

These references have been only partially deciphered by previous research. 522 Browder Street was the Dallas address of the Jaggars firm; R11 1150, its telephone number. Typography can refer to almost any aspect of the advertising or printing trade, from typesetting to photographic composition. In May 1981 the author talked with Mr. Steven Baker, who then worked in Jaggars' advertising department.⁶⁶ He indicated that at Jaggars, typography had a more specialized meaning: it described the sophisticated techniques of photographic reduction and modification performed by the firm in its advertising work. In 1962-63, Baker asserted, Jaggars used "modification cameras" and other complex equipment which were more sophisticated than the photographic equipment available in most photo labs.⁶⁷

Microdot is a system employed in espionage to store and transmit intelligence data. Using sophisticated techniques of photographic reduction, the system affords the storage of large volumes of strategic information within a tiny spot the size of a semicolon or an exclamation point. Such a spot is then concealed within the text of a letter or document for storage or transmittal. It might be fruitful to examine all of Oswald's correspondence, notes and documents to see if any contain microdot. Neither the Warren Commission nor the House Committee did that. If microdot data could be found, it might reveal much about Oswald's spy missions and about the identity of those who controlled him. If the Commission or the Committee had become curious about microdots, however, they most likely would have asked the nation's premier espionage agency to analyze Oswald's papers. Given the CIA's record of covering up data about Oswald

(which will later be described) such a request would not necessarily have produced valid results.

Jaggars' work involved reducing photographs in size, photosetting typescript, photographing words and sentences, and using sophisticated lenses and equipment to arrange advertising displays and charts.⁶⁸ One Jaggars employee told the Warren Commission that the firm did many things with letters in ways that differed from ordinary photography.⁶⁹ The employees and management of Jaggars who testified before the Commission claimed to be unfamiliar with microdotting.⁷⁰ Most thought that it had to do with microfilm; none knew of any microdot work being done at Jaggars. Indications are that Jaggars had the equipment sophisticated enough to do microdotting. Oswald did hands-on work in the photographic department.⁷¹ His job was described as that of "camera man."⁷² He was taught how to operate the specialized equipment: distortion cameras, phototypesetters, Robertson vertical cameras.⁷³

Though no one else at Jaggars knew what microdotting was, Oswald did. There was one employee who became friendly with him. Dennis Ofstein was the same age as Oswald (twenty-four).⁷⁴ He too had served in the military (Army) and had an interest in the Russian language. He had studied Russian while working for the Army Security Agency and was still trying to improve his skills. Although Lee generally kept to himself, he and Ofstein conversed quite a bit. In one discussion which Ofstein described to the Warren Commission, Oswald explained microdotting:⁷⁵

WARREN COMMISSION COUNSEL ALBERT JENNER : Do you know what a

microdot is?

DENNIS OFSTEIN: That was explained to me by Lee Oswald.

JENNER: Tell us about that.

OFSTEIN: He asked me one day if I knew the term "microdot" and I told him no I wasn't familiar with it and he told me that that was the method of taking a large area of type or a picture and reducing it down to an extremely small size for condensing and for purposes, such as where you had a lot of type to photograph to confine them into a small area, and he said that that is the way spies sometimes sent messages and pictures of diagrams and so on, was to take a microdot photograph of it and place it under a stamp and send it. I presumed that he had either read this in a book or had some knowledge of it from somewhere, but where, I didn't know.

Ofstein was friendly enough with Oswald to invite him and Marina to his house for "social activities." Ofstein asked Oswald to introduce him to some of Lee's Russian-speaking friends. Oswald promised to do so "in time," but never did. The two men didn't talk politics much, but Ofstein recalled that Lee simply shrugged when Ofstein cursed Fidel Castro.

Oswald showed Ofstein a photograph of a building situated on the bank of a river. Ofstein asked if it was taken in Japan, knowing that Oswald had served there. Oswald said that it wasn't Japan but would say no more, except to discuss with Ofstein the possibilities of enlarging the photo. Ofstein later learned from subsequent conversations that the picture was taken in Minsk and was of a Soviet military headquarters of some sort.⁷⁶ The

building was guarded by troops whom Lee described as having orders to shoot anyone trying to enter without permission.

It is no wonder Ofstein assumed that Oswald was "with the government" (ours) while he was in Russia (Ofstein did not know about Oswald's supposed defection). Oswald's eye for the details of Soviet military disbursement smacked of professionalism. As Ofstein described:

He also mentioned about the disbursement [dispersal] of the military units, saying that they didn't intermingle their armored divisions and their infantry divisions and various units the way we do in the United States, that they would have all of their aircraft in one geographical location and their tanks in another geographical location, and their infantry in another, and he mentioned that in Minsk he never saw a vapor trail, indicating the lack of aircraft in the area.⁷⁷

Oswald also said the Russians kept tanks north of Minsk.

Oswald ~~also~~ criticized Soviet military logistics, telling Ofstein that their disbursement patterns were ineffective because they neglected the mutual support needs of various kinds of units and because of the time it took to move units from one section of the country to another. And, said Oswald, the Soviet units were quite far apart: he never saw jet trails where he saw tank treads and vice versa, and infantry units were not meshed with air or ground support.⁷⁸ Ofstein had the impression that Oswald's analyses of military logistics was not confined exclusively to Minsk but extended to Moscow as well.⁷⁹ Lee also

seemed to be familiar with the Soviet MVD, which he told Ofstein was like our FBI. He described MVD headquarters in Minsk.⁸⁰

After six months Oswald was fired from Jaggars, allegedly because his photographic work manifested excessive errors resulting in too many do-overs.⁸¹ If he did not purposely precipitate his firing for some reason related to his covert activities, and if his firing was for real, then it may well have resulted because Oswald was rushing through the firm's work to do his own--developing his own pictures, forging a Hidell ID card, doing micro dotting.

During his tenure at Jaggars he also seems to have been busy using the equipment of the national-security-connected firm to do leftist photographic work. He sent samples of his left-wing photography to the Gus Hall-Benjamin Davis Defense Committee (closely linked to the American Communist Party); he sent blow-ups to the American Communist Party newspaper The Worker; he mailed still more blow-ups to the Socialist Workers' Party national headquarters. To all three he intimated that he was available and expert regarding photographic work for "the cause". All three letters, with accompanying samples, were mailed within ten days of each other.⁸² It is a familiar scene: Oswald, ensconced in a governmental or national-security or anti-communist context while emitting left-wing paper trails. And it is--surely not coincidentally--a vision that would drive the House Un-American Activities Committee to distraction: a former Russian defector infiltrates a firm which does sensitive government work and uses the facilities for his pinko activities.

Alleged inability to hold a job is one of the traits central to his profile as a malcontent and a loser--the profile accepted by all official investigations and many researchers. We know, however, that in at least one of these employment terminations he actually quit while pretending to be fired. By whatever circumstances, his two jobs in Dallas brought him in proximity to the U-2 and the President's assassination.

Oswald was supposedly fired from Reily Coffee in New Orleans for having poor working habits, after working there from May 9 to July 19, 1963. Adrian Alba, the manager of a garage located near Reily Coffee, remembered that Oswald was pleased about leaving Reily, saying that he had "found his pot of gold at the end of the rainbow": he expected to work at the New Orleans facility of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration).⁸³ At first, this seems to be just another Oswaldian fairy tale about jobs. One might imagine that with Oswald's background and employment history, he had about as much chance of working at NASA as he did of landing a job as an electrician in Clinton. He never did work at NASA, but there may have been more to his comment than idle chatter or fantasy.

Whatever went on inside Reily Coffee, the firm seems to have been a primary recruiting ground for the aerospace industry. It is not clear how a coffee company would train its personnel in such a way that several of them could make an easy transition to aerospace work. But a clue to the Reily-aerospace connection may lie in the fact that it was not a random sample of employees who made this transition: it was those who worked with Oswald.

In July, the same month Oswald was allegedly fired, Alfred

Claude, the man who hired Oswald at Reily, went to work for the Chrysler Aerospace Division of the NASA facility in New Orleans.⁸⁴ Within days of Oswald's separation, Emmett Barbee, Oswald's immediate superior, left the coffee works for a new job at NASA in New Orleans.⁸⁵ Several weeks later John D. Branyon, a co-worker of Oswald's, also went to NASA.⁸⁶ Dante Marachini, who also went from Reily to Chrysler Aerospace, was a friend of David Ferrie's. He had been hired at the coffee company on the same day as Oswald.⁸⁷ One of Ferrie's associates who did not work at Reily also found his way into aerospace work. Melvin Coffee, who accompanied Ferrie on his ice-skating foray to Texas on the night following the assassination, found work at Cape Kennedy.⁸⁸ Another Ferrie associate, James Lewallen, who lived in the same apartment building as Marachini, went to work for Boeing at the NASA facility.⁸⁹

Melvin Coffee and James Lewallen also had some connection with the Civil Air patrol⁹⁰ Coffee denied knowing or recognizing Oswald but told the FBI that Ferrie had coordinated weekend bivouacs for the New Orleans-area CAP while Coffee was a member. He joined the group in 1954 and left in 1957. Oswald joined in 1955. Lewallen had no formal connection with the New Orleans CAP but stated that he had assisted David Ferrie as a volunteer during Ferrie's tenure with the squadron. Lewallen too claimed he had never met Oswald.

The aerospace connection did not touch Oswald as he had allegedly boasted to Adrian Alba, but it did touch everyone around him at the coffee company. One wonders what was happening

here. Did the firm have some established pipeline to the defense-aerospace industry? Was everyone who worked with Oswald being placed in some national-security context for some reason relating to him? It is impossible to discern. But the occupational connection between working on coffee beans and rockets is an intriguing one.

George de Mohrenschildt, who clearly seems to have played a major role in shaping at least some of Oswald's employment history, used this as part of the highly negative portrait of his deceased associate that he presented to the Warren Commission. When Oswald and de Mohrenschildt falsely announced to the White Russian social group that Lee had been fired, he had actually performed satisfactorily for three months before he quit the Leslie Welding Company in Fort Worth (according to his supervisor).⁹¹

De Mohrenschildt told the Commission that "hating" jobs was but another facet of Lee's "unstable" personality.⁹² When asked by Commission lawyer Albert Jenner whether Oswald would be capable of doing government work requiring a high degree of intelligence and equilibrium, de Mohrenschildt volunteered that Oswald was unsuitable for "confidential work." The Commission was unaware just how much expertise George had on this subject.

COMMISSION COUNSEL JENNER: Did you form any impression in the area, let us say, of reliability--that is, whether our Government would entrust him with something that required a high degree of intelligence, a high degree of imagination, a high degree of ability to retain his equilibrium under pressure, a management of

a situation, to be flexible enough?

DE MOHRENSCHILDT: I never would believe that any government would be stupid enough to trust Lee with anything important.

JENNER: Give me the basis of your opinion.

DE MOHRENSCHILDT: Well, again, as I said, an unstable individual, mixed up individual, uneducated individual, without background. What government would give him any confidential work? No government would. Even the government of Ghana would not give him any job of any type.

JENNER: You used the expression "unstable." Would you elaborate on that?

DE MOHRENSCHILDT: ... instability--his life is an example of his instability. He switched allegiance from one country to another, and then back again, disappointed in this, disappointed in that, tried various jobs. But he did it, you see, without the enjoyment of adventure--like some other people would do in the United States, a new job is a new adventure, new opportunities. For him it was a gruesome deal. He hated his jobs. He switched all the time.

~~JENNER: Now, let's assume he switched jobs because he was discharged from those jobs. Does that affect your opinion? That is, assume now for the purpose of discussion that he lost every one of his jobs.~~

~~DE MOHRENSCHILDT: I do not know the details of all his jobs, you see, but I certainly can evaluate people just by looking at them because I have met so many people in my profession--you have to~~

~~evaluate them by just looking at them and saying a few words.~~

De Mohrenschildt may have been one of The CIA's unofficial operatives in Dallas, but J. Walton Moore was the official one. He was with the Agency's Domestic Contact Service (DCS). He had known de Mohrenschildt since at least 1957 when he debriefed him upon his return from Yugoslavia (where he was accused of sketching military facilities).⁹³ It is not surprising that de Mohrenschildt should have a lot to talk to the CIA about. Like Oswald, he had a habit of showing up on turfs where the Agency action was heavy--Guatemala, during preparations for the Bay of Pigs invasion; Haiti, where the Agency had been involved in a coup plot.

In a 1977 CIA memorandum written to refute a claim by a Dallas television station that Oswald had been employed by the CIA, Moore denied knowing Oswald before the assassination. He also "recalled" that he had met de Mohrenschildt only twice.⁹⁴ But the House Assassinations Committee found other documents in de Mohrenschildt's CIA file which revealed "more contact with Moore than was stated in the 1977 memorandum."⁹⁵ In 1961, de Mohrenschildt showed Moore the extensive film footage of his eight-month backpacking tour through central America.⁹⁶

Jeanne de Mohrenschildt claimed that Moore was such a close associate of her husband's that the local Agency man dined once a fortnight at their home.⁹⁷ She also remembered hearing at least one conversation between Moore and her husband, occurring before the assassination, in which "Moore seemed to be aware of Oswald."⁹⁸ She asserted that Moore was instantly familiar with

Oswald when his name was brought up during dinner.⁹⁹ Still, Moore claimed that, "To the best of my recollection I hadn't seen de Mohrenschildt for a couple of years before the assassination."¹⁰⁰

It was de Mohrenschildt himself who first implied the existence of a special relationship between Oswald and the CIA. George was questioned by the FBI while he was living in Haiti after the assassination. He told Agent James Wood that after he first met Oswald, Moore had indicated that it was "safe"-- whatever that meant--for him to associate with Lee, that the returning defector was "okay."¹⁰¹

It has always been a mystery as to how the spooky Baron and the leftist ideologue became close friends. De Mohrenschildt claimed that he met Oswald by chance in the fall of 1962 when they were casually introduced by other members of the White Russian community. An early version of this explanation had George being introduced by a Dallas businessman of Russian extraction, Colonel Lawrence Orlov, who took Oswald to meet the Baron. But Orlov stated during an interview with author Edward Epstein that, at that meeting, it was clear to him that Lee and George had already met.¹⁰²

After the assassination de Mohrenschildt told the FBI that it was George Bouhe, a leading figure in the White Russian community, who first introduced them. Bouhe did not endorse that version.¹⁰³ Another de Mohrenschildt associate, Samuel B. Ballen, then Chairman of the Board of Highplains Natural Gas Company, thought that the acquaintance had somehow materialized via "members of the White Russian community." But he did not

know how.¹⁰⁴ He told the FBI that the de Mohrenschildts "went out of their way to befriend the Oswalds."¹⁰⁵

As to how this friendship really got started, George de Mohrenschildt may finally have revealed the truth during his last interview on the subject. In 1977 he told the Dallas Morning Star that it was, in fact, CIA officer J. Walton Moore who encouraged him to see Oswald, and that he never would have done so without Moore's encouragement.¹⁰⁶

In 1977 the House Assassinations Committee tried to locate de Mohrenschildt as a key witness.¹⁰⁷ Students of the Kennedy assassination looked forward to his being questioned about his mysterious background and his association with Oswald, questions that had arisen since the erstwhile "petroleum engineer" had testified before the Warren Commission. In March 1977 Committee investigators finally located him in Florida: they called and arranged for an interview. He seemed to take the call calmly.¹⁰⁸ Several hours later he was dead--shot through the mouth with a 20-gauge shotgun. The coroner ruled it a suicide.

Two of the best sources on Oswald's relationship to U.S. intelligence were never thoroughly questioned by investigators. Both Ferrie and de Mohrenschildt allegedly took their own lives within days of their impending interrogations about Oswald.

Photo #1

full page

photo #2

full page

Photos #3, 4, 5

1/4 page each

Photo #6

full page

Chapter 7

Mexican Mystery Tour

The Central Intelligence Agency advised that on October 1, 1963, an extremely sensitive source reported that an individual identified himself as Lee Oswald, who contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City inquiring as to any messages. Special Agents of this Bureau who have conversed with Oswald in Dallas, Texas have observed photographs of the individual referred to above and have listened to a recording of his voice. These Special Agents are of the opinion that the above-referred-to individual was not Lee Harvey Oswald.¹

--Memo by J. Edgar Hoover, November 23, 1963

In the last week of September 1963, after finishing his FPCC activities in New Orleans and his brief-but-active stint in Clinton, Louisiana with David Ferrie, Lee Harvey Oswald went to Mexico.

His trip is a mystery within a mystery. It is complex and has posed many unanswered questions. Before we examine in detail the events and puzzles of the Mexican sojourn, it is useful to begin with what is known or seems manifest. Again, Oswald is shadowed by persons with demonstrable or probable CIA

connections. Again he is snared in an Agency surveillance system but allegedly goes unmonitored, unrecorded. The ostensible purpose of the trip was that he was desperate to return to the Soviet Union via Cuba. He supposedly visited the Soviet and Cuban consulates in Mexico City desperately seeking assistance for his return to Russia to give communism another try--pinko Marine II? He allegedly failed and returned to Dallas in psychological turmoil.

Oswald announced to the passport office that the U.S.S.R. was his destination. In reality, since his leftism was a paper-thin veneer, this must be assumed to be yet another layer of Oswald's cover. His trip was rather sudden, and he must have believed that he had some mission or task to perform. Whatever he did do in Mexico City, whatever he thought his mission was, he was being impersonated while he was there: someone flitted between the Cuban and Soviet consulates posing as a desperate Oswald. If Oswald was directed to Mexico by his handlers so that he could be set up (which is the most logical option), then someone was working to create for him an image of motive and madness--for the impending assassination of the president. This was done by having Oswald himself do certain things that would enhance his already-established pinko cover and, simultaneously, by using Oswald impostors both in Mexico City and back in Dallas to create an aura of political and mental instability, and of a potential for violence, that would ultimately point to his guilt as an assassin. While someone played the role of Oswald becoming psychologically unhinged in Mexico City, yet another impostor(s) was back in Dallas impersonating him in more provocative

incidents designed to cement his future guilt.* Finally, there is overwhelming circumstantial evidence that the CIA covered up proof of an Oswald impostor at work. Thus the Agency may have had a lead to whomever was working to implicate Oswald in the President's murder.

Oswald's Mexican trip seems to have been shadowed closely by various intelligence operatives. Travel is often a seasonal activity: in summer the French head for European resorts; in winter Americans flock to Florida. Evidently the last week in September is the season in which anti-Castro intelligence agents rush to Mexico like lemmings. There was Lee Harvey Oswald himself. There was Manuel Porras Rivera, an anti-Castro operative on a covert mission. And there was a CIA agent who knew Oswald. All three went to Mexico at the same time and left at approximately the same time.

During its post-assassination investigation, the FBI sought out the identity of those who had applied for entry into Mexico at the same time as Oswald. The Mexican authorities cooperated fully and a list of names was obtained by the Bureau and given to the Warren Commission. Regarding persons who had gotten a Mexican visa on the same day as Oswald, the name of visa-holder FM 824084 did not appear. An FBI document indicated that "no record of FM 824084 located."² The traveler who had received his visa immediately before Oswald (and who stood in the visa queue in New Orleans ahead of Oswald) was William Gaudet, a CIA agent.³

* These incidents are discussed in the next chapter. In one, an Oswald impostor talks of assassinating President Kennedy.

Gaudet was officially listed as the editor of Latin American Traveler, a small Costa Rican-based newsletter. In fact, by his own admission, he worked undercover for the Agency for two decades.⁴ Gaudet claimed he did not travel to Mexico by bus with Oswald but went by air. He insisted that the timing of his trip was purely coincidental. He asserted that he could not remember the nature of his business in Mexico nor could he recall whether it involved intelligence work. The coincidence of Gaudet's proximity to Oswald is not confined to the Mexican trip. He admitted to having observed Oswald handling out FPCC leaflets in front of the New Orleans Trade Mart.⁵ He told one interviewer that he had known Oswald in New Orleans and went on to describe Lee's physical and personality characteristics in rich detail which seemed to stem from close contact.⁶

Gaudet, now deceased, was an elderly man living out his retirement in Mississippi when ^{his proximity to Oswald was discovered. He was} ~~the Bureau blew his cover. He was~~ ^{angered that his name had surfaced.} ~~angered by the release of his name.~~ His most striking revelation came in a 1977 interview with journalist Anthony Summers, when he stated, "I did see Oswald discussing various things with Banister at the time and I think Banister knew a whole lot of what was going on.... I suppose you are looking into Ferrie. He was with Oswald."⁷ Though Gaudet would not discuss his work for the Agency and flatly denied any links to the assassination, he opined that Oswald "was a patsy."⁸

Gaudet too may have known "a whole lot of what was going on," for he worked out of an office in the anti-Castro bastion of Camp Street, only a few doors from Guy Banister.⁹ It seems that

Gaudet had some knowledge concerning another key figure in the assassination. In 1959 Jack Ruby traveled to New Orleans on his way to Havana. The extent of Gaudet's interest in or knowledge of Ruby is not clear, but in 1963 he volunteered information on Ruby's 1959 visit to New Orleans.¹⁰
 to authorities
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In 1978 the House Assassinations Committee asked the Agency for Gaudet's file. It revealed only that he provided "foreign intelligence information" during the 1950s. There was no record of any contact with him after 1961.¹¹ Yet he claims to have worked for the Agency twenty years, including 1963.

Gaudet ran a Costa Rican newsletter. Another man who visited Mexico at the same time as Oswald was a Costa Rican anti-Castroite named Manual Porras Rivera. As journalist Anthony Summers has pointed out, his Mexican travel parallels Oswald's very closely.¹² Four days before Lee obtained his Mexican visa in New Orleans, Porras entered the United States and went to Miami, the hub of anti-Castro activity in the U.S. He admitted to authorities that he met with anti-Castro activists there. Then he traveled to Mexico City and departed by bus on the same day as Oswald (October 3).

It is what Porras did while in Mexico City that places him center stage in the mysterious events that occurred there: he visited the Cuban consulate at least once--on Saturday the 28th, one of the days that Oswald allegedly was there. Like the Oswald impostor, Porras tried to obtain a Cuban entry visa. He told U.S. authorities after the assassination that he traveled to Mexico to try to gain entrance to Cuba but was refused, so he gave up and left Mexico. Costa Rican intelligence claimed that

he was on a mission to infiltrate Cuba.

Perhaps he was, but he may well have had another mission as well. It seems that Porras was only about 5' 7" tall. Could he be the shorter Oswald who made such a fuss about getting to Cuba? As we will see, three Mexico City witnesses who had dealings with Oswald during his visit there remember him as being around 5' 6". The real Oswald was five feet nine inches or five feet nine and a half inches. When Porras departed Mexico, he did not return to his native Costa Rica or to Miami but went directly to Dallas. His activities and affiliations deserved intense investigation, which neither the Warren Commission or the House Assassinations Committee provided.

The parade of shadowy characters on the Mexican trip is not over. In addition to Oswald and the other two intelligence agents, there is yet another figure whose activities appear clandestine enough to suggest the possibility of an intelligence connection. This man not only rode the same bus as Oswald but, according to other passengers, sat with him during the trip.

Passengers recalled that Oswald sat next to a man with an English accent. The two conversed. In its efforts to interview the passengers, the FBI sought out this English-speaking man whose name was listed as "John Bowen" on the bus's baggage manifest. The Bureau could not find Mr. Bowen. It finally located a man allegedly named Albert Osborne, who claimed to be an acquaintance of Bowen (although his recollection of Bowen was hazy).¹³ The FBI interviewed Albert Osborne three times. Finally, agents discovered that Osborne was, indeed, well

acquainted with Bowen: they were one and the same. "Osborne" admitted to using the alias John Howard Bowen.¹⁴ The FBI was perplexed and angered by the deception. Bowen-Osborne denied sitting next to Oswald on the bus. But even the Warren Commission was troubled by this strange character with the false identity. The Commission concluded:

Osborne's responses to Federal investigators on matters unrelated to Oswald have proved inconsistent and unreliable, and, therefore, based on the contrary evidence and Osborne's lack of reliability, the Commission has attached no credence to his denial that Oswald was beside him on the bus.¹⁵

There was more to the spooky Osborne than just an alias. He appeared to be in his fifties but claimed to be in his seventies. He told the Bureau that he had used an alias in his work for fifty years, but never explained why. He claimed to be a "missionary"--the sort who traveled around the world bringing the word of God to Latin America, Spain, France, and Italy. He traveled almost continuously, conducting what he described as one-man "missionary tours."¹⁶ But he told fellow passengers that he was a retired teacher writing a book on earthquakes.

Osborne's missionary work seems to have had a lot in common with the international wanderings of another shadowy figure--George de Mohrenschildt, who claimed to be a geologist. Like de Mohrenschildt, Osborne traveled extensively (almost continuously) with no explanation as to how he financed these sojourns.¹⁷ Like de Mohrenschildt, his itineraries are puzzling. Extensive checks

of the border-crossing points for entry into France and Spain failed to turn up any record of the prevaricating preacher's entrances to do missionary work there.¹⁸ Also like de Mohrenschildt, Osborne had been pro-Nazi during World War II--fanatically so.¹⁹

Osborne returned to New Orleans after the Mexican trip. Nine days before the assassination he departed the U.S. for Spain and Italy. It is not surprising, in light of all this, that unconfirmed reports surfaced in the early to mid 1970s that he was a CIA operative of some sort.²⁰

Whether it is purely coincidence or whether Oswald knew Osborne before the Mexico City bus trip, there is this : Lee Harvey Oswald used the alias "Osborne" on two occasions when he ordered the printing of his FPCC literature. This occurred in New Orleans before the Mexican bus trip.

In attempting to track down the passengers on the bus, the FBI was forced to work from the baggage manifest rather than from the more-complete and official "passenger manifest." According to the bus-terminal manager in Mexico City, the passenger manifest was "borrowed by investigators of the Mexican government soon after the assassination."²¹ The terminal manager had kept a copy. But five days later some "unidentified investigators" claiming to be from the Mexican government showed up and "borrowed" the copy. The passenger manifest has never been found. Mexican officials disputed the claim that their investigators had taken the lists.²²

Some of the passengers who were located by the FBI presented a rather odd picture of Oswald's behavior on the bus ride. His

fellow workers at his various jobs described him as reserved if not reclusive. He was never known to be gregarious or outgoing. On this occasion he acted as if he were the social director for the tour. He left his seat to introduce himself to two Australian women, then told them a series of stories about his experiences in the Marine Corps and the Soviet Union. He showed them his 1959 passport as proof he had been there.²³ Lee initiated another conversation with a British couple, the McFarlands. In addition to informing them that he was the secretary of the FPCC in New Orleans, he asserted that he was headed for Havana, Cuba in hopes of meeting Fidel.²⁴ Since it was illegal for U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba, which Oswald surely knew, he was announcing his attention to break the law. But then, he had already announced his illegal travel plan to the U.S. government by indicating on his passport application that he was headed for Russia via Cuba. The usually secretive Oswald seemed compelled to leave an indelible impression among passengers concerning his pro-Communist background and his alleged plans. It worked.

In obtaining his passport, Oswald continued his run of inexplicably favorable treatment, or tremendous luck, when dealing with the federal bureaucracy. The lookout card--flagging him as a defector, or as a person whom it would be undesirable to permit travel abroad--was not there. As Sylvia Meagher pointed out, this was an era in which U.S. citizens alleged to have "pro-communist" sympathies were the subject of particular attention by the passport office--for example, a Harvard professor who had

advocated disarmament. But not the U-2 defector.²⁵ He got his passport in twenty-four hours, faster than most citizens who are not an object of suspicion regarding their loyalty to the U.S. It's not as if Oswald were being deceptive: he indicated on his application that his previous passport had been cancelled. This alone should have served to red-flag his passport even in the absence of a lookout card. True to form, it had no effect.²⁶

Oswald allegedly continued to render vivid impressions at the Soviet and Cuban consulates in Mexico City, in terms of both emotions and exhibits. He made a conspicuous display of leftism; he frenetically talked of returning to the Soviet Union; he exhibited an array of leftist materials: correspondence he had had with the American Communist party, a membership card for the FPCC, a photo of himself being arrested by New Orleans police during his street scuffle, a membership card ^{for} ~~in~~ the American Communist Party. He flew into a rage when informed that it would take several months to process his application to enter the Soviet Union.²⁷ But was this the real Oswald?

The evidence seems solid that the real Oswald went to Mexico--passport documents, signatures and other evidence convinced both the Warren Commission and the House Assassinations Committee.²⁸ But there is also very strong evidence that he was not the man who visited the consulates claiming to be "Oswald" and proffering credentials.

Cuban consul Eusebio Azcue, who dealt with Oswald, testified before the House Assassinations Committee. Azcue described the Oswald as thirty-five years old, medium height, with dark blond hair. The real Oswald was then twenty-four and had brown hair.

Azcue claimed that when he saw television coverage of Ruby shooting Oswald, he noted that the Oswald killed in Dallas did not even resemble the man who visited his consulate.²⁹

The other person at the Cuban Consulate who had the most contact with Oswald was Sylvia Duran, Azcue's assistant. Her recall was less certain than that of her boss. She had no reason to suspect that the man she dealt with was not the real Oswald: she knew that the names matched, and the brief film of Oswald's murder did not create any doubts.³⁰

In 1979 journalist Anthony Summers made it possible for Sylvia Duran to study more extensive film footage of Oswald than she had seen previously. The House Committee had not bothered to afford her a fresher, longer look at the man who was the subject of her testimony. The film was of a television interview he had given in New Orleans only a few weeks before his Mexican trip. Mrs. Duran could thus hear as well as see the subject. Her conclusion was that, "the man on the film is not like the man I saw here in Mexico City...." She observed that the real Oswald had a strong voice and seemed confident. The man she dealt with was small, had a trembling voice and seemed "weak." ³¹

This was partly reiterated by the Soviet Consul in Mexico City, Pavel Antonovich Yatskov. Eight months after the assassination he described his encounter with Oswald as follows:

I met Oswald here. He stormed into my office and wanted me to introduce and recommend him to the Cubans. He told me that he had lived in the USSR. I told him that I would have to check before I could recommend him. He was nervous

and his hands trembled, and he stormed out of my office. I don't believe that a person as nervous as Oswald, whose hands trembled, could have accurately fired a rifle.³²

Duran told the House Assassinations Committee that the man she dealt with was "gaunt and short," about her size (five feet, three inches).³³ In her contemporaneous notes about the 1963 Mexican episode, she wrote that Oswald was short, about five feet six inches. The real Oswald was five feet nine inches.³⁴ Both Duran and Azcue remembered the Mexican Oswald as having blond hair; Duran recalled that he had blue eyes.³⁵ The real Oswald had neither.

Anthony Summers, whose energetic investigation of the Mexican trip has provided important new data, also interviewed a man named Oscar Contreras, whom the House Committee investigators were unable to find.³⁶ At the time of Oswald's visit to Mexico, Contreras was a member of a leftist, pro-Castro student group. He asserted that a man calling himself "Lee Harvey Oswald" approached him and three of his friends and began to express discontent with life in the U.S. and a desire to go to Cuba. Oswald said the Cuban Consulate was refusing to give him a visa, he asked Contreras and friends for help in dealing with the officials. They did have contacts there. Oswald saw the group a second time and repeated his request for assistance. Contreras and his associates provided none: they were distrustful of the American, fearing that he might be trying to infiltrate their group.

Contreras described Oswald as being over thirty years old

and short. Contreras, himself five feet, nine inches, remembered looking down at him. Moreover, he was understandably suspicious as to how this man knew that he and his friends had left-wing political ties. When the American first approached them they were sitting drinking coffee, discussing a movie; there was no talk of politics. How, Contreras wondered, out of the thousands of students in Mexico City, was Oswald lucky enough or savvy enough to find four who had contacts with the Cuban Consulate. This aroused Contreras' suspicion that the man might be some sort of spy.

There are two pieces of physical evidence that point to the real Oswald instead of an impostor, but they are not definitive. First, Sylvia Duran's name and phone number were found in Oswald's notebook when he was arrested in Dallas. The Duran listing hardly assures that it was Oswald who made the visits. Second, House Assassinations Committee's handwriting experts concluded that the signature on the visa application filed with the Cuban Consulate was that of the real Oswald, although they could not rule out a skillful forgery.³⁷ There is a gap in this chain of evidence, however.

When Oswald entered the Cuban Consulate to apply for a visa, he claimed not to have any photographs of himself. He left, supposedly to get his picture taken at a nearby photographic studio. A post-assassination investigation could find no record in any local photographic establishment showing that Oswald had his picture taken. Yet he returned with a photo of the real Oswald. Evidently, when he returned with the photo, Sylvia Duran did not notice the discrepancy between the man's face and the

photo of the real Oswald.

The man was gone from the Consulate for four hours. In 1986 former HSCA investigator Edwin Lopez appeared in the television production "On Trial: Lee Harvey Oswald." Lopez, the author of HSCA's report on its Mexico City investigation, asserted that Duran "could never tell us that he signed it in her presence." The possibility exists that the signature could have been carefully forged, or perhaps it was somehow obtained from the real Oswald.

It seems that other artifacts proffered by Oswald were of suspicious origin. One was an American Communist Party membership card. It appeared to Consul Azcue to be suspiciously pristine, as if newly minted.³⁸ ~~Researcher Paul Hoch has stated~~ ^{arises as to} the question ^{of} whether the Party dispensed membership cards at all, a question which the author was unable to answer. The real Oswald had never become a member of the American Communist Party.³⁹ Then there was the proffered photo of him supposedly being taken into custody, with a policeman on each arm. The real Oswald had been arrested by New Orleans police after the scuffle with anti-Castroites. Sylvia Duran later reflected that the photo exhibited by Oswald looked "phony."⁴⁰ Indeed it might have been, for there is no known photograph of the arrest.

The Mexican episode has been obscured by a CIA cover-up that has gone on since 1963. In September of that year, two months before the assassination, the Agency reported (in a teletype sent to other government agencies) that a man named Lee Oswald had contacted the Soviet embassy in Mexico.⁴¹ At the time of this

alleged visit, the CIA had both the Soviet and Cuban consulates under photographic surveillance. The night of the President's assassination the Agency forwarded to the Dallas FBI office a picture of Oswald entering the Soviet Consulate. But the man in the picture was not Oswald: he was taller, older, heavier, crew cut, and bore no resemblance to Oswald. This incongruity spawned a host of questions, some of which remain unresolved. The Agency's conflicting explanations have led many investigators to the conclusion that this complex matter of CIA photos represents much more than an innocent bureaucratic error, that the Agency was covering up vital information about an Oswald impostor. To this day, the man in the picture remains unknown to researchers and official investigators. The then CIA Director William Colby alleged in 1975, "we don't know who he is."⁴²

One explanation as to how this man was mistaken for Oswald was that the Agency had simply guessed wrongly about his identity.⁴³ Part of the problem, it was claimed, was that the CIA had no picture of the real Oswald anywhere in its files, thus it could not determine that the heavysset, crew-cut man was not Oswald.⁴⁴ Not so. There was a picture of Oswald in CIA files allegedly taken by a tourist in the Soviet Union. In addition, the CIA's Oswald file that was sent to the Warren Commission in 1963 contained two newspaper photos of him from articles dealing with his defection.

The Warren Commission tried to resolve the matter of the "mistaken" photo but was frustrated by the Agency. The CIA dragged its feet in replying to the Commission's inquiries. Internal memoranda reveal that the Agency considered waiting out

the Commission--stalling until it went out of business.⁴⁵ It was Richard Helms, then Deputy Director, who wrote a memo to Commission chief counsel Rankin explaining Oswald's visit to Mexico.⁴⁶ Helms asserted that full disclosure of the Mexican incident might compromise the Agency's sources and methods.⁴⁷

In a memo sent to the Commission in July of 1964, the CIA claimed the mystery man had been photographed at the Soviet Consulate on October 4, 1963, the day after the real Oswald allegedly departed Mexico to return to Dallas.⁴⁸ This must have made the mystery man seem to the Commission to be less important, less potentially relevant to Oswald. The memo was silent about the fact that the man had also appeared at the Soviet Consulate on October 1, the date Oswald allegedly appeared there.⁴⁹ The Agency went on to assure the Commission that the unidentified man had no connection to either Oswald or the assassination; therefore, the Agency urged, there was no reason to publish his photo.⁵⁰ The CIA wanted it both ways: it had no idea who the man was, but it was certain he had no connection to anything important.

The question arose as to whether the real Oswald was photographed by Agency surveillance cameras, since he entered on the same day as the unidentified man. This surveillance operation was not set up to capture Oswald: it was a continuous monitoring system.⁵¹ Was the real Oswald missed? If so, how? Were there pictures of someone impersonating Oswald that were withheld or destroyed by the Agency? The reasons given by the CIA for the absence of the real Oswald's picture have been far

from satisfactory.

A former CIA officer who served in Mexico during the period of Oswald's visit claimed in 1977 that photographic surveillance was not operational twenty-four hours a day.⁵² But Oswald made no less than five visits to the two communist consulates. This provided a series of ten entrances and exits spread over a three-day period:⁵³ CIA cameras had more than their share of chances to catch Oswald. It was asserted that hundreds of photos produced by the surveillance systems during this same period were scrutinized, but there was not one of Oswald.⁵⁴

In 1976 a Freedom of Information Act suit filed against the Agency succeeded in liberating a dozen additional pictures of the mystery man who was "mistaken" for Oswald. In them, the man is wearing several different outfits, indicating several episodes of photographic surveillance.⁵⁵

In 1975 the Agency had claimed that the Soviet Consulate cameras did not operate on weekends, and that this explained how Oswald's Saturday-night visit was missed. Meanwhile, the story went, CIA photographic surveillance of the Cuban Consulate had simply broken down while Oswald was there.⁵⁶ Not only is it hard to imagine why a surveillance system would be given weekends off--perhaps the Agency had determined that espionage was a five-day-a-week activity--but we have a photo of the unidentified man taken on one of the very days Oswald visited the Soviet Consulate.

If the CIA did have pictures of the real Lee Harvey Oswald visiting communist consulates in Mexico City, it would surely have provided them to the Warren Commission. Doing so would have

saved considerable trouble and embarrassment. If the Agency had captured on film not Oswald but his impostor, it could hardly have turned such pictures over to the Warren Commission without raising the specter of conspiracy in a form impossible to ignore.

In 1989 Anthony Summers presented additional information, derived in part from interviews with former HSCA staffers.⁵⁷ He asserted that two former CIA employees had lied under oath to HSCA when claiming that the surveillance cameras missed Oswald because of malfunctioning or part-time usage. Summers says that Committee staffers felt certain that photographic surveillance was operational during Oswald's various visits.

Summers offers a provocative quote from former HSCA investigator Edwin Lopez stating that the CIA was definitely covering up but that he and his colleagues weren't sure whether it had to do with some element of the CIA being involved in the assassination. During the Mexico City investigation, the Agency allegedly tried to refuse the Committee access to interviewees and dragged its feet in responding, knowing the Committee had a limited, two-year life span.

Summers seems persuaded that a surveillance photo of the real Oswald in Mexico City did exist but was suppressed by the Agency. He reports that HSCA was told of the photo by a retired, senior CIA officer who served in Mexico City and that three other CIA employees told Committee investigators they too had seen the photo at the CIA office in Mexico City; two others claimed to have known about its existence. The photo was allegedly kept for years in the private safe of retired Mexico City station chief

Winston Scott, until it was removed by a senior CIA officer after Scott's death. If true, why would only one photo exist or be preserved? There should have been numerous Oswald photos, if HSCA investigators are correct in their belief that blanket surveillance was operational during his visits.

Summers speculates that perhaps the photo was suppressed because it showed someone with the real Oswald--perhaps someone with CIA linkages or even a communist affiliation (Cuban or Soviet). However, given the strong evidence of an Oswald impostor and given the Agency's record of deception and disinformation in this matter, there are other possibilities: that there really was no photo at all and the story was concocted, that the putative photo was not of the real Oswald and this accounted for its spooky history, that it was a photo of Oswald but not an authentic surveillance photo of his visiting a consulate in Mexico City. The alleged existence--or even the existence--of a single Oswald surveillance photo does not *refute* ~~refute~~ the evidence that he was being impersonated.

At the time of the Mexican episode the CIA had more than photographic surveillance to work with. It is now known that both consulates were extensively bugged, with phone taps and covert electronic surveillance devices.⁵⁸ Were Oswald's conversations captured on audio tape?

In a 1975 television interview with CBS reporter Dan Rather, then CIA Director William Colby was queried about the possibility.⁵⁹

RATHER: Did you make voice recordings of him?

COLBY: [pause of several seconds] I'd say...I think there were, yes.

In 1976 CIA officer David Phillips, who was in the Agency's Mexican station during the relevant period, said that tapes once existed but had been routinely destroyed.⁶⁰ If this occurred after the assassination, the Agency had trashed vital evidence, even if the tapes were of the real Oswald.

There is some indication from another source that the tapes may have captured an impostor. The day after the assassination FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote a memorandum to President Johnson summarizing the state of the evidence, as part of the Bureau's role as the primary investigative agency in the case. Hoover mentioned the Oswald tapes. He stated that two FBI agents who had conversed with Oswald prior to the assassination listened to the tapes, and they did not think it was Oswald's voice.⁶¹

It was noted by consulate personnel that Oswald spoke "broken" Russian that was "hardly recognizable."⁶² The real Oswald spoke fluent Russian.

The Hoover memo was the only mention of the tapes in FBI files. The two FBI agents named as listeners were called to testify before the House Assassinations Committee. They claimed to have no recollection of hearing any tape of Oswald.⁶³

a/?
It seems certain that ~~tapes~~ existed. The Warren Commission's own documents clearly establish that the CIA bugged, at the very least: a phone call made by Oswald from the Cuban Consulate to the Soviet Consulate, a conversation with a guard at the entrance to the Soviet Consulate (in which Oswald

specifically identified himself) and a third conversation in which Oswald indicated that he wanted to go to the city of Odessa if granted a Soviet visa.⁶⁴ This alone was sufficient data to determine if it was the real Oswald or an impostor. As with the pictures, if it was really Oswald the Agency should have been delighted to circulate the tapes widely rather than suppressing or destroying them. Such recordings could validate the CIA's account of Oswald's Mexican visit and could largely dispose of the impostor question.

In 1976 Washington Post reporter Ron Kessler was able to track down a typist and a translator who worked in the CIA's Mexican station during the Oswald affair.⁶⁵ They recalled translating and typing up the Oswald tapes. They also recalled that their bosses were in a rush for the data. As the translator described, "Usually they pick up the transcripts the next day. This, they wanted right away."⁶⁶

In his appearance on the 1986 television production "On Trial: Lee Harvey Oswald," former HSCA investigator Edwin Lopez expressed his conclusion about the Mexico City affair.⁶⁷ HSCA's 265-page investigative report remains sealed until the year 2028. As the report's author and one of the chief investigators, his observations carry considerable weight. Lopez asserted his belief that there was definitely an Oswald impostor and that "the only plausible explanation was that they were trying to set him up [as a patsy in the President's assassination]." Lopez also stated that the evidence suggested the real Oswald was not really trying to go to Cuba. When asked if Oswald was involved with the CIA, Lopez responded: "Oh, I have no doubt that he was in some

way." The former investigator could not provide details because he had signed a legally-binding secrecy pledge when working for HSCA.

The Mexican episode is not the only CIA cover-up regarding crucial data about Oswald. It is not the only instance in which someone clearly seemed to be impersonating him. Back in the U.S., incidents and artifacts designed to implicate him in the President's assassination appeared with striking frequency.

Chapter 8

Legend* I: Incidents

"I'm just a patsy."

--Lee Harvey Oswald, to reporters in the
Dallas police station, Nov. 22, 1963

It is indeed a facet of certain criminal mentalities that they seek, subconsciously, to get caught. Therefore, they implicate themselves or make mistakes that lead to arrest: a compulsive manifestation of self-loathing or a desire for notoriety. It is certainly logical that if Oswald wanted to enter the history books as the world's most famous Marxist assassin, he would consciously or subconsciously delight in leaving a trail that any correspondence-school gumshoe could follow. Regardless of whether Oswald did or did not shoot at the President; regardless of whether he knowingly participated in the assassination, either alone or in concert with others; regardless of whether he left a trail of self-implicating evidence for

* In clandestine terminology a legend is a cover story created to mask the real activities of a spy or operative, or the real purpose of a project. Depending upon the scenario being run, the operative(s) for whom the legend is crafted may or may not be aware of it or may be aware of only part of it.

reasons of stupidity or to assure his place in history, there remains a basic problem: he was not entirely responsible for the orgy of incriminating activity that surrounded him before, during, and after the assassination. He had help, whether he wanted it or not. To some degree at least, depending on his actual role, Oswald was set up. A legend was built for him.

When the alleged assassin's face is flashed across the TV screen, whether it is Oswald, James Earl Ray or Sirhan Sirhan, dozens of persons come forward with stories of sightings. Law enforcement files in all three cases are glutted with such reports. Sometimes the sources are seeking media attention; sometimes they are mistaken, having seen someone who bore a resemblance to the alleged assassin; sometimes they are correct but their report has no significance for the case (witnessing Sirhan buying lunch). But Oswald's case is different.

We begin with the strange machinations in Mexico City that lend credence to the basic notion that someone was impersonating him. In most of the incidents that followed, witnesses rendered very positive identifications, but it could not have been Oswald: he was known to be at his job, with Marina and his two children or in Mexico. These instances are all provocative, because they form a consistent pattern in which each contributes to the false portrait of a violence-prone, left-wing hothead who is increasingly frustrated and out of control. Most significantly, the impostor(s) not only verbally identifies himself as Oswald in half of the incidents, but proffers some information or artifact that relates to the real Oswald--experience in the Marine Corps or in Russia or Mexico, use of a rifle (an uncommon Italian

carbine) like the one with which Oswald allegedly shot the President. Several of the sightings are far more than fleeting and involve multiple witnesses.

On September 25, 1963 while the real Oswald was on a bus somewhere between New Orleans and Mexico City regaling passengers with tales of his leftism, a young man calling himself "Harvey Oswald"¹ appeared at the Selective Service Office in Austin, Texas. He requested help in upgrading his Marine corps discharge.² He talked for over a half hour to the assistant director of the office's administrative section and explained his problem in detail. Harvey Oswald had been in the Marines, he said, and had gotten into some trouble resulting in an undesirable discharge. This prevented him from obtaining a good job. He said that he had a family living in Fort Worth and needed the upgraded discharge in order to support them. He was given a sympathetic ear but was informed that he should try the Veterans Administration, since Selective Service had no jurisdiction over discharges.

The real Oswald did receive a downgraded discharge from the Marine Corps and had lived in Fort Worth in 1962. The Selective Service administrator never saw Oswald again--until she saw his name and picture flashed across her TV screen the evening of the assassination. It was, she believed, the same man who had visited her office. Two other people in Austin claimed to have seen Oswald there on or near September 25.³

There were additional incidents of Oswald's discontent with his treatment and his status. On November 9, 1963 a customer

calling himself "Lee Oswald" walked into a Lincoln-Mercury showroom in Dallas and expressed interest in buying a car.⁴ The prospective customer would not easily be forgotten by the salesman, for "Lee Oswald" took him for a nerve-wracking test drive that reached speeds of eighty-five miles an hour on the crowded Stemmons Freeway. When they returned to the showroom to discuss financing, Oswald announced that he did not presently have enough money for a downpayment, but that he would be coming into "a lot of money in the next two or three weeks."⁵ This was two weeks before the assassination. Oswald delivered an ideologically charged statement about money to the credit manager: if financing could not be arranged, he just might return to Russia "where they treat workers like men."⁶

Three witnesses at the car dealership vouched for this Oswald encounter. The Warren Commission concluded that they were mistaken. According to the Commission's evidence, the real Oswald was at home in Irving, Texas the day of the incident.⁷ Even if he had been in Dallas that day, he was an unlikely candidate for a high-speed test spin: the real Oswald did not know how to drive.⁸

An Irving, Texas grocer claimed that "Harvey Oswald" appeared in his store on November 9 and tried unsuccessfully to cash a check for \$189.⁹ The Warren Commission rejected the sighting because Oswald was accounted for elsewhere and there was no corroboration for the story. But there was some corroboration.

Clifton Shasteen is not mentioned in the Warren Report although the grocer is. Shasteen owned a barber shop a few doors

away from the grocery store. He asserted that Oswald had come to his shop on several occasions and gotten a haircut. He had seen him enter the grocery store but could not provide a date certain.¹⁰

Shasteen vividly remembered one encounter with Oswald, who was accompanied by a fourteen-year-old boy.^{11*} In the presence of Shasteen and several customers, Oswald and the boy made leftist remarks about the unfairness of there being "one leader over everyone else," about Shasteen keeping part of the money earned by the barbers who worked for him, about the inequity of allowing one man "to hog up the whole country and let another man starve," about world "greed" ending when "you don't have a leader in every little old country." Shasteen admired Oswald's shoes. They were purchased in Mexico, said Oswald.

On November 1 a young man entered Morgan's Gun Shop in Fort Worth and purchased ammunition for a rifle.¹² His rudeness and abrasiveness managed to draw the attention of three witnesses. He boasted that he had served in the Marine Corps. After the assassination all three witnesses identified the man as Lee Harvey Oswald. The real Oswald was accounted for in Dallas that day.¹³

On November 9 (the same day as the test drive incident, while Oswald was at home in Irving) a man appeared at the Sports Dome Rifle Range in Dallas and drew the attention of a number of people by his obnoxious behavior.¹⁴ Witnesses said the man was a good shot but was shooting at the targets of neighboring riflemen

* The real Oswald had two young daughters.

as well as his own, a violation of one of the cardinal rules of range conduct. The man fired rapidly--another violation of the rules. One witness who talked with the man and saw his weapon said that he was using a 6.5mm Italian carbine, like the one allegedly used to kill the President. After the assassination witnesses recognized the undisciplined marksman as Lee Harvey Oswald.¹⁵

Journalist Henry Hurt reported another incident involving Oswald and a 6.5mm Italian carbine.¹⁶ Mrs. Lovell Penn, a Dallas high school teacher, lived on a farm fifteen miles outside the city. About six weeks prior to the assassination she was startled to hear blasts of gunfire coming from her cow pasture. She confronted three trespassers, one of whom held a rifle, and told them to stop shooting because they might hit her livestock. The man she thought might have been Oswald became angry. When Mrs. Penn threatened to call the police the trio departed.

Following the assassination she thought she recognized Oswald* she presented authorities with an empty cartridge case she had picked up in her field. The FBI determined that it was a cartridge case for a 6.5mm Mannlicher-Carcano rifle but that it was not fired from the rifle that ^{had} allegedly killed President.

By far the most significant impersonations occurred in late September.¹⁷ Three strangers visited the home of Annie and Silvia Odio in Dallas. The women were active in the anti-Castro efforts of the Cuban exile community. The three men, two Latins

* Mrs. Penn thought one of the other men might have been of Latin extraction.

and an American, claimed to be members of JURE, a mildly anti-Castro exile group but one which was very far to the left on the spectrum of exile politics. The American was introduced as "Leon." He said only a few words during the brief discussion of exile politics at the Odio home.

Forty-eight hours after the trio of visitors departed, one of the Latins phoned Silvia Odio. He again requested that she help the JURE movement, as he had done at her home, but he also seemed keen to discuss his American companion "Leon Oswald." According to Odio, the Latin asked her opinion of the American. Then the caller went on to characterize Oswald in a manner that she found chilling even at the time:

Well, you know, he's a Marine, an ex-Marine, and an expert marksman....He's kind of loco, kinda nuts....The American says we Cubans don't have any guts. He says we should have shot President Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs. He says we should do something like that.¹⁸

After the assassination, with a profound sense of shock and fear, both sisters recognized the Oswald they saw on TV as the man who had visited them. The Warren Commission found the Odio story very credible, as did the House Assassinations Committee. Silvia Odio seemed an intelligent, articulate woman. Moreover, she had told portions of her story to others before the assassination. This was substantiated by her father's reply to a letter she had written.¹⁹ She placed the incident as occurring sometime between September 24 and September 29, probably in the middle of that span.²⁰

During that time, the real Oswald was ending his stay in New Orleans and heading for Mexico: he was not in Dallas.²¹ It is interesting to note that while this incident seems to contrast with the others in that it has an anti-Castro thrust instead of a pro-leftist one, this incident can be seen as fostering a leftist image from the perspective of Cuban-exile politics. JURE, the organization with which the visitors identified themselves, espoused a program of Castroism without Castro. It was considered to be dangerously left-wing by many elements within the exile community.²² To the most militant anti-Castro groups, JURE was viewed as little better than the Communist Party.²³

The Warren Commission was troubled by the implications of what it regarded as Mrs. Odio's very credible story. Since the Commission's own evidence placed Oswald in New Orleans or Mexico at the time of the incident, someone might well have been trying to frame him. Commission Chief Counsel J. Lee Rankin wrote to J. Edgar Hoover insisting that the Odio story must be either "proved or disproved."²⁴ In some senses this was one of the most crucial problems to face the Commission: proof of the Odio story would constitute circumstantial proof of conspiracy.

The Warren Commission breathed a collective sigh of relief when the matter was allegedly settled. J. Edgar Hoover took the Commission off the hook of conspiracy, or so it appeared. The FBI turned up a witness, Loran Eugene Hall, who claimed to be one of the men who had visited Mrs. Odio. Hall identified the other members of the trip^o as Lawrence J. Howard and William Houston Seymour. Seymour, claimed Hall, bore a striking resemblance to

Lee Harvey Oswald.²⁵ The FBI showed photos of Howard and Seymour to Silvia Odio. She could not identify either of them, or Hall, as the men who visited her. And there was another problem: Seymour did not look anything like Lee Harvey Oswald. He denied to the FBI being in Dallas at the relevant time or even meeting the Odios. Despite all this, the Commission chose to consider the matter settled. As Chief Counsel Rankin told a colleague who remained troubled by the incident, "We are supposed to be closing doors, not opening them."²⁶

Ten days after the Commission presented its final report to President Johnson, Loran Eugene Hall retracted his version of the Odio story.²⁷ In fact, Hall now admitted, he had never so much as met Mrs. Odio. The retraction came too late for the Commission, whose conclusions were now carved in granite.

Loran Hall's career as a witness in the Kennedy assassination was only half over. He surfaced again in 1967, this time in New Orleans. Again Hall managed to confuse an ~~investigation~~ ^{assassination probe} -- that of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. Hall showed up and gave Garrison information that led to the ill-conceived investigation of a California man in connection with an alleged New Orleans conspiracy to assassinate the President, an investigation based largely on Hall's stories.²⁸

Who was this mysterious witness whose ersatz testimony had dead-ended the Odio affair? For one thing, he was an operative with impressive anti-Castro credentials. He was linked to the CIA as well as to the anti-Castro activities of organized crime²⁹ (which, in turn, were linked to each other). In 1963 he worked

with the CIA-backed Free Cuba group.³⁰ He was reportedly detained twice for ~~ignoring~~^{violating} President Kennedy's ban on exile military activities in the U.S.³¹ He reportedly visited Dallas twice in the Fall of 1963--once to raise funds for a Cuban-exile group, a second time with a trailer-full of weapons bound for exiles in Miami.³² Hall was also a leader of Interpen, a militant anti-Castro group composed of Cuban exiles and CIA contract agents.³³

After the assassination, Dallas Deputy Sheriff Roger Craig reported what apparently turns out to be an Oswald look-alike fleeing the crime scene. Craig was a meritorious twenty-seven-year-old law officer. He was across the street from the Texas School Book Depository fifteen to twenty minutes after the shooting when he saw a white male running away from the building.³⁴ A light-colored Rambler with a luggage rack, driven by a dark-complected individual, pulled up and the running man got in. Several witnesses from different vantage points independently corroborated the presence of such a vehicle. Craig ran afoul of his superiors and his career went into a tailspin because of his unwavering insistence that the fleeing man was Oswald, or someone who looked very much like him. (Craig saw Oswald being interrogated at police headquarters). The real Oswald had departed the crime scene earlier and was heading back to his apartment.

Apparently unknown to the Warren Commission, there were two men in Dallas at the time of the assassination who were involved in supplying or obtaining firearms for anti-Castro efforts.

Both men apparently bore a resemblance to Oswald. Although there is no evidence linking either individual to the President's murder, the existence of two persons in the anti-Castro arena who resembled Oswald should have spawned a more energetic investigation of the alleged Oswald sightings.

There was a glaring lapse in the advance protective work done for President Kennedy. Alpha-66, an anti-Castro group, was in Dallas. The Secret Service didn't know it, even though the Service had previously foiled one Cuban-exile assassination plot in which a small plane was going to ram Air Force One.³⁵

While the question of why the FBI did not report Oswald to the Secret Service would receive great attention after the assassination, the question of why the CIA did not report Alpha-66 or its "violently anti-Kennedy" leader was never asked. CIA was conspicuously silent about Dallas Alpha-66 head Roberto Ruiz,* both before and after the assassination. Local police had the major responsibility for discovering local threats to a visiting President, but Federal agencies also had an important role.³⁶ There were no precise guidelines as to the types of individuals that the FBI or CIA should report to the Service as constituting potential threats, but the violently anti-Kennedy leader of a commando group noted for openly challenging the President's ban on military activities against Castro clearly should have been reported.

That the CIA had no knowledge of Ruiz or his group is unlikely. Alpha-66 was in many ways a creature of the Company,

* A pseudonym provided by the author

receiving resources and encouragement in the Agency's covert war against Castro. CIA case officers were with the exiles at their Dallas meetings.³⁷ Alpha-66 and its leader came to the belated attention of the Secret Service after the assassination. The CIA responded to a Secret Service inquiry by stating that it had no data on Ruiz.³⁸ This is highly unlikely given the Agency's operational interest in the group and its direct contact with Ruiz and his group in Dallas.

After the assassination an FBI informant in Dallas reported that Ruiz was "known to be violently anti-President Kennedy."³⁹ The Bureau interviewed him twice in 1964.⁴⁰ On both occasions he claimed that he was an admirer of the President, both as a person and as a politician. Nor could he remember ever hearing any derogatory comments about Kennedy uttered at Alpha-66 meetings, although he had "heard rumors" that many Cubans were critical of Kennedy's policies. One Warren Commission memorandum describes Ruiz as "apparently a survivor of the Bay of Pigs episode," a debacle for which many anti-Castro Cubans blamed Kennedy personally.

Ruiz also seems to have borne a resemblance to Oswald. At 8:00 a.m. the day after the assassination, the Dallas County Sheriff's office passed along a report to the Secret Service: Oswald had been meeting with a Cuban political group before the assassination, "possibly the Freedom for Cuba Party [sic] of which Oswald was a member."⁴¹ The address at which Oswald was seen had nothing to do with the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC). It was the Dallas headquarters of Alpha-66.

The man attending Alpha-66 meetings who was mistaken for