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FROM : William T. Coleman, Jr.
W. David Slawson

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Which Might be Said to Show that There was Foreign
Involvement in the Assassination of President Kennedy

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INTRODUCTION

One of the basic purposes of the Commission's investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy is to determine whether it was due in whole or in part to a foreign conspiracy. The investigation conducted by the section of the staff responsible for the foreign aspects of the Commission's work leads to the conclusion that there was no foreign involvement. Nevertheless, there is evidence which points toward a possible conclusion of foreign involvement which we think should be brought to the attention of the Commission for its independent evaluation.

The foreign countries most suspected in the public's mind are the Soviet Union and Cuba. The Chinese communists and even Madame Nhu's wing of Vietnam, however, might also be suggested.^{1/} Likewise, the possible involvement of expatriated anti-Castro Cubans, whether resident in the United States or in one of the South or Central American nations, is worth considering.

Firm evidence of a foreign conspiracy is obviously very hard to come by, since there naturally is the greatest attempt by the country involved to prevent discovery. Investigations that are dependent upon information voluntarily furnished by the foreign government involved, such as have already been undertaken with the Soviet Union and Cuba, are obviously not very helpful in uncovering evidence

^{1/} Madame Nhu reportedly sent Mrs. Kennedy a very inconsiderate telegram shortly after the assassination and she has been reported in the public press as stating that the assassination of President Kennedy was only retribution for the killing of her husband, which she claimed was American inspired.

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of this type, because the foreign government will try to furnish only that evidence which it believes to be nonincriminating. Nevertheless, even this kind of evidence can be of some use in assessing whether a foreign conspiracy existed. This is because, first, the furnishing of the evidence, despite appearances, is not quite "voluntary." In a case of the magnitude of this one, and in which the widely known facts already disclose important links with the Soviet Union and Cuba, these governments are under considerable pressure to render reasonable cooperation to the Government of the United States. If they do not, they risk having public opinion swing strongly against them and conclude that they are afraid to cooperate because the evidence will indeed incriminate them. Second, once these governments conclude that they will furnish some evidence to the Commission, the difficulties of falsifying the evidence they give are considerable. They must realize that the Commission already possesses a great deal of data against which their new evidence will be tested, and that the CIA has additional facilities for this purpose which will be placed at the disposal of the Commission. Moreover, if even only a small part of the evidence furnished is found to have been fabricated, the entire body of new evidence will become suspect; and if this should happen, the adverse public opinion effects previously mentioned would again come into play. For these reasons, we have concluded that, on balance, it was worthwhile to ask the governments of the U.S.S.R. and Cuba to furnish the Commission with whatever evidence they could.

(It should also be pointed out that there is another reason why the governments of Russia and Cuba have been asked to furnish evidence.

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The Commission is primarily interested in ascertaining the truth, not just in "pinning the rap" on someone, and therefore the two foreign governments mentioned must be regarded not only as objects of investigation, but also as parties who have a right to be heard. They therefore should be given basically the same opportunity to present evidence as has been accorded to the hundreds of other individuals and institutions which have come into contact with Lee Harvey Oswald in one way or another.)

Obviously, despite the fact that voluntarily obtained evidence is not completely useless even in judging whether a foreign conspiracy is involved, the most valuable evidence for this purpose is that obtained through informers, ordinary witnesses, electronic and mechanical spying devices and other means available to American intelligence and investigatory agencies which are not dependent upon the consent of the government being investigated. The bulk of this memorandum will deal with this kind of evidence.

We think this separate memorandum for the Commission and the General Counsel appropriate because the material covered in the final report to the public will necessarily be somewhat more restricted. A good deal of the information contained herein is Secret or Top Secret and therefore cannot be disclosed to the American Public at this time. In most instances this is not because of the information itself but because of the necessity of protecting the method or source for obtaining it. In other words, in the final report we can set forth the facts, but we will not be able to demonstrate the reliability (or lack of reliability) of these facts by showing their source. Moreover, in some

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cases even the information itself must be withheld from the public. For example, the fact that a Russian MVD employee may secretly have tried to warn Oswald not to come to Russia, if disclosed, might result in the employee being severely punished or even executed. Similarly, even disclosing the information gained from certain wiretapping facilities would necessarily disclose the existence of the facilities, where the nature of the information is such that we could not have learned it except through these facilities.

I. SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. "Foreign Involvement" Defined

We have intentionally chosen the words, "foreign involvement," to describe the problems with which we are concerned in this memorandum. The words were chosen because they are extremely broad, covering everything from a comparatively innocent arrangement for propaganda purposes, such as, for example, an agreement whereby Oswald might have served the propaganda purposes of the Castro Government in New Orleans and Dallas in exchange for that Government paying his printing expenses plus some small additional compensation, to the most serious kind of conspiratorial connection, as would be the case if a foreign power had ordered Lee Oswald to kill John F. Kennedy. By "foreign involvement," however, we do mean something more concrete than simply emotional or ideological influence. The Commission already possesses evidence, and indeed so does the general public, that Oswald considered himself a Marxist and that he sympathized wholeheartedly with the Castro regime: he openly spread pamphlets in its behalf on the streets of New Orleans and he took its side in radio

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