

## NATIONAL NEWS

## Papers Shed New Light on Soviets, Oswald

*JFK Assassin's Past Worried Moscow, but U.S. 'Does Not Want to Involve Us'*By GEORGE LARDNER JR.  
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Three days after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan told Moscow in a top-secret telegram that the U.S. government "clearly prefers to consign the whole business to oblivion as soon as possible."

That is one of several new tidbits to emerge from more than 80 pages of previously secret records that Russian President Boris Yeltsin gave President Clinton in Germany in June. But the documents, made public at the National Archives yesterday, also serve as a reminder of

the huge number of Soviet records regarding Kennedy and his assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, that have not been disclosed.

The chairman of the now-defunct Assassination Records Review Board, U.S. District Judge John Tunheim of Minneapolis, said officials of the Belorussian KGB showed him a stack of files "a bit more than four feet high" when he and two other review board representatives visited Minsk in 1996. They were made available to Norman Mailer for his 1995 book, "Oswald's Tale," but remain beyond the reach of U.S. officials.

The papers released yesterday offer insights into the high-level

discussions among Soviet officials about Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 and his activities there as well as the assassination.

Mikoyan, sent to Washington to attend Kennedy's funeral, concluded that the U.S. government wanted to halt a war of words over the assassination. American news reports at the time were emphasizing Oswald's ties to Moscow and Havana. The Soviet media had countered that "extreme right-wing circles" in America were to blame.

President Lyndon B. Johnson had taken steps to prevent Dallas authorities from charging Oswald with killing Kennedy "in furtherance of a communist conspiracy." U.S. officials, especially Ambassador-at-Large Llewellyn E. Thompson, urged Mikoyan to reciprocate by toning down the rhetoric in the Soviet media.

"Judging from everything, the U.S. government does not want to involve us in this matter, but neither does it want to get into a fight with the extreme rightists; it clearly prefers to consign the whole business to oblivion as soon as possible," Mikoyan said in a Nov. 25, 1963, cable to Moscow.

He noted that Johnson had that day "stated . . . publicly that a thorough investigation would be carried out." Mikoyan suggested that "in further statements by our press, this point should be taken into account. This will help weaken attempts to foment an anti-Soviet

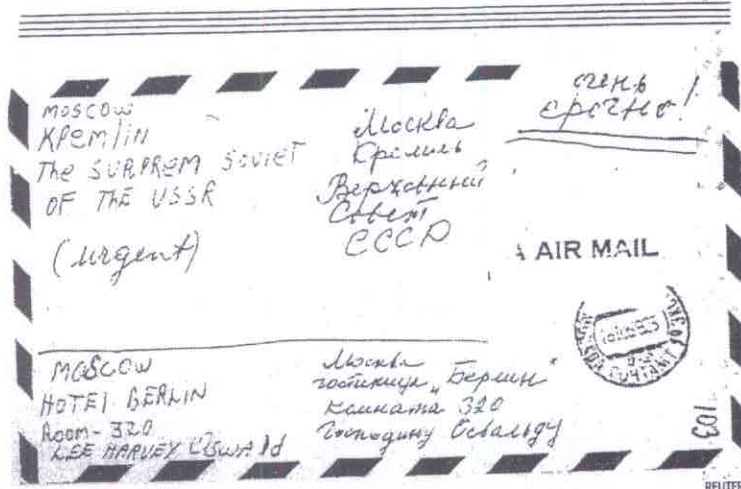
and anti-Cuban campaign."

The documents also show that it was the Central Committee of the Communist Party that decided to give Oswald an allowance of 700 rubles (\$70) a month in addition to his 700- to 900-ruble salary at a radio-television factory in Minsk. The Central Committee also decreed that 5,000 rubles (\$500) would be allotted to furnish a small apartment for him. The payments were made through the Soviet Red Cross.

After Kennedy's assassination in 1963, all relevant files—on Oswald, on the assassination, on Oswald's perplexing visits to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City two months before the murder, and on any investigations the Soviets conducted after the murder—were consolidated in Moscow, but after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Tunheim said, "everything they had from Minsk was sent back to Minsk."

Still locked up in Moscow, for instance, are records concerning Oswald's Mexico City visit that former KGB officials stationed there wrote about in a 1993 book, "Passport to Assassination." They described Oswald as a desperate man, pleading for a visa to return to Russia and tearfully claiming persecution by the FBI.

The Yeltsin papers are not the first set the Russians have provided. The Soviets gave some to the Warren Commission, most of them dealing with Oswald's suicide at-



Among previously secret documents released by the National Archives was Lee Harvey Oswald's 1959 letter to the Supreme Soviet seeking citizenship.

tempt and his work in Minsk.

Five KGB documents about Oswald also were turned over by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1995 and are kept at the National Archives in College Park. One of these is a Nov. 23, 1963, summary of Oswald's stay in the Soviet Union. It noted that Oswald belonged to a "fisherman's club" at his factory, bought a double-barreled shotgun and went hunting two or three times before his marriage to Marina Prusakova.

On one hunt, the report said, "Oswald shot very badly" and "with pleasure, he accepted a dead game bird from his friends on the hunt."

After Kennedy's murder, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and other U.S. officials made a point of assuring the Russians that U.S.-Soviet relations would remain on an even keel. At a White House reception after the funeral, Mikoyan said Jacqueline Kennedy told them "with great emotion and nearly sobbing" that she was sure Soviet leader

Nikita Khrushchev and her husband "could have been successful in the search for peace" and she urged them to keep trying.

"During the entire conversation," Mikoyan wrote in a separate telegram, "she clasped my hand with her two hands, trying to convey as convincingly as possible her feelings and thoughts regarding the cause, to which her husband had devoted his efforts. . . . Her fortitude is most impressive."

When the Warren Commission report came out in 1964, concluding that Oswald acted alone in killing the president, without any foreign involvement, the Soviets nonetheless took exception to the report's detailed discussion of the possible involvement of "Soviet agencies" before rejecting it. A one-page draft states that dissemination of the report in the U.S.S.R. by the U.S. Embassy should be halted "immediately."

Staff researcher Nathan Abse contributed to this report.