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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Wendell Thornley today was charged with committing perjury before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury during his testimony on February 8, 1968. The perjury charges were based on his sworn testimony before the Grand Jury to the effect that he did not think he had met Lee Oswald in New Orleans in 1963. Evidence indicates that he did.

When the Warren Commission hearings were held in 1964, Thornley testified that Oswald was a "Communist" when they were in the Marines together in California, prior to Oswald's 1959 departure for Russia. Thornley was the Commission's star witness concerning Oswald's early "left wing" orientation.¹ Inasmuch as Oswald really was never at any time a

1. Since this portrait of Oswald as a demented Marxist was not forthcoming from the other Marines, the testimony of most of them was presented simply in the form of brief affidavits. Thornley's image-creating testimony lasted for 33 pages, at the end of which little doubt was left about Lee Oswald's commitment to Communism and his qualifications as an assassin.

To see how starkly Thornley's florid portrait of Oswald contrasts with the recollection of the other Marines, see Addendum at the end of this press release.

"Communist" -- nor even inclined in that direction -- and inasmuch as he was sent to Russia as an employee of the United States Government, it was necessary to have a major witness testify in great detail to create an early image as a Marxist so that there would not be too much public curiosity about the real reasons for Oswald's abrupt departure from the Marine Corps to sail to Russia.² Thornley's Warren Commission testimony concerned his observations of this "Marxist" personality during their service together at El Toro Marine Base in California in 1959. He testified that he had not seen Oswald since. Thornley's own long residence in New Orleans, after his discharge, from 1961 through 1963 was not examined in any depth.

2. The Report of the Warren Commission infers that Oswald somehow must have learned Russian on his own, ostensibly in preparation for his forthcoming defection. Actually, Oswald was taught Russian by the United States government, as is indicated by Lieutenant Colonel Folsom's testimony during which he happened to refer to one of Oswald's grades in a U.S. Armed Forces Russian examination (Volume VIII, p. 307). The formal designation for this Russian examination was "Department of the Army, Adjutant General's Office, PRT-157. Oswald took the Russian examination on February 25, 1959, while stationed at El Toro Marine Base in California.

Nor was there any hint in Thornley's Warren Commission testimony that he had any connection in New Orleans with individuals or organizations engaged in anti-Castro activity. Least of all was there any hint that he was connected here with persons who were connected with Lee Oswald -- persons who played active roles in creating the picture of Oswald as still being a "Communist" in 1963 shortly before the assassination. Nor was there any indication of his having met, following his discharge from the Marines, one of the men presently under a charge related to the assassination.

Like a number of young men who have been identified as CIA employees, Thornley had a post office box in the federal building across from Banister's office. Such post office boxes are customarily used by federal employees with clandestine assignments as "message drops" as well as an acceptable excuse for regular visits into a federal building. Another of the young men having such a post office box was Lee Harvey Oswald. What this means is simply that Kerry Thornley and Lee Oswald were both part of the covert federal operation operating in New Orleans. The only difference between Oswald and the other young CIA employees was that, having performed a flamboyant Russian assignment for his country, he had a beautiful potential as a decoy in the assassination -- a potential which, as it happened, his employers did not waste. Thornley actually lived across Lafayette Square

from the old post office building and from the Newman Building, in which Oswald later was seen, prior to his moving into the French Quarter. At the time of the assassination Thornley was living on Dauphine Street a block and a half downtown from Esplanade. Shortly after the assassination he departed abruptly for the Washington, D.C. area, where he remained until after his testimony before the Warren Commission.

By a curious stroke of luck Thornley, during his New Orleans residence, wrote a book based on Lee Oswald. He completed it about the time of the assassination. As luck would have it, the man he wrote about ended up being charged with assassinating the President. Apparently no one else had written a book about Oswald prior to the assassination and, in due course, it found its way to a publisher.

The Central Intelligence Agency elements which accomplished the execution of President Kennedy included, in addition to the ambush squad of professional assassins used in Dallas, individuals working on custodial assignments and on image-creating assignments. The techniques used in creating a Communist image for Oswald were: persuading him by means of a pretext to engage in certain activities (such as handing out "Fair Play for Cuba" pamphlets), having other employees play his part in more inculpatory tableaux (such as appearing at the Mexican Consul here and inquiring as to whether

he could "bring a rifle into Mexico" or ostensibly receiving money being paid to him in the courtyard of the Cuban Consul in Mexico City) and testifying, after the assassination, that Oswald was indeed a deranged Communist.

Like all large bureaucratic federal agencies, however, the Central Intelligence Agency is capable of goofing. In spite of the carefully contrived insulation and the countless red herrings it planted along the way, it goofed with regard to Thornley -- apparently because by mid-December things appeared to be well under control. A few weeks after the assassination Thornley abruptly cleared out of his Dauphine Street apartment, leaving a note for his landlord that he had to go to a town just outside of Washington, D.C. Thornley remained on ice in Arlington, Virginia until it came time for him to testify that Oswald had been a Communist way back in their Marine days. Ordinarily, the connections to our one government agency specializing in assassination are more carefully concealed. However, by December 13, 1964, the Warren Commission had been selected, with the reassuring presence of Allen Dulles, the former head of the CIA, and the situation must have appeared to be well under control.

When Spring of 1964 arrived and the time came for his word picture of Oswald, Thornley testified not only that he had been a "Marxist" but that he "had a persecution complex", "was emotionally unstable" and "wanted a place in history".

Inasmuch as the defendant had already safely been executed -- the standard fate of the decoy in professional assassinations -- these words now became part of the official picture of Lee Oswald and his years as a CIA employee were buried with him.

In such a fashion, with key witnesses produced to attest to the needed fictions at crucial points, did the Warren Commission turn day into night, up into down -- and achieve a harmonious continuity of the tableau produced by the architects of President Kennedy's assassination. That is why the concealment of the involvement of elements of the CIA was so successful -- because the seven distinguished men on the Warren Commission literally adopted the scenario developed by the assassins.³ Their giving official status to the fraudulent fairy tale made it extremely difficult

3. With one notable exception: one of the main objectives of the assassination, in addition to removing a President who had reached a detente with Castro and was working toward new understandings with Russia, was to establish an excuse, acceptable to an apathetic public, to invade Cuba. Prior to the President's assassination careful scenes had been set up to connect Oswald with Cuba so as to create the inference that the assassination was a plot directed from Cuba, hence justifying invasion. The Warren Commission readily accepted the false picture of Oswald as a "Communist" but compromised the original plan by making him a "lone" assassin, as the result of which some of the men who initiated the assassination are unhappy still at not achieving their entire objective. That it made this "liberal compromise" does not alter the fact that the Warren Commission adopted the basic fiction created by the planners of the assassination to make the world believe that a "lonely Marxist" had killed President Kennedy.

to learn what really did happen to John Kennedy -- especially when the new President issued an executive order concealing much of the crucial evidence for 75 years.

With regard to Thornley, the total absence of any details in his Warren Commission testimony concerning his relationships in New Orleans with relevant individuals reveals his 33-page picture of "Oswald at El Toro" to be synthetic and representative of the fictional nature of the entire fraudulent "investigation". When the time comes that it is desired to determine when we ceased to live in a free society, it will be found that the change occurred on November 22, 1963 -- the day the credibility gap began.

JIM GARRISON

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A D D E N D U M

Following are some examples of the evaluations of the other Marine associates of Oswald as to his rabid "Communist" orientation:

Nelson Delgado: "He would discuss his ideas, but not anything against our Government or -- nothing Socialist, mind, you" (Volume VIII, p. 246).

Donald Camarata: "I have no recollection...of any remarks on his part concerning Communism, Russia or Cuba" (Volume VIII, p. 317).

Peter Connor: "I never heard Oswald make any anti-American or pro-Communist statements. He claimed to be named after Robert E. Lee whom he characterized as the greatest man in history" (Volume VIII, p. 317).

Allen D. Graf: "Oswald never gave to me any indication of favoring Communism or opposing capitalism" (Volume VIII, p. 318).

John R. Heindel: "Although I generally regarded Oswald as an intelligent person, I did not observe him to be particularly interested in politics or international affairs" (Volume VIII, p. 318).

Henry J. Roussel, Jr.: "I recall no serious political remarks on the part of Oswald" (Volume VIII, p. 321).

Mack Osborne: "I do not recall any remarks on his part concerning Communism, Russia or Cuba" (Volume VIII, p. 322).

Richard D. Call: "I do not recall Oswald's making serious remarks with regard to the Soviet Union or Cuba" (Volume VIII, p. 323).

It is thought provoking that the only one of Oswald's former Marine comrades who testified that he was a "Marxist" -- one of the star witnesses for the Warren Commission -- is also the only one who was in personal association with Oswald in New Orleans in 1963 just before he returned to Dallas before the assassination. It is equally thought provoking that this former Marine comrade, whose testimony is so curiously different from all of the others, was also in the company, in 1963, of one of the men now charged in connection with the assassination of President Kennedy. And it is particularly thought provoking that this man's associates and pattern of activity in 1963 plainly mark him as an employee, like Lee Oswald, of the Central Intelligence Agency.