

Was Oswald One of Castro's Terrorists?

Behind the Oswald-Castro Connection

BY PETER DALE SCOTT

Editor's Note: Peter Dale Scott, a professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, is one of the country's leading scholarly experts on the John F. Kennedy assassination. He has authored or edited numerous articles and books on covert politics, foreign and domestic, including most recently The Assassinations, Dallas and Beyond (Random House, 1976).

JUNE 1 (PNS) — The official finding of the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald was a homicidal "loner" may soon be replaced by a new line — that Oswald was under the "influence" of Fidel Castro or his intelligence service. But a close look at the key source of this new hypothesis raises serious questions about its accuracy and the motives of its proponents.

The Castro link, originally suggested soon after the JFK assassination by a number of anti-Castro sources close to the CIA, resurfaced last year in a memo from a CIA consultant to the Rockefeller Commission investigating the CIA. The consultant, Ray Rocca, and earlier served as the CIA liaison to the Warren Commission.

Rocca's memo concludes that the Warren Commission report should have left a "wider window" for the contingency of a foreign conspiracy and that Oswald had been influenced by his "hand-

ing and stay in the Soviet Union and his contacts in Mexico City." It adds that this "was the opinion at the working level, particularly in the counterintelligence component in the CIA, in 1964."

One member of Senator Church's Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Robert Morgan (D, N.C.) has already stated bluntly that he believes that "John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated by Fidel Castro or someone under his influence in retaliation for our efforts to assassinate him."

And the Rocca memo has been prominent in a spate of newspaper stories. The Associated Press (AP) has referred to the memo's "promising leads" which, according to the memo, "must be considered of great significance in investigating a possible foreign conspiracy" but were not followed up.

But in fact these so-called promising leads were old speculations or uncorroborated claims that the Warren Commission had already considered and rejected.

One lead is suggestively entitled "Cuban Contact with Lew Harvey Oswald, Santa Ana, California, Early 1959 (?)" (question mark Rocca's). It discusses, as one press account reported it, testimony by Oswald's "closest

friend — about 1959 contacts between Oswald and Cuban officials."

But in the published Warren Commission testimony, the friend, Oswald's fellow marine Nelson Delgado, spoke of only one visitor — whom he never saw. Delgado reported no evidence to suggest the visitor was a Cuban or an official. Nor did he claim to be Oswald's closest friend.

Another lead cites a vivid story from a Nicaraguan Secret Service agent — called "D" by the Warren Report — who claimed to have seen Oswald in the Cuban consulate of Mexico City, being paid \$6,500 for a murder contract.

"D" soon retracted his story and also failed a polygraph test, however — a fact not present in the declassified version of Rocca's memo. Yet Rocca chose to revive the story eleven years later.

In a third key lead, Rocca points to an AP story of September, 1963 from Havana reporting an interview in which Fidel Castro allegedly threatened the lives of U.S. leaders. The Rocca memo claims "There is no evidence in the files of the Kennedy assassination that the Castro interview was conducted in following-up lead."

But in fact the 1963 AP story was discussed in an internal Warren Commission memo and later published. The commission staff concluded it was irrelevant in the absence of

anything to link Castro's alleged remarks to Oswald. The staff may have been influenced by the fact that the AP reporter had no corroboration for his story.

Rocca's inaccuracies may explain why the CIA declined to endorse the memo. "The attached review represents the research and analysis of an individual officer," the CIA's covering letter noted, "and does not necessarily represent the position of this agency."

Rocca was originally asked for a memo on the possible Castro connection by David Belin, executive director of the Rockefeller Commission investigating the CIA. Later both he and President Ford suggested a new JFK investigation along lines similar to Rocca's.

Whose Agent?

Many serious students of the Warren Commission agree that Oswald was an agent of some private or public intelligence agency. But they argue that the agency was probably not foreign.

Their arguments follow those suggested almost a decade ago by Sylvia Meagher in her recently republished book, *Accessories After the Fact*. Senator Richard Schweiker (R., Pa.) of the Senate Intelligence Committee has called this book "by far the most meticulous and compelling indictment of the Warren

port and direction.

This would also explain suspension of normal State Department procedures making it easier for Oswald to travel freely and later obtain a second passport in one day.

* Oswald's recurring contacts with anti-Castro Cubans sponsored by the CIA. Researchers have since learned that Oswald had contact with at least four individuals on the membership list of the CIA's Cuban Revolutionary Council in New Orleans. The Council's 1962 New Orleans address (544 Camp St.) was stamped on some of the pro-Castro leaflets Oswald handed out in front of New Orleans television cameras. One such leaflet was reprinted by the Warren Commission, but with the address deleted.

Research into published FBI reports has also disclosed that Oswald stayed in Mexico City at a hotel frequented by anti-Castro Cubans.

* Oswald's unexplained voluntary contacts with FBI officials, both in New Orleans and in Dallas. Recently released FBI files reveal that even in its own reports the FBI covered up Oswald's use of the 544

Camp St. address, suggesting that the FBI recognized this was an intelligence connection to be protected.

* Jack Ruby's alleged involvement in anti-Castro plotting. The Church Committee has revealed that the milieu of U.S. underworld gambling interests in Havana, to which Ruby had close ties, was used by the CIA in its anti-Castro assassination plots.

Ruby's friend and host in Havana, Lewis McWillie, later worked for the CIA's mafia contact, Sami Giancana.

* Jack Ruby's close links to the Dallas police. FBI reports to the Warren Commission reveal that the Dallas police for years had used Ruby as an informant, as the FBI did also in 1959, at the time of Ruby's visit to Cuba.

The new wave of Oswald stories may at last establish what critics like Sylvia Meagher have long claimed — that Oswald was an intelligence agent. But the irregularities they point up — plus the continuing false leads — raise more questions than answers about who Oswald was working for.

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Commission report ever made. Meagher pointed to recurring irregularities in the handling of the Oswald case by U.S. officials — from the local level before and after the assassination. To attribute all blame to Havana would ignore the presence of CIA agents in the U.S. State Department, FBI, Army Intelligence and above all the Dallas police. Meagher's irregularities, although they have been corroborated by other data, were: 1. The CIA's role in the State Department's failure to respond to Oswald's threats in Moscow to release military secrets to the Soviet Union, which Meagher believed was because Oswald made these threats with official U.S. sup-