

# Cuban rebels told ex-envoy of Oswald trip

John F. Kennedy

By EARL GOLZ

Less than 12 hours after Lee Harvey Oswald was apprehended in Dallas, anti-Castro Cubans in New Orleans gave Clare Boothe Luce intelligence information — or misinformation — about the assassination suspect that was known by very few people.

In an interview with *The News*, Mrs. Luce said the refugees told her of several trips Oswald made to Mexico City and speculated he "had been in contact with Castro Cubans there."

Oswald made only one trip to Mexico City in September 1963, according to the Warren Commission. Documents also show someone using Oswald's name visited the Cuban and Russian embassies in Mexico City, seeking a transit visa from Cuban officials.

When the Cubans in New Orleans were telling Mrs. Luce a few hours after the assassination that Oswald had been to Mexico, only the CIA, FBI and Oswald's wife knew of the trip.

THE FORMER congresswoman and wife of the late co-founder of Time, Inc., said the Cuban refugees told her Oswald tried to "infiltrate" their anti-Castro "Free Cuba" committee in New Orleans. But the refugees had their own double agent who convinced Oswald he was a potential member of Oswald's pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee, she said.

The Cubans told Mrs. Luce they had photographs of Oswald and tape recordings of him at Fair Play for Cuba meetings, "including a speech Oswald made about what a hell of a good shot he was and how he could kill the secretary of the Navy."

"I said, 'Go at once to the FBI, give them your tapes, give them your photographs. Tell them everything you know. . . . I just assumed that night that they had done what I advised them to and I forgot all about it,' Mrs. Luce said.

None of the Oswald photos or tape recordings, however, has turned up among evidence during any of the investigations of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In 1975, U.S. Sen. Richard Schweiker, R-Penn., of the Senate Intelligence

Committee in New Orleans; no one has ever claimed his "committee" conducted meetings at which he spoke.

Mrs. Luce still believes her Cuban friends took their photos of Oswald to the FBI "because soon after photographs appeared in the Dallas papers . . . showing Oswald handing out handbills" in New Orleans.

Those photos, however, were taken by newsmen.

The refugees' early knowledge of any trip by Oswald to Mexico, however, indicated they had intelligence sources. Not even the CIA briefing on Oswald's mysterious visit to Mexico City was given to President Lyndon Johnson until hours after the Luce call.

Then, on Nov. 23, 1963, CIA Director John McCone told Johnson about Oswald's "visits" to the Cuban and Russian embassies in Mexico City in late September and October of 1963. The CIA claimed it had photographed and taped Oswald's visits. But later, after the agency realized their man was not Oswald, the Warren Commission was not so informed.

The Luce incident was similar to a series of attempts to spread misinformation by people with obvious intelligence connections to link Oswald to Castro immediately after the assassination.

THE IMPRESSION of Oswald the Cuban refugees left with Mrs. Luce "was a Communist gun-for-hire" who at first didn't have much money but who "had suddenly come into enough money to take trips (to Mexico) and to bring his wife to New Orleans."

Her husband, Henry, would have been an ideal conduit to disseminate the refugees' story nationally through his *Time* or *Life* magazines, but Mrs. Luce didn't take the bait.

Two days after Mrs. Luce's call from the Cubans in New Orleans, a Nicaraguan named Gilberto Alvarado Ugarte told personnel at the American embassy in Mexico City that he was in the Cuban consulate on Sept. 17, 1963, and

Committee, heard of Mrs. Luce's story and asked to talk with the Cubans.

The former diplomat and playwright found one of the three refugees, then a lawyer in Miami.

"I told him he could testify in secret if he wanted," she said. "But he said he would just as soon broadcast from the top of the Empire State Building as to testify in secret before a senate investigating committee. He begged me not to reveal his name because he would then be on the Cuban (Castro) hit list."

MRS. LUCE respected his wishes and didn't reveal his identity to Schweicker. Nor did she when she was interviewed last year by investigators with the House Assassinations Committee.

The other two Cubans were not available for testimony. One was deported "right after they had reported to the FBI" in 1963, she said, and the other was knifed to death in Miami.

The Miami lawyer said he and the other refugees in 1963 took the photographs and tape recordings to the FBI as Mrs. Luce advised. He told her the FBI took the photos and tapes, "roughed them up and told them to scam and keep their mouths shut and disappear or they would all be deported."

"Now what became of their evidence is something I do not know," Mrs. Luce said. "The incident was never reflected in the Warren report. I myself have always entertained the theory that unable to prove that the assassination was backed by the Castroites — but perhaps suspicious of it — the Kennedys and the Johnsons and the whole government decided to say nothing about it since even to raise the suspicion might have plunged us into a war with Cuba."

When the three Cubans called Mrs. Luce in the early morning on the day after the assassination, they were not strangers. They had known her as crew members of a Miami-based boat she had secretly "sponsored" for raids and other missions against Fidel Castro's government.

The boat excursions ended and the trio was dispersed to New Orleans when Kennedy ordered a halt to such activities in early 1963.

"I myself got a personal call from Allen Dulles (then a former CIA director and later a member of the Warren Commission)," Mrs. Luce said. "He said get out of that boat business — he was well aware of it, by the way — because the neutrality act has now been reasserted and it was against the law to aid or abet the Cubans in any attempts to free their country."

MRS. LUCE said the former crew members called her "because they wanted to inform me of anything they could that would, so to speak, put the finger on or clarify the motive of Oswald."

However, some of the Cubans' information was inaccurate, and maybe intentionally so.

The Warren Commission deter-

MINI-REVEALS WHO TOLD ASSASSINATION PAY OSWALD \$6,500.

The CIA and Warren Commission later concluded the story was a fabrication, but President Johnson and American intelligence agencies at the time were concerned it might lead to a confrontation with Castro's Cuba.

About a week later the Secret Service intercepted a letter to Oswald in Dallas, postmarked Havana, stating "Oswald had been paid by (Pedro) Charles to carry out an unidentified mission which involved accurate shooting." The FBI also got a copy of a letter written to Robert Kennedy which claimed Oswald assassinated his brother "at the direction of Pedro Charles, a Cuban (Castro) agent" and was paid \$7,000 by Charles in Miami in early 1963. The Warren Commission concluded the letters were a hoax but didn't consider whether they were part of a misinformation plant by intelligence sources.

Another early attempt to plant misinformation was not known to the Warren Commission in 1963-1964, but was told to the House Assassinations Committee by a witness deemed credible by committee investigators.

THE WITNESS was Antonio Veciana of Miami, one of the founders of the militant group of anti-Castro exiles called Alpha 66. Veciana said that soon after the assassination an American intelligence agent, known only by his alias of Maurice Bishop, "solicited me to intercede with a cousin of mine who worked in the Cuban embassy in Mexico to see if he, for money," would agree to say he saw Oswald in the embassy.

Veciana told the committee Bishop was "the man behind the scenes" in Alpha 66's attempts to assassinate Castro. Veciana said he saw Bishop with Oswald — several weeks before Oswald left for Mexico City — in the lobby of what probably was the Southland Center in Dallas. The committee was unable to identify or locate Bishop.

The assassination of Kennedy by Castro forces would have achieved "basically nothing" for Castro because Kennedy "was their (Castro Cubans) best ally," said the militantly anti-Castro Mario Kohley Jr., son of the late official de facto president-in-exile of the Cuban government.

"He (Kennedy) was their best ally," Kohley said. "He was preventing us from leaving our (United States) shores. He had made a secret deal with (Nikita) Khrushchev not to allow any more Cubans to leave American waters and go to Cuba to harass Castro. So actually I thought it was to Castro's advantage to keep him alive."

Kohley said he thinks it "very possible that the assassination was done by anti-Castro Cubans in the hopes of making it look like Castro had done it. Which would have given us a green light for our invasion of Cuba."