She introduced my wife and me to many important people in Mexico. She was also particularly knowledgeable about agrarian affairs. A biographic report that I prepared on her on May 3, 1966 is attached (Tab A).

2. On one occasion, Miss Garro inadvertently mentioned to me that she had been at a party with Lee Harvey Oswald and two American companions when Oswald was in Mexico just before the Kennedy assassination. The party had been at the home of her cousin, Ruben Duran. The memorandum of that conversation, dated December 10, 1965, is attached (Tab B). I had not read the Warren Report, but I assumed that if Oswald had been to such a party in Mexico, it would have been well known to the Embassy. I also knew Miss Garro to be something of a professional anti-communist who tended to see a communist plot behind any untoward political event. However, the episode about her being escorted into hiding at an obscure hotel intrigued me. Accordingly, I decided to report the matter in writing. I gave the memorandum of conversation limited distribution within the Embassy, and did not send any copies to Washington.

3. A few days later I was called to the office of Mr. Winston Scott, who headed the Embassy's Political Research Section. Also present was Mr. Nathan Ferris, the Embassy's Legal Attache. They had noted with interest my December 10 memorandum of conversation. They pointed out that there had been a great many rumors about Oswald at the time of the assassination and that some could not be verified and others had proved false. They asked me, however, to try and get a more detailed replay of Miss Garro's story. Mr. Scott made clear that the FBI had full responsibility for any further investigations of the Oswald case!

B1, EC, I  
B1, EC, J

4. In a memorandum of conversation dated December 25, 1965 (Tab C), I provided a much more detailed and accurate restatement of Miss Garro's alleged encounter with Oswald and subsequent developments. Certain errors in my original presentation were corrected. Miss Garro guessed that the date of the party at her cousin's house was in early September, 1962. She admitted that she had gone to the Embassy to report briefly about this matter on an earlier occasion.

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5. I got no reaction to the second memorandum from Messrs. Scott and Ferris. However, the Deputy Chief of Mission, Clarence Boonstra, who had been Charge d' Affaires at the time of the Kennedy assassination and subsequent Oswald investigation, told me that Oswald had not been in Mexico on the date given for the party. He stated, furthermore, that the informant had changed her story. When I explained that she hadn't changed her story but that rather I now had given a more accurate account of it, he reiterated that the date was wrong and seemed to dismiss the whole affair.

6. Some time later, Elena Garro told me she had found her old calendar and had reconstructed the date of the party at which she had seen Oswald. She stated it had been in late September rather than early September. (Oswald was in Mexico from September 26 to October 3, 1963.) I accordingly went to Mr. Ferris' office and informed him of this. He replied that she had given the late September date accurately when she had come to the Embassy and made her original report to the FBI. He added, however, that someone who was at the party had stated that there were no Americans there. He did not reveal who had provided this information. I asked Mr. Ferris to tell me frankly if he thought I should continue pursuing this matter. He advised me that it was not necessary since he considered the Oswald case closed, stating again that he had heard all these rumors before.

7. Although the date of the alleged party had been placed in the proper time frame, I was puzzled at the report that there had been no Americans at the party. I had assumed that Miss Garro could have clearly been mistaken about the identity of the Americans she saw there, but never doubted that she had seen some Americans. Although, I had met Elena Garro's sister, Deva Guerrero, I had never discussed the Oswald case with her. Mrs. Guerrero's grown-son, however, told me that he was quite convinced that his mother had seen Oswald.

8. Although I pursued the matter no further, I felt obligated nevertheless to report in writing the developments described in the memorandum of conversation dated July 13, 1966 (Tab D). I thought it was particularly strange that the Cuban Government would carry as Miss Garro's address the small hotel where she was allegedly hidden away after the Kennedy assassination by a man identified with the Mexican Ministry of Interior. I should perhaps add that it was I, rather than Miss Garro, who first noticed the address. At the least, the letters lend some cross confirmation to her story about the small hotel. At the most, they provide a source of endless speculation about conspiracy and international intrigue.

9. In early 1967, in the context of the Garrison investigation of the Oswald case, which had opened in New Orleans, Allen White **BI, ECF, E**  
made an interesting comment to me about the investigation of Oswald's activities in Mexico. He stated that the DSF (the security police attached to the Ministry of Interior) had interrogated the

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Durans after the assassination about a party which Oswald had reportedly attended, but that the transcript of the interrogation was entirely unsatisfactory by normal investigatory standards. Furthermore, the party inquired about was not the one at Ruben Duran's house, reported by Elena Garro, but at an entirely different place. This transcript may well be the source of Mr. Ferris' belief that Elena Garro's story had been checked out and found to be untrue.

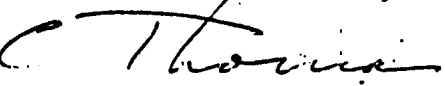
10. It would appear that whereas the FBI has discounted the Elena Garro allegations, the CIA is still considerably disturbed by them. The CIA may not have pressed for further investigation, however, for a number of reasons: 1) considering the sensitive overlap and subtle competition between two intelligence collecting agencies, it had to yield to the FBI's clear jurisdiction; 2) there are obvious complications in conducting such an investigation in a foreign country: (

the circumstances it is unlikely that any further investigation of this matter will ever take place unless it is ordered by a high official in Washington. Under

11. If all the allegations in the attached memoranda were true, they would not, in themselves, prove that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. However, if they were ever made public, those who have tried to discredit the Warren Report could have a field day in speculating about their implications. The credibility of the Warren Report would be damaged all the more if it were learned that these allegations were known and never adequately investigated by the competent American authorities.

12. Reference is made again to the biographic report (Tab A) on Elena Garro. She is hardly an ordinary or average person. Her strengths and weaknesses become exaggerated precisely because she is not. It would be easy and convenient to sweep this matter under the rug by claiming that Miss Garro is an unreliable informant since she is emotional, opinionated, and "artistic." I have been affected at times by that temptation, myself. No American official, however, knows her better than I do. On the basis of the facts that I have presented, I believe that, on balance, the matter warrants further investigation.

13. Finally, the record should show that a representative of a major American publication has at least some knowledge of this story.

  
Charles William Thomas  
July 25, 1969

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**DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Washington, D.C. 20520

August 28, 1969

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MEMORANDUM

TO : The Honorable  
 J. Edgar Hoover, Director  
 Federal Bureau of Investigation  
 Washington, D.C.  
 Attention: Mr. Bernard Rachner

FROM : Bert M. Bennington *BMB*  
 Acting Chief, Division of Protective Security  
*Dept of State*

SUBJECT : Charles William Thomas

In a letter addressed to the Secretary of State dated July 25, 1969, with accompanying related documents, Mr. Charles William Thomas, a former employee of the State Department, reported certain events and speculations, which tend to suggest that a conspiracy applicable to the assassination of former President John F. Kennedy may have existed involving representatives of the Cuban Government. The author reflects that the events discussed in his writing were previously reported to representatives

**BI, EC**

who were assigned at the time to the American Embassy in Mexico. Details relating to certain portions of the same information are included in the Warren Commission Report (cite pages 299-310, 658-659, and 730-736). Enclosed as Attachment "I" for your information and any action deemed appropriate, is a copy of Mr. Thomas' letter with accompanying material.

The names contained in the material accompanying Mr. Thomas' letter were examined against appropriate records within the State Department. Enclosed as Attachment "II" is the results of the aforementioned file review, which is set forth in a comparison format with respect to information contained in State Department records; that furnished by Mr. Thomas and that applicable to the Warren Commission Report.

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D. ZISCHEK

9/21/81

**CONFIDENTIAL**

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It has been reported that Mr. Charles William Thomas officially severed his employment with the State Department effective July 31, 1949.

A letter reply to Mr. Thomas, acknowledging receipt of his correspondence will be initiated by this Office.

It is requested that this Office be apprised of any action your Bureau initiates in this matter.

For your information similar written notification of this matter has been made to the United States Secret Service. **BI, EC**

Attachments:

As stated

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