

Castro Denies Role in Kennedy

By Jeremiah O'Leary
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Fidel Castro has told the House Assassinations Committee that neither he nor any other Cuban official had anything to do with the death of President John F. Kennedy or with that of Kennedy's accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

In a tape recording of an interview with Castro which was to be played at a committee hearing today, the Cuban leader also said he would have had a moral responsibility to inform the United States if Oswald had told Cuban officials in Mexico three months before the assassination that he intended to kill Kennedy.

A partial transcript of Castro's statements to committee Chairman Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, shows Castro said the only connection Cuba had with Oswald was his visit to the Cuban consulate in Mexico City in

September 1963, two months before the Nov. 22 assassination.

Castro was asked about an account published in The National Enquirer in 1967 claiming that Oswald had told officials at the consulate he intended to kill Kennedy. That article said Castro had admitted being told of the threat but had taken no action in response to it.

CASTRO'S STATEMENT said in part:

"This is absurd. I didn't say that. It has been invented from the beginning until the end. It's a lie from head to toe.

"If this man would have done something like that it would have been our moral duty to inform the United States. Because if a man comes here, mentions that he wants to kill Kennedy, we are being provoked.

"It would have been similar to a mad person. How could we accept a man from Mexico to Cuba who tells us he is going to kill President Kennedy?"

According to committee counsel G. Robert Blakey, the Enquirer article was written by Comer Clark, a British journalist whose reputation for accuracy was not good. "On the other hand, even though there may be doubt as to the fact of Clark's interview with President Castro, the committee has been informed that the substance of the Clark article is supported by highly confidential, but reliable, sources available to the U.S. government," Blakey said in his prepared narration.

OSWALD FIRST visited the consulate in Mexico on Sept. 27, 1963, and requested a visa to visit Cuba en route to the Soviet Union, Blakey said.

"He was informed that he could not obtain a visa to Cuba unless he first got one to enter the Soviet Union and he was told at the Soviet Embassy that he could not expect an answer to his visa application for about four months," Blakey said. When he went to the Cuban consulate he carried with him newspaper clippings and other documents in an attempt to demonstrate he was "a friend of Cuba," Blakey said, adding that Oswald used these documents and his marriage to a Soviet woman, plus his previous residence in the Soviet Union, to curry favor at the Cuban consulate.

"He persisted in his demand for a Cuban visa, resulting in a bitter argument between him and the Cuban consul, Eusebio Azcue Lopez. Eventually his request was denied and he left in anger," Blakey said.

CASTRO WAS revealed in Senate Intelligence Committee hearings in 1976 to have been the target of assassination schemes in which the CIA was said to have conspired with underworld figures.

"The revelation that the premier of Cuba was the target of an unsuccessful assassination planned by the United States served to fuel the fires of speculation that Cuba had been the perpetrator of the successful effort against President Kennedy in 1963," Blakey said. "It was recalled that Premier Castro in a press interview two months before Kennedy's death seemed to be warning that U.S. leaders who approved terrorist attacks on Cuban leaders could themselves be vulnerable."

Azcue testified yesterday that the picture on the visa application and all other pictures he has seen of Oswald bear no resemblance to the man he met three times in Mexico.

Azcue, now retired but sent by the Havana government as a witness,



—United Press International

Cuban leader Fidel Castro says he would have had a "moral duty" to report knowledge of an assassination attempt on the life of President Kennedy.

Slayings

was shown an enlargement of the visa application Oswald allegedly made on Sept. 27, 1963, to try to get to the Soviet Union by way of Cuba. He was also shown the Dallas Police Department mug shots of Oswald and enlargements of the photo affixed to the Cuban visa application, all enlarged.

Azcue told the committee, "I believe the picture (on the visa) was not the same man I talked to. I believe this individual was not the man who came to the consulate.

"It was in mid-December of 1963 that I saw films of Jack Ruby shooting Oswald and I was not able to identify him even though only two months had gone by since I saw the Oswald who came to the consulate."

Committee counsel Gary Cornwell asked Azcue if the man at the consulate looked like the passport photo taken from Oswald's American passport.

"No. There are many differences. He (the man at the consulate) had straight eyebrows; cold, hard and straight eyes; thin cheeks; and the nose was very straight and pointed. This (passport) picture looks heavier and the eyes are at an angle with his face. I would never have identified him from the passport picture.

This and other discrepancies arose in the testimony of the Cuban official, who, along with three other Cuban officials, appeared under heavy security guard to testify yesterday.

Blakey told the committee the Soviet Union "declined to be of assistance" in the probe.

The Cubans made available to the investigators by President Fidel Castro were Azcue; Alfredo Mirabal Diaz, who succeeded Azcue before the Dallas assassination took place; Ricardo Escartin, counsellor of the Cuban interests section in Washington; and Capt. Felipe Villa of the Cuban Interior Ministry.

"He (Oswald) thought I'd be able to solve his problems," Azcue testified but I had to check with Havana. He insisted on the need to proceed urgently to Cuba. I told him on his second visit that if he already had a Soviet visa I could give him a transit visa without consulting my government. I believe he left our consulate to try to get a Soviet visa.

Asked what happened when Oswald came to the Cuban consulate the third time, Azcue replied, "He was very troubled because I told him no."

"He had a face which reflected unhappiness. He was not friendly or pleasant. On each visit he got very worked up and said in English, accused us of being discourteous bureaucrats. Then I became upset and told him to leave, somewhat violently. He mumbled and slammed the door. That was the last time I saw him."

Mirabal said, "I noticed that Oswald submitted a Communist Party USA card. I've been a Communist for

many years and we don't use cards. We identify ourselves by our actions and our ideas." Mirabal testified that his memory of Oswald is of "a small man with narrow shoulders, short hair, no mustache and who appeared hard and tough, upset or unhappy."

"I think he was sent to our consulate in Mexico City to be a provocation. He insisted on the urgency of his application for a visa as if he was being persecuted. The second time he came is what started the argument with Azcue. He accused us all of not being true revolutionaries."