

Lee Harvey Oswald: Background and Possible Motives

THE EVIDENCE reviewed above identifies Lee Harvey Oswald as the assassin of President Kennedy and indicates that he acted alone in that event. There is no evidence that he had accomplices or that he was involved in any conspiracy directed to the assassination of the President. There remains the question of what impelled Oswald to conceive and to carry out the assassination of the President of the United States. The Commission has considered many possible motives for the assassination, including those which might flow from Oswald's commitment to Marxism or communism, the existence of some personal grievance, a desire to effect changes in the structure of society or simply to go down in history as a well publicized assassin. None of these possibilities satisfactorily explains Oswald's act if it is judged by the standards of reasonable men. The motives of any man, however, must be analyzed in terms of the character and state of mind of the particular individual involved. For a motive that appears incomprehensible to other men may be the moving force of a man whose view of the world has been twisted, possibly by factors of which those around him were only dimly aware. Oswald's complete state of mind and character are now outside of the power of man to know. He cannot, of course, be questioned or observed by those charged with the responsibility for this report or by experts on their behalf. There is, however, a large amount of material available in his writings and in the history of his life which does give some insight into his character and, possibly, into the motives for his act.

Since Oswald is dead, the Commission is not able to reach any definite conclusions as to whether or not he was "sane" under prevailing legal standards. Under our system of justice no forum could properly make that determination unless Oswald were before it. It certainly could not be made by this Commission which, as has been pointed out above, ascertained the facts surrounding the assassination but did not draw conclusions concerning Oswald's legal guilt.

Indications of Oswald's motivation may be obtained from a study of the events, relationships and influences which appear to have been

significant in shaping his character and in guiding him. Perhaps the most outstanding conclusion of such a study is that Oswald was profoundly alienated from the world in which he lived. His life was characterized by isolation, frustration, and failure. He had very few, if any, close relationships with other people and he appeared to have great difficulty in finding a meaningful place in the world. He was never satisfied with anything. When he was in the United States he resented the capitalist system which he thought was exploiting him and others like him. He seemed to prefer the Soviet Union and he spoke highly of Cuba.¹ When he was in the Soviet Union, he apparently resented the Communist Party members, who were accorded special privileges and who he thought were betraying communism, and he spoke well of the United States.² He accused his wife of preferring others to himself and told her to return to the Soviet Union without him but without a divorce. At the same time he professed his love for her and said that he could not get along without her.³ Marina Oswald thought that he would not be happy anywhere, "Only on the moon, perhaps."⁴

While Oswald appeared to most of those who knew him as a meek and harmless person, he sometimes imagined himself as "the Commander"⁵ and, apparently seriously, as a political prophet—a man who said that after 20 years he would be prime minister.⁶ His wife testified that he compared himself with great leaders of history. Such ideas of grandeur were apparently accompanied by notions of oppression.⁷ He had a great hostility toward his environment, whatever it happened to be, which he expressed in striking and sometimes violent acts long before the assassination. There was some quality about him that led him to act with an apparent disregard for possible consequences.⁸ He defected to the Soviet Union, shot at General Walker, tried to go to Cuba and even contemplated hijacking an airplane to get there. He assassinated the President, shot Officer Tippit, resisted arrest and tried to kill another policeman in the process.

Oswald apparently started reading about communism when he was about 15. In the Marines, he evidenced a strong conviction as to the correctness of Marxist doctrine, which one associate described as "irrevocable," but also as "theoretical"; that associate did not think that Oswald was a Communist.⁹ Oswald did not always distinguish between Marxism and communism.¹⁰ He stated several times that he was a Communist but apparently never joined any Communist Party.¹¹

His attachment to Marxist and Communist doctrine was probably, in some measure, an expression of his hostility to his environment. While there is doubt about how fully Oswald understood the doctrine which he so often espoused, it seems clear that his commitment to Marxism was an important factor influencing his conduct during his adult years. It was an obvious element in his decision to go to Russia and later to Cuba and it probably influenced his decision to shoot at General Walker. It was a factor which contributed to his character

and thereby might have influenced his decision to assassinate President Kennedy.

The discussion below will describe the events known to the Commission which most clearly reveals the formation and nature of Oswald's character. It will attempt to summarize the events of his early life, his experience in New York City and in the Marine Corps, and his interest in Marxism. It will examine his defection to the Soviet Union in 1959, his subsequent return to the United States and his life here after June of 1962. The review of the latter period will evaluate his personal and employment relations, his attempt to kill General Walker, his political activities, and his unsuccessful attempt to go to Cuba in late September of 1963. Various possible motives will be treated in the appropriate context of the discussion outlined above.

The Early Years

Significant in shaping the character of Lee Harvey Oswald was the death of his father, a collector of insurance premiums. This occurred 2 months before Lee was born in New Orleans on October 18, 1939.¹² That death strained the financial fortunes of the remainder of the Oswald family. It had its effect on Lee's mother, Marguerite, his brother Robert, who had been born in 1934, and his half-brother John Pic, who had been born in 1932 during Marguerite's previous marriage.¹³ It forced Marguerite Oswald to go to work to provide for her family.¹⁴ Reminding her sons that they were orphans and that the family's financial condition was poor, she placed John Pic and Robert Oswald in an orphans' home.¹⁵ From the time Marguerite Oswald returned to work until December 26, 1942, when Lee too was sent to the orphans' home, he was cared for principally by his mother's sister, by babysitters and by his mother, when she had time for him.¹⁶

Marguerite Oswald withdrew Lee from the orphans' home and took him with her to Dallas when he was a little over 4 years old.¹⁷ About 6 months later she also withdrew John Pic and Robert Oswald.¹⁸ Apparently that action was taken in anticipation of her marriage to Edwin A. Ekdahl, which took place in May of 1945.¹⁹ In the fall of that year John Pic and Robert Oswald went to a military academy where they stayed, except for vacations, until the spring of 1948.²⁰ Lee Oswald remained with his mother and Ekdahl,²¹ to whom he became quite attached. John Pic testified that he thought Lee found in Ekdahl the father that he never had.²² That situation, however, was short-lived, for the relations between Marguerite Oswald and Ekdahl were stormy and they were finally divorced, after several separations and reunions, in the summer of 1948.²³

After the divorce Mrs. Oswald complained considerably about how unfairly she was treated, dwelling on the fact that she was a widow with three children. John Pic, however, did not think her position was worse than that of many other people.²⁴ In the fall of 1948 she told John Pic and Robert Oswald that she could not afford to send them back to the military school and she asked Pic to quit school

entirely to help support the family, which he did for 4 months in the fall of 1948.²⁵ In order to supplement their income further she falsely swore that Pic was 17 years old so that he could join the Marine Corps Reserves.²⁶ Pic did turn over part of his income to his mother, but he returned to high school in January of 1949, where he stayed until 3 days before he was scheduled to graduate, when he left school in order to get into the Coast Guard.²⁷ Since his mother did not approve of his decision to continue school he accepted the responsibility for that decision himself and signed his mother's name to all his own excuses and report cards.²⁸

Pic thought that his mother overstated her financial problems and was unduly concerned about money. Referring to the period after the divorce from Ekdahl, which was apparently caused in part by Marguerite's desire to get more money from him, Pic said: "Lee was brought up in this atmosphere of constant money problems, and I am sure it had quite an effect on him, and also Robert."²⁹ Marguerite Oswald worked in miscellaneous jobs after her divorce from Ekdahl.³⁰ When she worked for a time as an insurance saleslady, she would sometimes take Lee with her, apparently leaving him alone in the car while she transacted her business.³¹ When she worked during the school year, Lee had to leave an empty house in the morning, return to it for lunch and then again at night, his mother having trained him to do that rather than to play with other children.³²

An indication of the nature of Lee's character at this time was provided in the spring of 1950, when he was sent to New Orleans to visit the family of his mother's sister, Mrs. Lillian Murret, for 2 or 3 weeks. Despite their urgings, he refused to play with the other children his own age.³³ It also appears that Lee tried to tag along with his older brothers but apparently was not able to spend as much time with them as he would have liked, because of the age gaps of 5 and 7 years, which became more significant as the children grew older.³⁴

New York City

Whatever problems may have been created by Lee's home life in Louisiana and Texas, he apparently adjusted well enough there to have had an average, although gradually deteriorating, school record with no behavior or truancy problems. That was not the case, however, after he and his mother moved to New York in August of 1952, shortly before Lee's 13th birthday. They moved shortly after Robert joined the Marines; they lived for a time with John Pic who was stationed there with the Coast Guard.³⁵ Relations soon became strained, however,³⁶ so in late September Lee and his mother moved to their own apartment in the Bronx.³⁷ Pic and his wife would have been happy to have kept Lee, however, who was becoming quite a disciplinary problem for his mother, having struck her on at least one occasion.³⁸

The short-lived stay with the Pics was terminated after an incident in which Lee allegedly pulled out a pocket knife during an argument

and threatened to use it on Mrs. Pic. When Pic returned home, Mrs. Oswald tried to play down the event but Mrs. Pic took a different view and asked the Oswalds to leave. Lee refused to discuss the matter with Pic, whom he had previously idolized, and their relations were strained thereafter.³⁹

On September 30, 1952, Lee enrolled in P.S. 117,⁴⁰ a junior high school in the Bronx, where the other children apparently teased him because of his "western" clothes and Texas accent.⁴¹ He began to stay away from school, preferring to read magazines and watch television at home by himself.⁴² This continued despite the efforts of the school authorities and, to a lesser extent, of his mother to have him return to school.⁴³ Truancy charges were brought against him alleging that he was "beyond the control of his mother insofar as school attendance is concerned."⁴⁴ Lee Oswald was remanded for psychiatric observation to Youth House, an institution in which children are kept for psychiatric observation or for detention pending court appearance or commitment to a child-caring or custodial institution such as a training school.⁴⁵ He was in Youth House from April 16 to May 7, 1953,⁴⁶ during which time he was examined by its Chief Psychiatrist, Dr. Renatus Hartogs, and interviewed and observed by other members of the Youth House staff.⁴⁷

Marguerite Oswald visited her son at Youth House, where she recalled that she waited in line "with Puerto Ricans and Negroes and everything."⁴⁸ She said that her pocketbook was searched "because the children in this home were such criminals, dope fiends, and had been in criminal offenses, that anybody entering this home had to be searched in case the parents were bringing cigarettes or narcotics or anything."⁴⁹ She recalled that Lee cried and said, "Mother, I want to get out of here. There are children in here who have killed people, and smoke. I want to get out."⁵⁰ Marguerite Oswald said that she had not realized until then in what kind of place her son had been confined.⁵¹

On the other hand, Lee told his probation officer, John Carro, that "while he liked Youth House he miss[ed] the freedom of doing what he wanted. He indicated that he did not miss his mother."⁵² Mrs. Evelyn Strickman Siegel, a social worker who interviewed both Lee and his mother while Lee was confined in Youth House, reported that Lee "confided that the worse thing about Youth House was the fact that he had to be with other boys all the time, was disturbed about disrobing in front of them, taking showers with them etc."⁵³

Contrary to reports that appeared after the assassination, the psychiatric examination did not indicate that Lee Oswald was a potential assassin, potentially dangerous, that "his outlook on life had strongly paranoid overtones" or that he should be institutionalized.⁵⁴ Dr. Hartogs did find Oswald to be a tense, withdrawn, and evasive boy who intensely disliked talking about himself and his feelings. He noted that Lee liked to give the impression that he did not care for other people but preferred to keep to himself, so that he was not bothered and did not have to make the effort of communicating. Os-

wald's withdrawn tendencies and solitary habits were thought to be the result of "intense anxiety, shyness, feelings of awkwardness and insecurity."⁵⁵ He was reported to have said "I don't want a friend and I don't like to talk to people" and "I dislike everybody."⁵⁶ He was also described as having a "vivid fantasy life, turning around the topics of omnipotence and power, through which he tries to compensate for his present shortcomings and frustrations."⁵⁷ Dr. Hartogs summarized his report by stating:

This 13 year old well built boy has superior mental resources and functions only slightly below his capacity level in spite of chronic truancy from school which brought him into Youth House. No finding of neurological impairment or psychotic mental changes could be made. Lee has to be diagnosed as "personality pattern disturbance with schizoid features and passive—aggressive tendencies." Lee has to be seen as an emotionally, quite disturbed youngster who suffers under the impact of really existing emotional isolation and deprivation, lack of affection, absence of family life and rejection by a self involved and conflicted mother.⁵⁸

Dr. Hartogs recommended that Oswald be placed on probation on condition that he seek help and guidance through a child guidance clinic. There, he suggested, Lee should be treated by a male psychiatrist who could substitute for the lack of a father figure. He also recommended that Mrs. Oswald seek "psychotherapeutic guidance through contact with a family agency." The possibility of commitment was to be considered only if the probation plan was not successful.⁵⁹

Lee's withdrawal was also noted by Mrs. Siegel, who described him as a "seriously detached, withdrawn youngster."⁶⁰ She also noted that there was "a rather pleasant, appealing quality about this emotionally starved, affectionless youngster which grows as one speaks to him."⁶¹ She thought that he had detached himself from the world around him because "no one in it ever met any of his needs for love."⁶² She observed that since Lee's mother worked all day, he made his own meals and spent all his time alone because he didn't make friends with the boys in the neighborhood. She thought that he "withdrew into a completely solitary and detached existence where he did as he wanted and he didn't have to live by any rules or come into contact with people."⁶³ Mrs. Siegel concluded that Lee "just felt that his mother never gave a damn for him. He always felt like a burden that she simply just had to tolerate."⁶⁴ Lee confirmed some of those observations by saying that he felt almost as if there were a veil between him and other people through which they could not reach him, but that he preferred the veil to remain intact. He admitted to fantasies about being powerful and sometimes hurting and killing people, but refused to elaborate on them. He took the position that such matters were his own business.⁶⁵

A psychological human figure-drawing test corroborated the interviewer's findings that Lee was insecure and had limited social contacts. Irving Sokolow, a Youth House psychologist reported that:

The Human Figure Drawings are empty, poor characterizations of persons approximately the same age as the subject. They reflect a considerable amount of impoverishment in the social and emotional areas. He appears to be a somewhat insecure youngster exhibiting much inclination for warm and satisfying relationships to others. There is some indication that he may relate to men more easily than to women in view of the more mature conceptualisation. He appears slightly withdrawn and in view of the lack of detail within the drawings this may assume a more significant characteristic. He exhibits some difficulty in relationship to the maternal figure suggesting more anxiety in this area than in any other.⁶⁶

Lee scored an IQ of 118 on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. According to Sokolow, this indicated a "present intellectual functioning in the upper range of bright normal intelligence."⁶⁷ Sokolow said that although Lee was "presumably disinterested in school subjects he operates on a much higher than average level."⁶⁸ On the Monroe Silent Reading Test, Lee's score indicated no retardation in reading speed and comprehension; he had better than average ability in arithmetical reasoning for his age group.⁶⁹

Lee told Carro, his probation officer, that he liked to be by himself because he had too much difficulty in making friends.⁷⁰ The reports of Carro and Mrs. Siegel also indicate an ambivalent attitude toward authority on Oswald's part. Carro reported that Lee was disruptive in class after he returned to school on a regular basis in the fall of 1953. He had refused to salute the flag and was doing very little, if any, work. It appears that he did not want to do any of the things which the authorities suggested in their efforts to bring him out of the shell into which he appeared to be retreating.⁷¹ He told Mrs. Siegel that he would run away if sent to a boarding school. On the other hand he also told her that he wished his mother had been more firm with him in her attempts to get him to return to school.⁷²

The reports of the New York authorities indicate that Lee's mother gave him very little affection and did not serve as any sort of substitute for a father. Furthermore she did not appear to understand her own relationship to Lee's psychological problems. After her interview with Mrs. Oswald, Mrs. Siegel described her as a "smartly dressed, gray haired woman, very self-possessed and alert and superficially affable," but essentially a "defensive, rigid, self-involved person who had real difficulty in accepting and relating to people" and who had "little understanding" of Lee's behavior and of the "protective shell he has drawn around himself."⁷³ Dr. Hartogs reported that Mrs. Oswald did not understand that Lee's withdrawal was a form of "violent but silent protest against his neglect by her and represents his reac-

tion to a complete absence of any real family life.”⁷⁴ Carro reported that when questioned about his mother Lee said, “well I’ve got to live with her. I guess I love her.”⁷⁵ It may also be significant that, as reported by John Pic, “Lee slept with my mother until I joined the service in 1950. This would make him approximately 10, well, almost 11 years old.”⁷⁶

The factors in Lee Oswald’s personality which were noted by those who had contact with him in New York indicate that he had great difficulty in adapting himself to conditions in that city. His usual reaction to the problems which he encountered there was simply withdrawal. Those factors indicated a severe inability to enter into relationships with other people. In view of his experiences when he visited his relatives in New Orleans in the spring of 1950, and his other solitary habits, Lee had apparently been experiencing similar problems before going to New York, and as will be shown below, this failure to adapt to his environment was a dominant trait in his later life.

It would be incorrect, however, to believe that those aspects of Lee’s personality which were observed in New York could have led anyone to predict the outburst of violence which finally occurred. Carro was the only one of Oswald’s three principal observers who recommended that he be placed in a boy’s home or similar institution.⁷⁷ But Carro was quite specific that his recommendation was based primarily on the adverse factors in Lee’s environment—his lack of friends, the apparent unavailability of any agency assistance and the ineffectualness of his mother—and not on any particular mental disturbance in the boy himself.⁷⁸ Carro testified that:

There was nothing that would lead me to believe when I saw him at the age of 12 that there would be seeds of destruction for somebody. I couldn’t in all honesty sincerely say such a thing.⁷⁹

Mrs. Siegel concluded her report with the statement that:

Despite his withdrawal, he gives the impression that he is not so difficult to reach as he appears and patient, prolonged effort in a sustained relationship with one therapist might bring results. There are indications that he has suffered serious personality damage but if he can receive help quickly this might be repaired to some extent.⁸⁰

Lee Oswald never received that help. Few social agencies even in New York were equipped to provide the kind of intensive treatment that he needed, and when one of the city’s clinics did find room to handle him, for some reason the record does not show, advantage was never taken of the chance afforded to Oswald. When Lee became a disciplinary problem upon his return to school in the fall of 1953, and when his mother failed to cooperate in any way with school authorities, authorities were finally forced to consider placement in a home for boys. Such a placement was postponed, however, perhaps in part at

least because Lee's behavior suddenly improved. Before the court took any action, the Oswalds left New York⁸¹ in January of 1954, and returned to New Orleans where Lee finished the ninth grade before he left school to work for a year.⁸² Then in October of 1956, he joined the Marines.⁸³

Return to New Orleans and Joining the Marine Corps

After his return to New Orleans Oswald was teased at school because of the northern accent which he had acquired.⁸⁴ He concluded that school had nothing to offer him.⁸⁵ His mother exercised little control over him and thought he could decide for himself whether to go on in school.⁸⁶ Neighbors and others who knew him at that time recall an introverted boy who read a great deal.⁸⁷ He took walks and visited museums, and sometimes rode a rented bicycle in the park on Saturday mornings.⁸⁸ Mrs. Murret believes that he talked at length with a girl on the telephone, but no one remembers that he had any dates.⁸⁹ A friend, Edward Voebel, testified that "he was more bashful about girls than anything else."⁹⁰

Several witnesses testified that Lee Oswald was not aggressive.⁹¹ He was, however, involved in some fights. Once a group of white boys beat him up for sitting in the Negro section of a bus, which he apparently did simply out of ignorance.⁹² Another time, he fought with two brothers who claimed that he had picked on the younger of them, 3 years Oswald's junior. Two days later, "some big guy, probably from a high school—he looked like a tremendous football player" accosted Oswald on the way home from school and punched him in the mouth, making his lip bleed and loosening a tooth. Voebel took Oswald back to the school to attend to his wounds, and their "mild friendship" stemmed from that incident.⁹³ Voebel also recalled that Oswald once outlined a plan to cut the glass in the window of a store on Rampart Street and steal a pistol, but he was not sure then that Oswald meant to carry out the plan, and in fact they never did. Voebel said that Oswald "wouldn't start any fights, but if you wanted to start one with him, he was going to make sure that he ended it, or you were going to really have one, because he wasn't going to take anything from anybody."⁹⁴ In a space for the names of "close friends" on the ninth grade personal history record, Oswald first wrote "Edward Vogel," an obvious misspelling of Voebel's name, and "Arthor Abear," most likely Arthur Hebert, a classmate who has said that he did not know Oswald well. Oswald erased those names, however, and indicated that he had no close friends.⁹⁵

It has been suggested that this misspelling of names, apparently on a phonetic basis, was caused by a reading-spelling disability from which Oswald appeared to suffer.⁹⁶ Other evidence of the existence of such a disability is provided by the many other misspellings that appear in Oswald's writings, portions of which are quoted below.

Sometime during this period, and under circumstances to be discussed more fully below, Oswald started to read Communist litera-

ture, which he obtained from the public library.⁹⁷ One of his fellow employees, Palmer McBride, stated that Oswald said he would like to kill President Eisenhower because he was exploiting the working class.⁹⁸ Oswald praised Khrushchev and suggested that he and McBride join the Communist Party "to take advantage of their social functions."⁹⁹ Oswald also became interested in the New Orleans Amateur Astronomy Association, an organization of high school students. The association's then president, William E. Wulf, testified that he remembered an occasion when Oswald

* * * started expounding the Communist doctrine and saying that he was highly interested in communism, that communism was the only way of life for the worker, et cetera, and then came out with a statement that he was looking for a Communist cell in town to join but he couldn't find any. He was a little dismayed at this, and he said that he couldn't find any that would show any interest in him as a Communist, and subsequently, after this conversation, my father came in and we were kind of arguing back and forth about the situation, and my father came in the room, heard what we were arguing on communism, and that this boy was loud-mouthed, boisterous, and my father asked him to leave the house and politely put him out of the house, and that is the last I have seen or spoken with Oswald.¹⁰⁰

Despite this apparent interest in communism, Oswald tried to join the Marines when he was 16 years old.¹⁰¹ This was 1 year before his actual enlistment and just a little over 2½ years after he left New York. He wrote a note in his mother's name to school authorities in New Orleans saying that he was leaving school because he and his mother were moving to San Diego. In fact, he had quit school in an attempt to obtain his mother's assistance to join the Marines.¹⁰² While he apparently was able to induce his mother to make a false statement about his age he was nevertheless unable to convince the proper authorities that he was really 17 years old.¹⁰³ There is evidence that Oswald was greatly influenced in his decision to join the Marines by the fact that his brother Robert had done so approximately 3 years before.¹⁰⁴ Robert Oswald had given his Marine Corps manual to his brother Lee, who studied it during the year following his unsuccessful attempt to enlist until "He knew it by heart."¹⁰⁵ According to Marguerite Oswald, "Lee lived for the time that he would become 17 years old to join the Marines—that whole year."¹⁰⁶ In John Pic's view, Oswald was motivated to join the Marines in large part by a desire "to get from out and under * * * the yoke of oppression from my mother."¹⁰⁷

Oswald's inability or lack of desire to enter into meaningful relationships with other people continued during this period in New Orleans (1954-56).¹⁰⁸ It probably contributed greatly to the general dissatisfaction which he exhibited with his environment, a dissatisfaction which seemed to find expression at this particular point in his

intense desire to join the Marines and get away from his surroundings and his mother. His study of Communist literature, which might appear to be inconsistent with his desire to join the Marines, could have been another manifestation of Oswald's rejection of his environment.¹⁰⁹

His difficulty in relating to other people and his general dissatisfaction with the world around him continued while he was in the Marine Corps. Kerry Thornley, a marine associate, who, shortly after Oswald's defection, wrote an as yet unpublished novel based in considerable part on Oswald's life, testified that "definitely the Marine Corps was not what he had expected it to be when he joined." He said that Oswald "seemed to guard against developing real close friendships."¹¹⁰ Daniel Powers, another marine who was stationed with Oswald for part of his marine career, testified that Oswald seemed "always [to be] striving for a relationship, but whenever he did * * * his general personality would alienate the group against him."¹¹¹ Other marines also testified that Oswald had few friends and kept very much to himself.¹¹²

While there is nothing in Oswald's military records to indicate that he was mentally unstable or otherwise psychologically unfit for duty in the Marine Corps,¹¹³ he did not adjust well to conditions which he found in that service.¹¹⁴ He did not rise above the rank of private first class, even though he had passed a qualifying examination for the rank of corporal.¹¹⁵ His Marine career was not helped by his attitude that he was a man of great ability and intelligence and that many of his superiors in the Marine Corps were not sufficiently competent to give him orders.¹¹⁶ While Oswald did not seem to object to authority in the abstract, he did think that he should be the one to exercise it. John E. Donovan, one of his former officers, testified that Oswald thought "that authority, particularly the Marine Corps, ought to be able to recognize talent such as his own, without a given magic college degree, and put them in positions of prominence."¹¹⁷

Oswald manifested this feeling about authority by baiting his officers. He led them into discussions of foreign affairs about which they often knew less than he did, since he had apparently devoted considerable time to a study of such matters.¹¹⁸ When the officers were unable to discuss foreign affairs satisfactorily with him, Oswald regarded them as unfit to exercise command over him.¹¹⁹ Nelson Delgado, one of Oswald's fellow Marines, testified that Oswald tried to "cut up anybody that was high ranking" in those arguments "and make himself come out top dog."¹²⁰ Oswald probably engaged his superiors in arguments on a subject that he had studied in an attempt to attract attention to himself and to support his exaggerated idea of his own abilities.

Thornley also testified that he thought that Oswald's extreme personal sloppiness in the Marine Corps "fitted into a general personality pattern of his: to do whatever was not wanted of him, a recalcitrant trend in his personality."¹²¹ Oswald "seemed to be a person who would go out of his way to get into trouble"¹²² and then used the "special treatment" he received as an example of the way in which

he was being picked on and "as a means of getting or attempting to get sympathy."¹²³ In Thornley's view, Oswald labored under a persecution complex which he strove to maintain and "felt the Marine Corps kept a pretty close watch on him because of his 'subversive' activities." Thornley added: "I think it was kind of necessary to him to believe that he was being picked on. It wasn't anything extreme. I wouldn't go as far as to call it, call him a paranoid, but a definite tendency there was in that direction, I think."¹²⁴

Powers considered Oswald to be meek and easily led,¹²⁵ an "individual that you would brainwash, and quite easy * * * [but] I think once he believed in something * * * he stood in his beliefs."¹²⁶ Powers also testified that Oswald was reserved and seemed to be "somewhat the frail, little puppy in the litter."¹²⁷ He had the nickname "Ozzie Rabbit."¹²⁸

Oswald read a good deal, said Powers, but "he would never be reading any of the shoot-em-up westerns or anything like that. Normally, it would be a good type of literature; and the one that I recall was 'Leaves of Grass,' by Walt Whitman."¹²⁹ According to Powers, Oswald said: "'All the Marine Corps did was to teach you to kill' and after you got out of the Marines you might be good gangsters."¹³⁰ Powers believed that when Oswald arrived in Japan he acquired a girlfriend, "finally attaining a male status or image in his own eyes."¹³¹ That apparently caused Oswald to become more self-confident, aggressive and even somewhat pugnacious, although Powers "wouldn't say that this guy is a troublemaker."¹³² Powers said "now he was Oswald the man rather than Oswald the rabbit."¹³³ Oswald once told Powers that he didn't care if he returned to the United States at all.¹³⁴

While in Japan, Oswald's new found apparent self confidence and pugnaciousness led to an incident in which he spilled a drink on one of his sergeants and abusively challenged him to fight.¹³⁵ At the court-martial hearing which followed, Oswald admitted that he had been rather drunk when the incident occurred. He testified that he had felt the sergeant had a grudge against him and that he had unsuccessfully sought a transfer from the sergeant's unit. He said that he had simply wanted to discuss the question with the sergeant and the drink had been spilled accidentally. The hearing officer agreed with the latter claim but found Oswald guilty of wrongfully using provoking words and sentenced him to 28 days, canceling the suspension of a 20-day sentence that Oswald had received in an earlier court-martial for possessing an unauthorized pistol with which he had accidentally shot himself.¹³⁶

At his own request, Oswald was transferred from active duty to the Marine Corps Reserve under honorable conditions in September of 1959, 3 months prior to his regularly scheduled separation date,¹³⁷ ostensibly to care for his mother who had been injured in an accident at her work.¹³⁸ He was undesirably discharged from the Marine Corps Reserve, to which he had been assigned on inactive status following his transfer from active duty, after it was learned that he had

defected to the Soviet Union.¹³⁹ In an attempt to have this discharge reversed, Oswald wrote to then Secretary of the Navy Connally on January 30, 1962, stating that he would "employ all means to right this gross mistake or injustice."¹⁴⁰

Governor Connally had just resigned to run for Governor of Texas, so he advised Oswald that he had forwarded the letter to his successor.¹⁴¹ It is thus clear that Oswald knew that Governor Connally was never directly concerned with his discharge and he must have known that President Kennedy had had nothing to do with it. In that connection, it does not appear that Oswald ever expressed any dissatisfaction of any kind with either the President or Governor Connally.¹⁴² Marina Oswald testified that she "had never heard anything bad about Kennedy from Lee. And he never had anything against him."¹⁴³ Mrs. Oswald said that her husband did not say anything about Governor Connally after his return to the United States. She testified: "But while we were in Russia he spoke well of him. * * * Lee said that when he would return to the United States he would vote for him [for Governor]."¹⁴⁴ Oswald must have already learned that the Governor could not help him with his discharge because he was no longer Secretary of the Navy, at the time he made that remark.

Even though Oswald apparently did not express any hostility against the President or Governor Connally, he continued to be concerned about his undesirable discharge.¹⁴⁵ It is clear that he thought he had been unjustly treated. Probably his complaint was due to the fact that his discharge was not related to anything he had done while on active duty and also because he had not received any notice of the original discharge proceedings, since his whereabouts were not known.¹⁴⁶ He continued his efforts to reverse the discharge by petitioning the Navy Discharge Review Board, which finally declined to modify the discharge and so advised him in a letter dated July 25, 1963.¹⁴⁷

Governor Connally's connection with the discharge, although indirect, caused the Commission to consider whether he might have been Oswald's real target. In that connection, it should be noted that Marina Oswald testified on September 6, 1964, that she thought her husband "was shooting at Connally rather than President Kennedy." In support of her conclusion Mrs. Oswald noted her husband's undesirable discharge and that she could not think of any reason why Oswald would want to kill President Kennedy.¹⁴⁸ It should be noted, however, that at the time Oswald fired the shots at the Presidential limousine the Governor occupied the seat in front of the President, and it would have been almost impossible for Oswald to have hit the Governor without hitting the President first. Oswald could have shot the Governor as the car approached the Depository or as it was making the turn onto Elm Street. Once it had started down Elm Street toward the Triple Underpass, however, the President almost completely blocked Oswald's view of the Governor prior to the time the first shot struck the President.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Oswald would have had other and more favorable opportunities to strike at the Governor than on this occasion

when, as a member of the President's party, he had more protection than usual. It would appear, therefore, that to the extent Oswald's undesirable discharge affected his motivation, it was more in terms of a general hostility against the government and its representatives rather than a grudge against any particular person.

Interest in Marxism

As indicated above, Oswald started to read Communist literature after he and his mother left New York and moved to New Orleans.¹⁵¹ He told Aline Mosby, a reporter who interviewed him after he arrived in Moscow:

I'm a Marxist, * * * I became interested about the age of 15. From an ideological viewpoint. An old lady handed me a pamphlet about saving the Rosenbergs. * * * I looked at that paper and I still remember it for some reason, I don't know why.¹⁵²

Oswald studied Marxism after he joined the Marines and his sympathies in that direction and for the Soviet Union appear to have been widely known, at least in the unit to which he was assigned after his return from the Far East. His interest in Russia led some of his associates to call him "comrade"¹⁵³ or "Oswaldskovitch."¹⁵⁴ He always wanted to play the red pieces in chess because, as he said in an apparently humorous context, he preferred the "Red Army."¹⁵⁵ He studied the Russian language,¹⁵⁶ read a Russian language newspaper¹⁵⁷ and seemed interested in what was going on in the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁸ Thornley, who thought Oswald had an "irrevocable conviction" that his Marxist beliefs were correct, testified:

I think you could sit down and argue with him for a number of years * * * and I don't think you could have changed his mind on that unless you knew why he believed it in the first place. I certainly don't. I don't think with any kind of formal argument you could have shaken that conviction. And that is why I say irrevocable. It was just—never getting back to looking at things from any other way once he had become a Marxist, whenever that was.¹⁵⁹

Thornley also testified about an incident which grew out of a combination of Oswald's known Marxist sympathies and George Orwell's book "1984," one of Oswald's favorite books which Thornley read at Oswald's suggestion. Shortly after Thornley finished reading that book the Marine unit to which both men were assigned was required to take part in a Saturday morning parade in honor of some retiring noncommissioned officers, an event which they both approached with little enthusiasm. While waiting for the parade to start they talked briefly about "1984" even though Oswald seemed to be lost in his own thoughts. After a brief period of silence Os-

wald remarked on the stupidity of the parade and on how angry it made him, to which Thornley replied: "Well, comes the revolution you will change all that." Thornley testified:

At which time he looked at me like a betrayed Caesar and screamed, screamed definitely, "Not you, too, Thornley." And I remember his voice cracked as he said this. He was definitely disturbed at what I had said and I didn't really think I had said that much. * * * I never said anything to him again and he never said anything to me again.¹⁶⁰

Thornley said that he had made his remark only in the context of "1984" and had not intended any criticism of Oswald's political views which is the way in which, Thornley thought, Oswald took his remarks.¹⁶¹

Lieutenant Donovan testified that Oswald thought that "there were many grave injustices concerning the affairs in the international situation." He recalled that Oswald had a specific interest in Latin America, particularly Cuba, and expressed opposition to the Batista regime and sympathy for Castro, an attitude which, Donovan said, was "not * * * unpopular" at that time. Donovan testified that he never heard Oswald express a desire personally to take part in the elimination of injustices anywhere in the world and that he "never heard him in any way, shape or form confess that he was a Communist, or that he ever thought about being a Communist."¹⁶² Delgado testified that Oswald was "a complete believer that our way of government was not quite right" and believed that our Government did not have "too much to offer," but was not in favor of "the Communist way of life." Delgado and Oswald talked more about Cuba than Russia, and sometimes imagined themselves as leaders in the Cuban Army or Government, who might "lead an expedition to some of these other islands and free them too."¹⁶³

Thornley also believed that Oswald's Marxist beliefs led to an extraordinary view of history under which:

He looked upon the eyes of future people as some kind of tribunal, and he wanted to be on the winning side so that 10,000 years from now people would look in the history books and say, "Well, this man was ahead of his time." * * * The eyes of the future became * * * the eyes of God. * * * He was concerned with his image in history and I do think that is why he chose * * * the particular method [of defecting] he chose and did it in the way he did. It got him in the newspapers. It did broadcast his name out.¹⁶⁴

Thornley thought that Oswald not only wanted a place in history but also wanted to live comfortably in the present. He testified that if Oswald could not have that "degree of physical comfort that he expected or sought, I think he would then throw himself entirely on the other thing he also wanted, which was the image in history. * * *

I think he wanted both if he could have them. If he didn't, he wanted to die with the knowledge that, or with the idea that he was somebody."¹⁶⁵

Oswald's interest in Marxism led some people to avoid him, even though as his wife suggested, that interest may have been motivated by a desire to gain attention.¹⁶⁶ He used his Marxist and associated activities as excuses for his difficulties in getting along in the world, which were usually caused by entirely different factors. His use of those excuses to present himself to the world as a person who was being unfairly treated is shown most clearly by his employment relations after his return from the Soviet Union. Of course, he made his real problems worse to the extent that his use of those excuses prevented him from discovering the real reasons for and attempting to overcome his difficulties. Of greater importance, Oswald's commitment to Marxism contributed to the decisions which led him to defect to the Soviet Union in 1959, and later to engage in activities on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in the summer of 1963, and to attempt to go to Cuba late in September of that year.

Defection to the Soviet Union

After Oswald left the Marine Corps in September of 1959, ostensibly to care for his mother, he almost immediately left for the Soviet Union where he attempted to renounce his citizenship. At the age of 19, Oswald thus committed an act which was the most striking indication he had yet given of his willingness to act on his beliefs in quite extraordinary ways.

While his defection resulted in part from Oswald's commitment to Marxism, it appears that personal and psychological factors were also involved. On August 17, 1963, Oswald told Mr. William Stuckey, who had arranged a radio debate on Oswald's activities on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, that while he had begun to read Marx and Engels at the age of 15,

the conclusive thing that made him decide that Marxism was the answer was his service in Japan. He said living conditions over there convinced him something was wrong with the system, and that possibly Marxism was the answer. He said it was in Japan that he made up his mind to go to Russia and see for himself how a revolutionary society operates, a Marxist society.¹⁶⁷

On the other hand, at least one person who knew Oswald after his return thought that his defection had a more personal and psychological basis.¹⁶⁸ The validity of the latter observation is borne out by some of the things Oswald wrote in connection with his defection indicating that his motivation was at least in part a personal one. On November 26, 1959, shortly after he arrived in the Soviet Union, and probably before Soviet authorities had given him permission to stay indefinitely, he wrote to his brother Robert that the Soviet Union

was a country which "I have always considered * * * to be my own" and that he went there "only to find freedom. * * * I could never have been personally happy in the U.S." ¹⁶⁹ He wrote in another letter that he would "never return to the United States which is a country I hate." ¹⁷⁰ His idea that he was to find "freedom" in the Soviet Union was to be rudely shattered.

Whatever Oswald's reasons for going to the Soviet Union might have been, however, there can be little doubt that his desire to go was quite strong. In addition to studying the Russian language while he was in the Marines, Oswald had managed to save enough money to cover the expenses of his forthcoming trip. While there is no proof that he saved \$1,500, as he claimed, it would have taken considerable discipline to save whatever amount was required to finance his defection out of the salary of a low ranking enlisted man. ¹⁷¹

The extent of Oswald's desire to go to the Soviet Union and of his initial commitment to that country can best be understood, however, in the context of his concomitant hatred of the United States, which was most clearly expressed in his November 26, 1959, letter to his brother Robert. Addressing himself to the question of why "I and my fellow workers and communist's would like to see the present capitalist government of the U.S. overthrown" Oswald stated that that government supported an economic system "which exploits all its workers" and under which "art, culture and the sprit of man are subjected to commercial enterprising, [and] religion and education are used as a tool to surpress what would otherwise be a population questioning their government's unfair economic system and plans for war." ¹⁷²

He complained in his letter about segregation, unemployment, automation, and the use of military forces to suppress other populations. Asking his brother why he supported the American Government and what ideals he put forward, Oswald wrote :

Ask me and I will tell you I fight for *communism*. * * * I will not say your grandchildren will live under communism, look for yourself at history, look at a world map! America is a dieing country, I do not wish to be a part of it, nor do I ever again wish to be used as a tool in its military aggressions.

This should ansewer your question, and also give you a glimpse of my way of thinking.

So you speak of advantages. Do you think that is why I am here? For personal, material advantages? Happiness is not based on oneself, it does not consist of a small home, of taking and getting, Happiness is taking part in the struggle, where there is no borderline between one's own personal world, and the world in general. I never believed I would find more material advantages at *this* stage of development in the Soviet Union than I might of had in the U.S.

* * * * *

I have been a pro-communist for years and yet I have never met a communist, instead I kept silent and observed, and what I observed plus my Marx'ist learning brought me here to the Soviet Union. I have always considered this country to be my own.¹⁷³

Responding to Robert's statement that he had not "renounced" him, Oswald told his brother "on what terms I want this arrangement." He advised Robert that:

1. In the event of war I would kill *any* american who put a uniform on in defence of the american government—any american.
2. That in my own mind I have no attachment's of any kind in the U.S.
3. That I want to, and I shall, live a normal happy and peaceful life here in the Soviet Union *for the rest of my life*.
4. that my mother and you are (in spite of what the newspaper said) *not* objects of affection, but only examples of workers in the U.S.¹⁷⁴

Despite this commitment to the Soviet Union Oswald met disappointments there just as he had in the past. At the outset the Soviets told him that he could not remain. It seems that Oswald immediately attempted suicide—a striking indication of how much he desired to remain in the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁵ It shows how willing he was to act dramatically and decisively when he faced an emotional crisis with few readily available alternatives at hand. He was shocked to find that the Soviet Union did not accept him with open arms. The entry in his self-styled "Historic Diary" for October 21, 1959, reports:

I am shocked ! ! My dreams! * * * I have waited for 2 year to be accepted. My fondes dreams are shattered because of a petty offial, * * * I decide to end it. Soak rist in cold water to numb the pain, Than slash my leftwrist. Than plagu wrist into bathtum of hot water. * * * Somewhere, a violin plays, as I wacth my life whirl away. I think to myself "How easy to Die" and "A Sweet Death, (to violins) * * * ¹⁷⁶

Oswald was discovered in time to thwart his attempt at suicide.¹⁷⁷ He was taken to a hospital in Moscow where he was kept until October 28, 1959.¹⁷⁸

Still intent, however, on staying in the Soviet Union, Oswald went on October 31, to the American Embassy to renounce his U.S. citizenship. Mr. Richard E. Snyder, then Second Secretary and senior consular official at the Embassy, testified that Oswald was extremely sure of himself and seemed "to know what his mission was. He took charge, in a sense, of the conversation right from the beginning."¹⁷⁹ He presented the following signed note:

I Lee Harvey Oswald do hereby request that my present citizenship in the United States of America, be revoked.

I have entered the Soviet Union for the express purpose of applying for citizenship in the Soviet Union, through the means of naturalization.

My request for citizenship is now pending before the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. .

I take these steps for political reasons. My request for the revoking of my American citizenship is made only after the longest and most serious considerations.

I affirm that my allegiance is to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.¹⁸⁰ (See Commission Exhibit 913, p. 261.)

As his "principal reason" for renouncing his citizenship Oswald stated: "I am a Marxist."¹⁸¹ He also alluded to hardships endured by his mother as a worker, referring to them as experiences that he did not intend to have himself,¹⁸² even though he stated that he had never held a civilian job.¹⁸³ He said that his Marine service in Okinawa and elsewhere had given him "a chance to observe 'American imperialism.'" but he also displayed some sensitivity at not having reached a higher rank in the Marine Corps.¹⁸⁴ He stated that he had volunteered to give Soviet officials any information that he had concerning Marine Corps operations,¹⁸⁵ and intimated that he might know something of special interest.¹⁸⁶ Oswald's "Historic Diary" describes the event in part as follows:

I leave Embassy, elated at this showdown, returning to my hotel I feel now my energies are not spent in vain. I'm sure Russians will except me after this sign of my faith in them.¹⁸⁷

The Soviet authorities finally permitted Oswald to remain in their country.¹⁸⁸ No evidence has been found that they used him for any particular propaganda or other political or informational purposes. They sent him to Minsk to work in a radio and television factory as a metal worker.¹⁸⁹ The Soviet authorities denied Oswald permission to attend a university in Moscow,¹⁹⁰ but they gave him a monthly allowance of 700 rubles a month (old exchange rate)¹⁹¹ in addition to his factory salary of approximately equal amount¹⁹² and considerably better living quarters than those accorded to Soviet citizens of equal age and station.¹⁹³ The subsidy, apparently similar to those sometimes given to foreigners allowed to remain in the Soviet Union, together with his salary, gave Oswald an income which he said approximated that of the director of the factory in which he worked.¹⁹⁴

Even though he received more money and better living quarters than other Russians doing similar work, he envied his wife's uncle, a colonel in the MVD, because of the larger apartment in which he lived. Reminiscent of his attitude toward his superiors in the Marine Corps, Oswald apparently resented the exercise of authority over him and the better treatment afforded to Communist Party officials.¹⁹⁵ After he returned to the United States he took the position that the Communist Party officials in the Soviet Union were opportunists who

were betraying their positions for personal gain. He is reported to have expressed the conclusion that they had "fat stinking politicians over there just like we have over here."¹⁹⁶

Oswald apparently continued to have personal difficulties while he was in Minsk. Although Marina Oswald told the Commission that her husband had good personal relationships in the Soviet Union,¹⁹⁷ Katherine Ford, one of the members of the Russian community in Dallas with which the Oswalds became acquainted upon their arrival in the United States, stated that Mrs. Oswald told her everybody in Russia "hated him."¹⁹⁸ Jeanne De Mohrenschildt, another member of that group, said that Oswald told her that he had returned because "I didn't find what I was looking for."¹⁹⁹ George De Mohrenschildt thought that Oswald must have become disgusted with life in the Soviet Union as the novelty of the presence of an American wore off and he began to be less the center of attention.²⁰⁰

The best description of Oswald's state of mind, however, is set forth in his own "Historic Diary." Under the entry for May 1, 1960, he noted that one of his acquaintances "relats many things I do not know about the U.S.S.R. . . I begin to feel uneasy inside, its true!"²⁰¹ Under the entry for August-September of that year he wrote:

As my Russian improves I become increasingly concious of just what sort of a sociaty I live in. Mass gymnastics, complusory afterwork meeting, usually political information meeting. Complusory attendence at lectures and the sending of the entire shop collective (except me) to pick potatoes on a Sunday, at a state collective farm: A "patroict duty" to bring in the harvest. The opions of the workers (unvoiced) are that its a great pain in the neck: they don't seem to be esspicialy enthusiastic about any of the "collective" duties a natural feeling. I am increasingly aware of the presence, in all thing, of Lebizen, shop party secretary, fat, fortyish, and jovial on the outside. He is a no-nonsense party regular.²⁰²

Finally, the entry of January 4-31 of 1961:

I am stating to reconsider my disire about staying the work is drab the money I get has nowhere to be spent. No night clubs or bowling allys no places of recreation accept the trade union dances I have have had enough.²⁰³

Shortly thereafter, less than 18 months after his defection, about 6 weeks before he met Marina Prusakova, Oswald opened negotiations with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow looking toward his return to the United States.²⁰⁴

Return to the United States

In view of the intensity of his earlier commitment to the Soviet Union, a great change must have occurred in Oswald's thinking to

induce him to return to the United States. The psychological effects of that change must have been highly unsettling. It should be remembered that he was not yet 20 years old when he went to the Soviet Union with such high hopes and not quite 23 when he returned bitterly disappointed. His attempt to renounce his citizenship had been an open expression of hostility against the United States and a profound rejection of his early life. The dramatic break with society in America now had to be undone. His return to the United States publicly testified to the utter failure of what had been the most important act of his life.

Marina Oswald confirmed the fact that her husband was experiencing psychological difficulties at the time of his return. She said that "immediately after coming to the United States Lee changed. I did not know him as such a man in Russia."²⁰⁵ She added that while he helped her as he had done before, he became more of a recluse, that "[he] was very irritable, sometimes for a trifle" and that "Lee was very unrestrained and very explosive" during the period from November 19, 1962 to March of 1963.²⁰⁶

After the assassination she wrote that:

In general, our family life began to deteriorate after we arrived in America. Lee was always hot-tempered, and now this trait of character more and more prevented us from living together in harmony. Lee became very irritable, and sometimes some completely trivial thing would drive him into a rage. I myself do not have a particularly quiet disposition, but I had to change my character a great deal in order to maintain a more or less peaceful family life.²⁰⁷

Marina Oswald's judgment of her husband's state of mind may be substantiated by comparing material which he wrote in the Soviet Union with what he wrote while on the way back to the United States and after his return. While in the Soviet Union he wrote his longest and clearest piece of work, "The Collective." This was a fairly coherent description of life in that country, basically centered around the radio and television factory in which he worked.²⁰⁸ While it was apparently intended for publication in the United States, and is in many respects critical of certain aspects of life in the Soviet Union, it appears to be the work of a fairly well organized person. Oswald prefaced his manuscript with a short autobiographical sketch which reads in part as follows:

Lee Harvey Oswald was born in Oct 1939 in New Orleans La. the son of a Insuraen Salesmen whose early death left a far mean streak of indepenence brought on by neglect. entering the US Marine corp at 17 this streak of independence was strenghted by exotic journeys to Japan the Philipines and the scores of odd Islands in the Pacific immianly after serving out his 3 years

**PHOTOGRAPHS OF LEE HARVEY
OSWALD TAKEN IN MINSK**



COMMISSION EXHIBIT 2891



COMMISSION EXHIBIT 2892



**PHOTOGRAPH OF LEE HARVEY OSWALD
TAKEN AFTER HIS RETURN FROM THE SOVIET UNION
(COMMISSION EXHIBIT 2788)**

in the USMC he abandoned his American life to seek a new life in the USSR. full of optimism and hope he stood in red square in the fall of 1959 vowing to see his chosen course through, after, however, two years and a lot of growing up I decided to return to the USA. * * * 209

“The Collective” contrasts sharply with material which Oswald seems to have written after he left the Soviet Union,²¹⁰ which appears to be more an expression of his own psychological condition than of a reasoned analysis. The latter material expresses great hostility to both communism and capitalism. He wrote, that to a person knowing both of those systems, “there can be no mediation between those systems as they exist to-day and that person. He must be opposed to their basic foundations and representatives”²¹¹

and yet it is immature to take the sort of attitude which says “a curse on both your houses!”
there are two great representatives of power in the world, simply expressed, the left and right, and their offspring factions and concerns.
any practical attempt at one alternative must have as its nucleus the traditional ideological best of both systems, and yet be utterly opposed to both systems.²¹²

Such an alternative was to be opposed both to capitalism and communism because:

No man, having known, having lived, under the Russian Communist and American capitalist system, could possibly make a choice between them, there is no choice, one offers oppression the other poverty. Both offer imperilistic injustice, tinted with two brands of slavery.²¹³

Oswald actually did attempt to formulate such an alternative²¹⁴ which he planned to “put forward” himself.²¹⁵ He thought the new alternative would have its best chance to be accepted after “conflict between the two world systems leaves the world country without defense or foundation of government,”²¹⁶ after which the survivors would “seek an alternative opposed to those systems which have brought them misery.”²¹⁷ Oswald realized that “their thinking and education will be steeped in the traditions of those systems [and] they would never except a ‘new order’ complete beyond their understanding.”²¹⁸ As a result he thought it would be “necessary to oppose the old systems but at the same time support their cherished traditions.”²¹⁹

Expanding on his ideas on how his alternative to communism and capitalism might be introduced, he wrote of a “readily foreseeable * * * economic, political or military crisis, internal or external, [which] will bring about the final destruction of the capitalist system,”²²⁰ and indicated that “preparation in a special party could safeguard an inde-

pendant course of action after the debacle,"²²¹ which would achieve the goal, which was:

The emplacement of a separate, democratic, pure communist society * * * but one with union-communes, democratic socializing of production and without regard to the twisting apart of ~~Marxism~~ Marxist Communism by other powers.²²²

While "[r]esoufulniss and patient working towards the aforesaid goal's are prefered rather than loud and useless manifestation's of protest,"²²³ Oswald went on to note:

But these prefered tactics now, may prove to be too limited in the near future, they should not be confused with slowness, in-decision or fear, only the intellectually fearless could even be re-motly attracted too our doctrine, and yet this doctrine requirers the ~~upmost~~ utmost restraint, a state of being in itself majustic in power.²²⁴

Oswald's decided rejection of both capitalism and communism seemed to place him in a situation in which he could not live with satisfaction either in the United States or in the Soviet Union. The discussion above has already set forth examples of his expression of hatred for the United States. He also expressed hatred of the Soviet Union and of the Communist Party, U.S.A., even though he later referred to the latter as "trusted long time fighters for progress."²²⁵ He wrote:

The Communist Party of the United States has betrayed itself! it has turned itself into the tradional lever of a foreign power to overthrow the government of the United States; not in the name of freedow or high ideals, but in servile conformity to the wishes of the Soviet Union and in anticipation of Soviet Russia's complete domination of the American continent.²²⁶

* * * * *

There can be no sympathy for those who have turned the idea of communism into a vill curse to western man.

The Soviets have committed crimes unsurpassed even by their early day capitalist counterparts, the imprisonment of their own peoples, with the mass extermination so typical of Stalin, and the individual surpresstion and regimentation under Krushchev.

The deportations, the purposefull curtailment of diet in the consumer slighted population of Russia, the murder of history, the prositution of art and culture.²²⁷

A suggestion that Oswald hated more than just capitalism and communism is provided by the following, which was apparently written either on the ship coming back, or after his return from the Soviet Union:

I have often wondered why it is that the communist, ~~anarchist~~ capitalist and even the fascist and anarchist elements in American, always profess patriotism toward the land and the people, if not the government; although their ~~ideals~~ movements must surely lead to the bitter destruction of all and everything.

I am quite sure these people must hate not only the government but ~~our~~ the ~~peop~~ culture, ~~traditions~~, heritage and very people itself, and yet they stand up and piously pronounce themselves patriots, displaying their war medals, that they gained in conflicts ~~long-past~~ between themselves.

* * * * *

I wonder what would happen if somebody was to stand up and say he was utterly opposed not only to the governments, but to the people, too the entire land and complete foundations of his socially.²²⁸

Oswald demonstrated his thinking in connection with his return to the United States by preparing two sets of identical questions of the type which he might have thought he would be asked at a press conference when he returned. With either great ambivalence or cold calculation he prepared completely different answers to the same questions. Judged by his other statements and writings, however, he appears to have indicated his true feelings in the set of answers first presented and to have stated in the second what he thought would be least harmful to him as he resumed life in the United States. For example, in response to his questions about his decision to go to the Soviet Union, his first draft answered "as a mark of disgust and protest against American political policies in foreign countries, my personal sign of discontent and horror at the misguided line of reasoning of the U.S. Government."²²⁹ His second answer was that he "went as a citizen of the U.S. (as a tourist) residing in a foreign country which I have a perfect right to do. I went there to see the land, the people and how their system works."²³⁰

To the question of "Are you a communist?" he first answered "Yes, basically, although I hate the USSR and socialist system I still *think* marxism can work under different circumstances."²³¹ His second answer to this question was, "No of course not, I have never even know a communist, outside of the ones in the USSR but you can't help that."²³² His first set of questions and answers indicated his belief that there were no outstanding differences between the Soviet Union and the United States, "except in the US. the living standard is a little higher. freedoms are about the same, medical aid and the educational system in the USSR is better than in the USA."²³³ In the second simulated transcript which ended with the statement "Newspapers, thank you sir; you are a *real* patriot! !" he apparently concluded that the United States offered "freedom of speech travel outspoken opposition to unpopular policies freedom to believe in god," while the Soviet Union did not.²³⁴

Despite the hatred that Oswald expressed toward the Soviet Union after his residence there, he continued to be interested in that country after he returned to the United States. Soon after his arrival he wrote to the Soviet Embassy in Washington requesting information on how to subscribe to Russian newspapers and magazines and asked for "any periodicals or bulletins which you may put out for the benefit of your citizens living, for a time, in the U.S.A.." ²³⁵ Oswald subsequently did subscribe to several Soviet journals. ²³⁶ While Marina Oswald tried to obtain permission to return to the Soviet Union she testified that she did so at her husband's insistence. ²³⁷

In July of 1963, Oswald also requested the Soviet Union to provide a visa for his return to that country. ²³⁸ In August of 1963, he gave the New Orleans police as a reason for refusing to permit his family to learn English, that "he hated America and he did not want them to become 'Americanized' and that his plans were to go back to Russia." ²³⁹ Even though his primary purpose probably was to get to Cuba, he sought an immediate grant of visa on his trip to Mexico City in late September of 1963. ²⁴⁰ He also inquired about visas for himself and his wife in a letter which he wrote to the Soviet Embassy in Washington on November 9, 1963. ²⁴¹

Personal Relations

Apart from his relatives, Oswald had no friends or close associates in Texas when he returned there in June of 1962, and he did not establish any close friendships or associations, although it appears that he came to respect George De Mohrenschildt. ²⁴² Somewhat of a nonconformist, ²⁴³ De Mohrenschildt was a peripheral member of the so-called Russian community, with which Oswald made contact through Mr. Peter Gregory, a Russian-speaking petroleum engineer whom Oswald met as a result of his contact with the Texas Employment Commission office in Fort Worth. ²⁴⁴ Some of the members of that group saw a good deal of the Oswalds through the fall of 1963, and attempted to help Mrs. Oswald particularly, in various ways. ²⁴⁵ In general, Oswald did not like the members of the Russian community. ²⁴⁶ In fact, his relations with some of them, particularly George Bouhe, became quite hostile. ²⁴⁷ Part of the problem resulted from the fact that, as Jeanne De Mohrenschildt testified, Oswald was "very, very disagreeable and disappointed." ²⁴⁸ He also expressed considerable resentment at the help given to his wife by her Russian-American friends. Jeanne De Mohrenschildt said:

Marina had a hundred dresses given to her * * * [and] he objected to that lavish help, because Marina was throwing it into his face.

* * * * *
He was offensive with the people. And I can understand why, * * * because that hurt him. He could never give her what the

people were showering on her. * * * no matter how hard he worked—and he worked very hard.²⁴⁹

The relations between Oswald and his wife became such that Bouhe wanted to “liberate” her from Oswald.²⁵⁰ While the exact sequence of events is not clear because of conflicting testimony, it appears that De Mohrenschildt and his wife actually went to Oswald’s apartment early in November of 1962 and helped to move the personal effects of Marina Oswald and the baby. Even though it appears that they may have left Oswald a few days before, it seems that he resisted the move as best he could. He even threatened to tear up his wife’s dresses and break all the baby things. According to De Mohrenschildt, Oswald submitted to the inevitable, presumably because he was “small, you know, and he was rather a puny individual.”²⁵¹ De Mohrenschildt said that the whole affair made him nervous since he was “interfering in other people’s affairs, after all.”²⁵²

Oswald attempted to get his wife to come back and, over Bouhe’s protest, De Mohrenschildt finally told him where she was. De Mohrenschildt admitted that:

if somebody did that to me, a lousy trick like that, to take my wife away, and all the furniture, I would be mad as hell, too. I am surprised that he didn’t do something worse.²⁵³

After about a 2-week separation, Marina Oswald returned to her husband.²⁵⁴ Bouhe thoroughly disapproved of this and as a result almost all communication between the Oswalds and members of the Russian community ceased. Contacts with De Mohrenschildt and his wife did continue and they saw the Oswalds occasionally until the spring of 1963.²⁵⁵

Shortly after his return from the Soviet Union, Oswald severed all relations with his mother; he did not see his brother Robert from Thanksgiving of 1962 until November 23, 1963.²⁵⁶ At the time of his defection, Oswald had said that neither his brother, Robert, nor his mother were objects of his affection, “but only examples of workers in the U.S.” He also indicated to officials at the American Embassy in Moscow that his defection was motivated at least in part by so-called exploitation of his mother by the capitalist system.²⁵⁷ Consistent with this attitude he first told his wife that he did not have a mother, but later admitted that he did but that “he didn’t love her very much.”²⁵⁸

When they arrived from the Soviet Union, Oswald and his family lived at first with his brother Robert. The latter testified that they “were just together again,” as if his brother “had not been to Russia.” He also said that he and his family got along well with Marina Oswald and enjoyed showing her American things.²⁵⁹ After about a month with his brother, Oswald and his family lived for a brief period with his mother at her urging, but Oswald soon decided to move out.²⁶⁰

Marguerite Oswald visited her son and his family at the first apartment which he rented after his return, and tried to help them get settled there. After she had bought some clothes for Marina Oswald and a highchair for the baby, Oswald emphatically told her to stop. As Marguerite Oswald testified, "he strongly put me in my place about buying things for his wife that he himself could not buy."²⁶¹ Oswald objected to his mother visiting the apartment and became quite incensed with his wife when she would open the door for her in spite of his instructions to the contrary.²⁶² Oswald moved to Dallas on about October 8, 1962, without telling his mother where he was going. He never saw or communicated with her in any way again until she came to see him after the assassination.²⁶³

Even though Oswald cut off relations with his mother, he attempted for the first time to learn something about his family background when he went to New Orleans in April of 1963. He visited some of his father's elderly relatives and the cemetery where his father was buried in an effort to develop the facts of his genealogy.²⁶⁴ While it does not appear that he established any new relationships as a result of his investigation, he did obtain a large picture of his father from one of the elderly relatives with whom he spoke.²⁶⁵ Oswald's interest in such things presents a sharp contrast with his attitude at the time of his defection, when he evidenced no interest in his father and hardly mentioned him, even when questioned.²⁶⁶

Employment

Oswald's defection, his interest in the Soviet Union, and his activities on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee not only caused him difficulties in his employment relations, but they also provided him with excuses for employment failures which were largely of his own making. Oswald experienced some difficulty finding employment. Perhaps this was partially because of his lack of any specific skill or training.²⁶⁷ Some of his acquaintances, feeling that Oswald tried to impress people with the fact that he had lived and worked in Russia, were led to the belief that his employment difficulties were caused by his telling prospective employers that he had last been employed in Minsk.²⁶⁸ While he might have expected difficulty from such an approach, in fact the evidence indicates that Oswald usually told his prospective employers and employment counselors that he had recently been discharged from the Marine Corps.²⁶⁹

Oswald obtained a job in July of 1962 as a sheet metal worker with a company in Fort Worth. His performance for that company was satisfactory.²⁷⁰ Even though he told his wife that he had been fired, he voluntarily left on October 8, 1962, and moved to Dallas.²⁷¹

On October 9, 1962 he went to the Dallas office of the Texas Employment Commission where he expressed a reluctance to work in the industrial field.²⁷² He indicated an interest in writing. An employment counselor testified, on the basis of a general aptitude test Oswald had taken, that he had some aptitude in that area, "because the verbal score

is high and the clerical score is high.”²⁷³ While that counselor found that he was qualified to handle many different types of jobs, because of his need for immediate employment she attempted to obtain for him any job that was available at the time. Oswald made qualifying marks in 19 of 23 categories included on the general aptitude examination and scored 127 on the verbal test, as compared with 50 percent of the people taking it who score less than 100. The counselor testified that there was some indication that Oswald was capable of doing college work and noted that Oswald’s verbal and clerical potential was “outstanding.”²⁷⁴ Employment Commission records concerning Oswald stated: “Well-groomed & spoken, business suit, alert replies—Expresses self extremely well.”²⁷⁵ Oswald said that he hoped eventually to develop qualifications for employment as a junior executive through a work-study program at a local college. He indicated, however, that he would have to delay that program because of his immediate financial needs and responsibilities.²⁷⁶

On October 11, 1962, the Employment Commission referred Oswald to a commercial advertising photography firm in Dallas,²⁷⁷ where he was employed as a trainee starting October 12, 1962.²⁷⁸ Even though Oswald indicated that he liked photographic work,²⁷⁹ his employer found that he was not an efficient worker. He was not able to produce photographic work which adhered with sufficient precision to the job specifications and as a result too much of his work had to be redone.²⁸⁰ He also had difficulty in working with the other employees. This was at least in part because of the close physical confines in which some of the work had to be done.²⁸¹ He did not seem to be able to make the accommodations necessary when people work under such conditions and as a result became involved in conflicts, some of which were fairly heated, with his fellow employees.²⁸²

In February or March of 1963, it began to appear that Oswald was having considerable difficulty doing accurate work and in getting along with the other employees. It appears that his discharge was hastened by the fact that he brought a Russian language newspaper to work.²⁸³ It is not possible to tell whether Oswald did this to provide an excuse for his eventual discharge, or whether he brought the Russian language newspaper with him one day after his other difficulties became clear. It is possible that his immediate supervisor noticed the newspaper at that time because his attention had otherwise been drawn more directly to Oswald. In any event, Oswald was discharged on April 6, 1963, ostensibly because of his inefficiency and difficult personality. His supervisor admitted, however, that while he did not fire Oswald because of the newspaper incident or even weigh it heavily in his decision, “it didn’t do his case any good.”²⁸⁴

Upon moving to New Orleans on April 24, 1963, Oswald’s employment problems became more difficult. He left his wife and child at the home of a friend, Mrs. Ruth Paine, of Irving, Tex.²⁸⁵ In New Orleans he obtained work as a greaser and oiler of coffee processing machines for the William B. Reily Co., beginning May 10, 1963.²⁸⁶

After securing this job and an apartment, Oswald asked his wife to join him. Mrs. Paine brought Oswald's family to New Orleans.²⁸⁷ Refusing to admit that he could only get work as a greaser, Oswald told his wife and Mrs. Paine that he was working as a commercial photographer.²⁸⁸ He lost his job on July 19, 1963, because his work was not satisfactory²⁸⁹ and because he spent too much time loitering in the garage next door, where he read rifle and hunting magazines.²⁹⁰ Oswald apparently concluded that his Fair Play for Cuba Committee activities were not related to his discharge.²⁹¹ The correctness of that conclusion is supported by the fact that he does not seem to have been publicly identified with that organization until August 9, 1963, almost a month after he lost his job.²⁹²

His Fair Play for Cuba Committee activities, however, made it more difficult for him to obtain other employment. A placement interviewer of the Louisiana Department of Labor who had previously interviewed Oswald, saw him on television and heard a radio debate in which he engaged on August 21, 1963. He consulted with his supervisor and "it was determined that we should not undertake to furnish employment references for him."²⁹³ Ironically, he failed to get a job in another photographic firm after his return to Dallas in October of 1963, because the president of the photographic firm for which he had previously worked told the prospective employer that Oswald was "kinda peculiar sometimes and that he had some knowledge of the Russian language," and that he "may be a damn Communist. I can't tell you. If I was you, I wouldn't hire him."²⁹⁴ The plant superintendent of the new firm testified that one of the employees of the old firm "implied that Oswald's fellow employees did not like him because he was propagandizing and had been seen reading a foreign newspaper." As a result Oswald was not hired.²⁹⁵ He subsequently found a job with the Texas School Book Depository for which he performed his duties satisfactorily.²⁹⁶

Attack on General Walker

The Commission has concluded that on April 10, 1963, Oswald shot at Maj. Gen. Edwin A. Walker (Resigned, U.S. Army), demonstrating once again his propensity to act dramatically and, in this instance violently, in furtherance of his beliefs. The shooting occurred 2 weeks before Oswald moved to New Orleans and a few days after he had been discharged by the photographic firm. As indicated in chapter IV, Oswald had been planning his attack on General Walker for at least 1²⁹⁷ and perhaps as much as 2 months.²⁹⁸ He outlined his plans in a notebook and studied them at considerable length before his attack.²⁹⁹ He also studied Dallas bus schedules to prepare for his later use of buses to travel to and from General Walker's house.³⁰⁰ Sometime after March 27, but according to Marina Oswald, prior to April 10, 1963,³⁰¹ Oswald posed for two pictures with his recently acquired rifle and pistol, a copy of the March 24, 1963, issue of the Worker, and the March 11, 1963, issue of the

Militant.³⁰² He told his wife that he wanted to send the pictures to the Militant and he also asked her to keep one of the pictures for his daughter, June.³⁰³

Following his unsuccessful attack on Walker, Oswald returned home. He had left a note for his wife telling her what to do in case he were apprehended, as well as his notebook and the pictures of himself holding the rifle.³⁰⁴ She testified that she was agitated because she had found the note in Oswald's room, where she had gone, contrary to his instructions, after she became worried about his absence.³⁰⁵ She indicated that she had no advance knowledge of Oswald's plans, that she became quite angry when Oswald told her what he had done, and that she made him promise never to repeat such a performance. She said that she kept the note to use against him "if something like that should be repeated again."³⁰⁶ When asked if Oswald requested the note back she testified that:

He forgot about it. But apparently after he thought that what he had written in his book might be proof against him, and he destroyed it. [the book]³⁰⁷

She later gave the following testimony [*indicates that the witness answered without using the interpreter]:

Q. After he brought the rifle home, then, he showed you the book?

*A. Yes.

Q. And you said it was not a good idea to keep this book?

*A. Yes.

Q. And then he burned the book?

*A. Yes.

Q. Did you ask him why he had not destroyed the book before he actually went to shoot General Walker?

A. It never came to me, myself, to ask him that question.³⁰⁸

Marina Oswald's testimony indicates that her husband was not particularly concerned about his continued possession of the most incriminating sort of evidence.³⁰⁹ If he had been successful and had been apprehended even for routine questioning, his apartment would undoubtedly have been searched, and his role would have been made clear by the evidence which he had left behind. Leaving the note and picture as he did would seem to indicate that he had considered the possibility of capture. Possibly he might have wanted to be caught, and wanted his involvement made clear if he was in fact apprehended. Even after his wife told him to destroy the notebook he removed at least some of the pictures which had been pasted in it and saved them among his effects, where they were found after the assassination.³¹⁰ His behavior was entirely consistent with his wife's testimony that:

I asked him what for he was making all these entries in the book and he answered that he wanted to leave a complete record so that all the details would be in it.

* * * * *

I am guessing that perhaps he did it to appear to be a brave man in case he were arrested, but that is my supposition. * * * ³¹¹

The attempt on General Walker's life deserves close attention in any consideration of Oswald's possible motive for the assassination and the trail of evidence he left behind him on that occasion. While there are differences between the two events as far as Oswald's actions and planning are concerned, there are also similarities that should be considered. The items which Oswald left at home when he made his attack on Walker suggest a strong concern for his place in history. If the attack had succeeded and Oswald had been caught, the pictures showing him with his rifle and his Communist and Socialist Worker's Party newspapers would probably have appeared on the front pages of newspapers or magazines all over the country, as, in fact, one of them did appear after the assassination.³¹² The circumstances of the attack on Walker coupled with other indications that Oswald was concerned about his place in history³¹³ and with the circumstances surrounding the assassination, have led the Commission to believe that such concern is an important factor to consider in assessing possible motivation for the assassination.

In any event, the Walker incident indicates that in spite of the belief among those who knew him that he was apparently not dangerous,³¹⁴ Oswald did not lack the determination and other traits required to carry out a carefully planned killing of another human being and was willing to consummate such a purpose if he thought there was sufficient reason to do so. Some idea of what he thought was sufficient reason for such an act may be found in the nature of the motive that he stated for his attack on General Walker. Marina Oswald indicated that her husband had compared General Walker to Adolph Hitler. She testified that Oswald said that General Walker "was a very bad man, that he was a fascist, that he was the leader of a fascist organization, and when I said that even though all of that might be true, just the same he had no right to take his life, he said if someone had killed Hitler in time it would have saved many lives."³¹⁵

Political Activities

Oswald's political activities after his return to the United States center around his interest in Cuba and in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. Although, as indicated above, the Commission has been unable to find any credible evidence that he was involved in any conspiracy, his political activities do provide insight into certain aspects of Oswald's character and into his possible motivation for the assassination. While it appears that he may have distributed

Fair Play for Cuba Committee materials on one uneventful occasion in Dallas sometime during the period April 6-24, 1963,³¹⁶ Oswald's first public identification with that cause was in New Orleans. There, in late May and early June of 1963, under the name Lee Osborne, he had printed a handbill headed in large letters "Hands Off Cuba," an application form for, and a membership card in, the New Orleans branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.³¹⁷ He first distributed his handbills and other material uneventfully in the vicinity of the U.S.S. *Wasp*, which was berthed at the Dumaine Street wharf in New Orleans, on June 16, 1963.³¹⁸ He distributed literature in downtown New Orleans on August 9, 1963, and was arrested because of a dispute with three anti-Castro Cuban exiles, and again on August 16, 1963.³¹⁹ Following his arrest, he was interviewed by the police, and at his own request, by an agent of the FBI.³²⁰ On August 17, 1963, he appeared briefly on a radio program³²¹ and on August 21, 1963, he debated over radio station WDSU, New Orleans, with Carlos Bringuier, one of the Cuban exiles who had been arrested with him on August 9.³²² Bringuier claimed that on August 5, 1963, Oswald had attempted to infiltrate an anti-Castro organization with which he was associated.³²³

While Oswald publicly engaged in the activities described above, his "organization" was a product of his imagination.³²⁴ The imaginary president of the nonexistent chapter was named A. J. Hidell,³²⁵ the name that Oswald used when he purchased the assassination weapon.³²⁶ Marina Oswald said she signed that name, apparently chosen because it rhymed with "Fidel,"³²⁷ to her husband's membership card in the New Orleans chapter. She testified that he threatened to beat her if she did not do so.³²⁸ The chapter had never been chartered by the national FPCC organization.³²⁹ It appears to have been a solitary operation on Oswald's part in spite of his misstatements to the New Orleans police that it had 35 members, 5 of which were usually present at meetings which were held once a month.³³⁰

Oswald's Fair Play for Cuba activities may be viewed as a very shrewd political operation in which one man single handedly created publicity for his cause or for himself. It is also evidence of Oswald's reluctance to describe events accurately and of his need to present himself to others as well as to himself in a light more favorable than was justified by reality. This is suggested by his misleading and sometime untruthful statements in his letters to Mr. V. T. Lee, then national director of FPCC. In one of those letters, dated August 1, 1963, Oswald wrote that an office which he had previously claimed to have rented for FPCC activities had been "promptly closed 3 days later for some obscure reasons by the renters, they said something about remodeling ect., I'm sure you understand."³³¹ He wrote that "thousands of circulars were distributed"³³² and that he continued to receive inquiries through his post office box which he endeavored "to keep answering to the best of my ability."³³³ In his letter to V. T. Lee, he stated that he was then alone in his efforts on behalf of FPCC, but he attributed his lack of support to an attack by Cuban

exiles in a street demonstration and being "officially cautioned" by the police, events which "robbed me of what support I had leaving me alone."³³⁴

In spite of those claims, the Commission has not been able to uncover any evidence that anyone ever attacked any street demonstration in which Oswald was involved, except for the Bringuier incident mentioned above, which occurred 8 days after Oswald wrote the above letter to V. T. Lee.³³⁵ Bringuier, who seemed to be familiar with many anti-Castro activities in New Orleans, was not aware of any such incident.³³⁶ Police reports also fail to reflect any activity on Oswald's part prior to August 9, 1963, except for the uneventful distribution of literature at the Dumaine Street wharf in June.³³⁷ Furthermore, the general tenor of Oswald's next letter to V. T. Lee, in which he supported his report on the Bringuier incident with a copy of the charges made against him and a newspaper clipping reporting the event, suggests that his previous story of an attack by Cuban exiles was at least greatly exaggerated.³³⁸ While the legend "FPCC 544 Camp St. NEW ORLEANS, LA." was stamped on some literature that Oswald had in his possession at the time of his arrest in New Orleans, extensive investigation was not able to connect Oswald with that address, although it did develop the fact that an anti-Castro organization had maintained offices there for a period ending early in 1962.³³⁹ The Commission has not been able to find any other indication that Oswald had rented an office in New Orleans. In view of the limited amount of public activity on Oswald's part before August 9, 1963, there also seems to be no basis for his claim that he had distributed "thousands" of circulars, especially since he had claimed to have printed only 2,000 and actually had only 1,000 printed. In addition, there is no evidence that he received any substantial amount of materials from the national headquarters.³⁴⁰

In another letter to V. T. Lee, dated August 17, 1963, Oswald wrote that he had appeared on Mr. William Stuckey's 15-minute television program over WDSU-TV called "Latin American Focus" as a result of which he was "flooded with callers and invitations to debate's ect. as well as people interested in joining the F.P.C.C. New Orleans branch."³⁴¹ WDSU has no program of any kind called "Latin American Focus."³⁴² Stuckey had a radio program called "Latin Listening Post," on which Oswald was heard for less than 5 minutes on August 17, 1963.³⁴³ It appears that Oswald had only one caller in response to all of his FPCC activities, an agent of Bringuier's attempting to learn more about the true nature of the alleged FPCC "organization" in New Orleans.³⁴⁴

Oswald's statements suggest that he hoped to be flooded with callers and invitations to debate. This would have made him a real center of attention as he must have been when he first arrived in the Soviet Union and as he was to some extent when he returned to the United States. The limited notoriety that Oswald received as a result of the street fracas and in the subsequent radio debate was apparently not enough to satisfy him. He exaggerated in his letters to V. T. Lee in an appar-

OSWALD DISTRIBUTING FAIR PLAY FOR CUBA HANDBILLS IN NEW ORLEANS, AUGUST 16, 1963 -- INSETS SHOW SAMPLES OF HIS HANDBILLS ON WHICH HE HAD STAMPED HIS NAME AND THE NAME OF "A J HIDELL"

COMMISSION EXHIBIT 2966 B

COMMISSION EXHIBIT 2966 A



GARNER DEPOSITION EXHIBIT 1

ent attempt to make himself and his activities appear far more important than they really were.

His attempt to express himself through his Fair Play for Cuba activities, however, was greatly impeded by the fact that the radio debate over WDSU on August 21, 1963, brought out the history of his defection to the Soviet Union.³⁴⁵ The basic facts of the event were uncovered independently by William Stuckey, who arranged the debate, and Edward Butler, executive director of the Information Council of the Americas, who also appeared on the program.³⁴⁶ Oswald was confronted with those facts at the beginning of the debate and was so thrown on the defensive by this that he was forced to state that Fair Play for Cuba was "not at all Communist controlled regardless of the fact that I had the experience of living in Russia."³⁴⁷

Stuckey testified that uncovering Oswald's defection was very important:

I think that we finished him on that program. * * * because we had publicly linked the Fair Play for Cuba Committee with a fellow who had lived in Russia for 3 years and who was an admitted Marxist.

The interesting thing, or rather the danger involved, was the fact that Oswald seemed like such a nice, bright boy and was extremely believable before this. We thought the fellow could probably get quite a few members if he was really indeed serious about getting members. We figured after this broadcast of August 21, why, that was no longer possible.³⁴⁸

In spite of the fact that Oswald had been surprised and was on the defensive throughout the debate, according to Stuckey: "Mr. Oswald handled himself very well, as usual."³⁴⁹ Stuckey thought Oswald "appeared to be a very logical, intelligent fellow," and "was arrested by his cleancutness."³⁵⁰ He did not think Oswald looked like the "type" that he would have expected to find associating with a group such as the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.³⁵¹ Stuckey thought that Oswald acted very much as would a young attorney.³⁵²

Following the disclosure of his defection, Oswald sought advice from the Communist Party, U.S.A., concerning his Fair Play for Cuba activity.³⁵³ He had previously sent, apparently unsolicited, to the Party newspaper, the Worker, samples of his photographic work, offering to contribute that sort of service without charge.³⁵⁴ The Worker replied: "Your kind offer is most welcomed and from time to time we shall call on you."³⁵⁵ He later wrote to another official of the Worker, seeking employment, and mentioning the praise he had received for submitting his photographic work.³⁵⁶ He presented Arnold Johnson, Gus Hall, and Benjamin J. Davis honorary membership cards in his nonexistent New Orleans chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and advised them of some of his activities on behalf of the organization.³⁵⁷ Arnold Johnson, director of the in-

formation and lecture bureau of the Communist Party, U.S.A., replied stating:

It is good to know that movements in support of fair play for Cuba has developed in New Orleans as well as in other cities. We do not have any organizational ties with the Committee, and yet there is much material that we issue from time to time that is important for anybody who is concerned about developments in Cuba.³⁶⁸

Marina Oswald said that such correspondence from people he considered important meant much to Oswald. After he had begun his Cuban activity in New Orleans "he received a letter from somebody in New York, some Communist—probably from New York—I am not sure from where—from some Communist leader and he was very happy, he felt that this was a great man that he had received the letter from."³⁵⁹ Since he seemed to feel that no one else understood his political views, the letter was of great value to him for it "was proof * * * that there were people who understood his activity."³⁶⁰

He anticipated that the full disclosure of his defection would hinder him in "the struggle for progress and freedom in the United States"³⁶¹ into which Oswald, in his own words, had "thrown" himself. He sought advice from the central committee of the Communist Party, U.S.A., in a letter dated August 28, 1963, about whether he could "continue to fight, handicapped as it were, by my past record * * * [and] compete with anti-progressive forces, above-ground or weather in your opinion I should always remain in the background, i.e. underground."³⁶² Stating that he had used his "position" with what he claimed to be the local branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee to "foster communist ideals," Oswald wrote that he felt that he might have compromised the FPCC and expressed concern lest "Our opponents could use my background of residence in the U.S.S.R. against any cause which I join, by association, they could say the organization of which I am a member, is Russian controlled, ect."³⁶³ In reply Arnold Johnson advised Oswald that, while as an American citizen he had a right to participate in such organizations as he wished, "there are a number of organizations, including possibly Fair Play, which are of a very broad character, and often it is advisable for some people to remain in the background, not underground."³⁶⁴

By August of 1963, after a short 3 months in New Orleans, the city in which he had been born and had lived most of his early life, Oswald had fallen on difficult times. He had not liked his job as a greaser of coffee processing machinery and he held it for only a little over 2 months.³⁶⁵ He had not found another job. His wife was expecting their second child in October and there was concern about the cost which would be involved.³⁶⁶ His brief foray on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee had failed to win any support. While he had drawn some attention to himself and had actually ap-

peared on two radio programs, he had been attacked by Cuban exiles and arrested, an event which his wife thought upset him and as a result of which "he became less active, he cooled off a little."³⁶⁷ More seriously, the facts of his defection had become known, leaving him open to almost unanswerable attack by those who opposed his views. It would not have been possible to have followed Arnold Johnson's advice to remain in the background, since there was no background to the New Orleans FPCC "organization," which consisted solely of Oswald. Furthermore, he had apparently not received any letters from the national headquarters of FPCC since May 29, 1963,³⁶⁸ even though he had written four detailed letters since that time to Mr. V. T. Lee³⁶⁹ and had also kept the national headquarters informed of each of his changes of mailing address.³⁷⁰ Those events no doubt had their effects on Oswald.

Interest in Cuba

By August of 1963, Oswald had for some time been considering the possibility of leaving the United States again. On June 24, 1963, he applied for a new passport³⁷¹ and in late June or early July he told his wife that he wanted to return to the Soviet Union with her. She said that he was extremely upset, very unhappy, and that he actually wept when he told her that.³⁷² He said that nothing kept him in the United States, that he would not lose anything if he returned to the Soviet Union, that he wanted to be with her and that it would be better to have less and not have to be concerned about tomorrow.³⁷³

As a result of that conversation, Marina Oswald wrote the Soviet Embassy in Washington concerning a request she had first made on February 17, 1963, for permission for herself and June to return to the Soviet Union.³⁷⁴ While that first request, made according to Marina Oswald at her husband's insistence, specifically stated that Oswald was to remain in the United States, she wrote in her letter of July 1963, that "things are improving due to the fact that my husband expresses a sincere wish to return together with me to the USSR."³⁷⁵ Unknown to his wife, however, Oswald apparently enclosed a note with her letter of July in which he requested the Embassy to rush his wife's entrance visa because of the impending birth of the second child but stated that: "As for my return entrance visa please consider it *separtably*."³⁷⁶

Thus, while Oswald's real intentions, assuming that they were known to himself, are not clear, he may not have intended to go to the Soviet Union directly, if at all.³⁷⁷ It appears that he really wanted to go to Cuba. In his wife's words:

I only know that his basic desire was to get to Cuba by any means, and that all the rest of it was window dressing for that purpose.³⁷⁸

Marina Oswald testified that her husband engaged in Fair Play for Cuba Committee activities "primarily for purposes of self-advertising. He wanted to be arrested. I think he wanted to get into the newspapers, so that he would be known."³⁷⁹ According to Marina Oswald, he thought that would help him when he got to Cuba.³⁸⁰ He asked his wife to help him to hijack an airplane to get there, but gave up that scheme when she refused.³⁸¹

During this period Oswald may have practiced opening and closing the bolt on his rifle in a screened porch in his apartment.³⁸² In September he began to review Spanish.³⁸³ He approved arrangements for his family to return to Irving, Tex., to live with Mrs. Ruth Paine.³⁸⁴ On September 20, 1963, Mrs. Paine and her two children arrived in New Orleans from a trip to the East Coast³⁸⁵ and left for Irving with Marina Oswald and June and most of the Oswalds' effects 3 days later.³⁸⁶ While Marina Oswald knew of her husband's plan to go to Mexico and thence to Cuba if possible,³⁸⁷ Mrs. Paine was told that Oswald was going to Houston and possibly to Philadelphia to look for work.³⁸⁸

Oswald left for Mexico City on September 25, 1963, and arrived on September 27, 1963. He went almost directly to the Cuban Embassy and applied for a visa to Cuba in transit to Russia.³⁸⁹ Representing himself as the head of the New Orleans branch of the "organization called 'Fair Play for Cuba,' he stated his desire that he should be accepted as a 'friend' of the Cuban Revolution."³⁹⁰ He apparently based his claim for a visa in transit to Russia on his previous residence, his work permit for that country, and several unidentified letters in the Russian language. The Cubans would not, however, give him a visa until he had received one from the Soviets, which involved a delay of several months. When faced with that situation Oswald became greatly agitated, and although he later unsuccessfully attempted to obtain a Soviet visa at the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City, he insisted that he was entitled to the Cuban visa because of his background, partisanship, and personal activities on behalf of the Cuban movement. He engaged in an angry argument with the consul who finally told him that "as far as he was concerned he would not give him a visa" and that "a person like him [Oswald] in place of aiding the Cuban Revolution, was doing it harm."³⁹¹

Oswald must have been thoroughly disillusioned when he left Mexico City on October 2, 1963. In spite of his former residence in the Soviet Union and his Fair Play for Cuba Committee activities he had been rebuffed by the officials of both Cuba and the Soviet Union in Mexico City. Now there appeared to be no chance to get to Cuba, where he had thought he might find his communist ideal. The U.S. Government would not permit travel there and as far as the performance of the Cubans themselves was concerned, he was "disappointed at not being able to get to Cuba, and he didn't have any great desire to do so any more because he had run into, as he himself said—into bureaucracy and red tape."³⁹²

Oswald's attempt to go to Cuba was another act which expressed his hostility toward the United States and its institutions as well as a concomitant attachment to a country in which he must have thought were embodied the political principles to which he had been committed for so long. It should be noted that his interest in Cuba seems to have increased along with the sense of frustration which must have developed as he experienced successive failures in his jobs, in his political activity, and in his personal relationships. In retrospect his attempt to go to Cuba or return to the Soviet Union may well have been Oswald's last escape hatch, his last gambit to extricate himself from the mediocrity and defeat which plagued him throughout most of his life.

Oswald's activities with regard to Cuba raise serious questions as to how much he might have been motivated in the assassination by a desire to aid the Castro regime, which President Kennedy so outspokenly criticized. For example, the Dallas Times Herald of November 19, 1963, prominently reported President Kennedy as having "all but invited the Cuban people today to overthrow Fidel Castro's Communist regime and promised prompt U.S. aid if they do."³⁹³ The Castro regime severely attacked President Kennedy in connection with the Bay of Pigs affair, the Cuban missile crisis, the ban on travel to Cuba, the economic embargo against that country, and the general policy of the United States with regard to Cuba. An examination of the *Militant*, to which Oswald subscribed,³⁹⁴ for the 3-month period prior to the assassination reflects an extremely critical attitude toward President Kennedy and his administration concerning Cuban policy in general as well as on the issues of automation and civil rights, issues which appeared to concern Oswald a great deal.³⁹⁵ The *Militant* also reflected a critical attitude toward President Kennedy's attempts to reduce tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. It also dealt with the fear of the Castro regime that such a policy might result in its abandonment by the Soviet Union.

The October 7, 1963, issue of the *Militant* reported Castro as saying Cuba could not accept a situation where at the same time the United States was trying to ease world tensions it also "was increasing its efforts to 'tighten the noose' around Cuba."³⁹⁶ Castro's opposition to President Kennedy's attempt to reduce world tensions was also reported in the October 1, 1963, issue of the *Worker*, to which Oswald also subscribed.³⁹⁷ In this connection it should be noted that in speaking of the *Worker*, Oswald told Michael Paine, apparently in all seriousness, that "you could tell what they wanted you to do * * * by reading between the lines, reading the thing and doing a little reading between the lines."³⁹⁸

The general conflict of views between the United States and Cuba was, of course, reflected in other media to such an extent that there can be no doubt that Oswald was aware generally of the critical attitude that Castro expressed about President Kennedy. Oswald was asked during the New Orleans radio debate in which he engaged on August 21, 1963, whether or not he agreed with Castro that President

Kennedy was a "ruffian and a thief." He replied that he "would not agree with that particular wording."³⁹⁹ It should also be noted, however, that one witness testified that shortly before the assassination Oswald had expressed approval of President Kennedy's active role in the area of civil rights.⁴⁰⁰

Although Oswald could possibly have been motivated in part by his sympathy for the Castro government, it should be remembered that his wife testified that he was disappointed with his failure to get to Cuba and had lost his desire to do so because of the bureaucracy and red tape which he had encountered.⁴⁰¹ His unhappy experience with the Cuban consul seems thus to have reduced his enthusiasm for the Castro regime and his desire to go to Cuba.

While some of Castro's more severe criticisms of President Kennedy might have led Oswald to believe that he would be well received in Cuba after he had assassinated the American President, it does not appear that he had any plans to go there. Oswald was carrying only \$13.87 at the time of his arrest, although he had left, apparently by design, \$170 in a wallet in his wife's room in Irving.⁴⁰² If there was no conspiracy which would help him escape, the possibility of which has been considered in chapter VI, it is unlikely that a reasoning person would plan to attempt to travel from Dallas, Tex., to Cuba with \$13.87 when considerably greater resources were available to him. The fact that Oswald left behind the funds which might have enabled him to reach Cuba suggests the absence of any plan to try to flee there and raises serious questions as to whether or not he ever expected to escape.

Possible Influence of Anti-Kennedy Sentiment in Dallas

It has been suggested that one of the motivating influences operating on Lee Oswald was the atmosphere in the city of Dallas, especially an atmosphere of extreme opposition to President Kennedy that was present in some parts of the Dallas community and which received publicity there prior to the assassination.⁴⁰³ Some of that feeling was expressed in the incident involving then vice-presidential candidate Johnson during the 1960 campaign, in the treatment of Ambassador Adlai Stevenson late in October of 1963 and in the extreme anti-Kennedy newspaper advertisement and handbills that appeared in Dallas at the time of the President's visit there.⁴⁰⁴

The Commission has found no evidence that the extreme views expressed toward President Kennedy by some rightwing groups centered in Dallas or any other general atmosphere of hate or rightwing extremism which may have existed in the city of Dallas had any connection with Oswald's actions on November 22, 1963. There is, of course, no way to judge what the effect of the general political ferment present in that city might have been, even though Oswald was aware of it. His awareness is shown by a letter that he wrote to Arnold Johnson of the Communist Party U.S.A., which Johnson said he did not receive until after the assassination. The letter said in part:

On October 23rd, I had attended a ultra-right meeting headed by General Edwin A. Walker, who lives in Dallas.

This meeting preceded by one day the attack on A. E. Stevenson at the United Nations Day meeting at which he spoke

As you can see, political friction between "left" and "right" is very great here.

Could you advise me as to the general view we have on the American Civil Liberties Union? ⁴⁰⁵

In any event, the Commission has been unable to find any credible evidence that Oswald had direct contact or association with any of the personalities or groups epitomizing or representing the so-called rightwing, even though he did, as he told Johnson, attend a meeting at which General Walker spoke to approximately 1,300 persons.⁴⁰⁶ Oswald's writings and his reading habits indicate that he had an extreme dislike of the rightwing, an attitude most clearly reflected by his attempt to shoot General Walker.

Relationship With Wife

The relations between Lee and Marina Oswald are of great importance in any attempt to understand Oswald's possible motivation. During the period from Oswald's return from Mexico to the assassination, he and his wife spent every weekend but one together at the Irving, Tex., home of Mrs. Ruth Paine, who was then separated from her husband. The sole exception was the weekend of November 16-17, 1963, the weekend before the assassination, when his wife asked Oswald not to come to Irving. During the week, Oswald lived in a roominghouse in Dallas, but he usually called his wife on the telephone twice a day.⁴⁰⁷ She testified that after his return from Mexico Oswald "changed for the better. He began to treat me better. * * * He helped me more—although he always did help. But he was more attentive."⁴⁰⁸ Marina Oswald attributed that to their living apart and to the imminent birth of their second child. She testified that Oswald "was very happy" about the birth of the child.⁴⁰⁹

While those considerations no doubt had an effect on Oswald's attitude toward his family it would seem that the need for support and sympathy after his recent rebuffs in Mexico City might also have been important to him. It would not have been the first time that Oswald sought closer ties with his family in time of adversity.⁴¹⁰

His past relationships with his wife had been stormy, however, and it did not seem that she respected him very much. They had been married after a courtship of only about 6 weeks, a part of which Oswald spent in the hospital. Oswald's diary reports that he married his wife shortly after his proposal of marriage to another girl had been rejected. He stated that the other girl rejected him partly because he was an American, a fact that he said she had exploited. He stated that "In spite of fact I married Marina to hurt Ella [the girl that had rejected him] I found myself in love with Marina."⁴¹¹

Many of the people with whom the Oswalds became acquainted after their arrival in the United States thought that Marina Oswald had married her husband primarily in the hope that she would be able to leave the Soviet Union. Marina Oswald has denied this.⁴¹²

Marina Oswald expressed one aspect of her husband's attitude toward her when she testified that :

* * * Lee wanted me to go to Russia, and I told him that if he wanted me to go then that meant that he didn't love me, and that in that case what was the idea of coming to the United States in the first place. Lee would say that it would be better for me if I went to Russia. I did not know why. I did not know what he had in mind. He said he loved me but that it would be better for me if I went to Russia, and what he had in mind I don't know.⁴¹³

On the other hand, Oswald objected to the invitation that his wife had received to live with Mrs. Ruth Paine, which Mrs. Paine had made in part to give her an alternative to returning to the Soviet Union.⁴¹⁴ Marina Oswald wrote to Mrs. Paine that: "Many times he [Oswald] has recalled this matter to me and said that I am just waiting for an opportunity to hurt him. It has been the cause of many of our arguments."⁴¹⁵ Oswald claimed that his wife preferred others to him.⁴¹⁶ He said this about members of the Russian-speaking group in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, whom she said he tried to forbid her from seeing,⁴¹⁷ and also about Mrs. Paine.⁴¹⁸ He specifically made that claim when his wife refused to come to live with him in Dallas as he asked her to do on the evening of November 21, 1963.⁴¹⁹

The instability of their relations was probably a function of the personalities of both people. Oswald was overbearing in relations with his wife. He apparently attempted to be "the Commander" by dictating many of the details of their married life.⁴²⁰ While Marina Oswald said that her husband wanted her to learn English,⁴²¹ he made no attempt to help her and there are other indications that he did not want her to learn that language. Oswald apparently wished to continue practicing his own Russian with her.⁴²² Lieutenant Martello of the New Orleans police testified that Oswald stated that he did not speak English in his family because he did not want them to become Americanized.⁴²³ Marina Oswald's inability to speak English also made it more difficult for her to have an independent existence in this country. Oswald struck his wife on occasion,⁴²⁴ did not want her to drink, smoke or wear cosmetics⁴²⁵ and generally treated her with lack of respect in the presence of others.⁴²⁶

The difficulties which Oswald's problems would have caused him in any relationship were probably not reduced by his wife's conduct. Katherine Ford, with whom Marina Oswald stayed during her separation from her husband in November of 1962, thought that Marina Oswald was immature in her thinking and partly responsible for the difficulties that the Oswalds were having at that time.⁴²⁷ Mrs. Ford

said that Marina Oswald admitted that she provoked Oswald on occasion.⁴²⁸ There can be little doubt that some provocation existed. Oswald once struck his wife because of a letter which she wrote to a former boy friend in Russia. In the letter Marina Oswald stated that her husband had changed a great deal and that she was very lonely in the United States. She was "sorry that I had not married him [the Russian boy friend] instead, that it would have been much easier for me."⁴²⁹ The letter fell into Oswald's hands when it was returned to his post office box because of insufficient postage, which apparently resulted from an increase in postal rates of which his wife had been unaware.⁴³⁰ Oswald read the letter, but refused to believe that it was sincere, even though his wife insisted to him that it was. As a result Oswald struck her, as to which she testified: "Generally, I think that was right, for such things that is the right thing to do. There was some grounds for it."⁴³¹

Although she denied it in some of her testimony before the Commission,⁴³² it appears that Marina Oswald also complained that her husband was not able to provide more material things for her.⁴³³ On that issue George De Mohrenschildt, who was probably as close to the Oswalds as anyone else during their first stay in Dallas, said that:

She was annoying him all the time—"Why don't you make some money?" * * * Poor guy was going out of his mind. * * * We told her she should not annoy him—poor guy, he is doing his best, "Don't annoy him so much." * * *⁴³⁴

The De Mohrenschildts also testified that "right in front" of Oswald Marina Oswald complained about Oswald's inadequacy as a husband.⁴³⁵ Mrs. Oswald told another of her friends that Oswald was very cold to her, that they very seldom had sexual relations and that Oswald "was not a man."⁴³⁶ She also told Mrs. Paine that she was not satisfied with her sexual relations with Oswald.⁴³⁷

Marina Oswald also ridiculed her husband's political views, thereby tearing down his view of his own importance. He was very much interested in autobiographical works of outstanding statesmen of the United States, to whom his wife thought he compared himself.⁴³⁸ She said he was different from other people in "At least his imagination, his fantasy, which was quite unfounded, as to the fact that he was an outstanding man."⁴³⁹ She said that she "always tried to point out to him that he was a man like any others who were around us. But he simply could not understand that."⁴⁴⁰ Jeanne De Mohrenschildt, however, thought that Marina Oswald "said things that will hurt men's pride."⁴⁴¹ She said that if she ever spoke to her husband the way Marina Oswald spoke to her husband, "we would not last long."⁴⁴² Mrs. De Mohrenschildt thought that Oswald, whom she compared to "a puppy dog that everybody kicked,"⁴⁴³ had a lot of good qualities, in spite of the fact that "Nobody said anything good about him."⁴⁴⁴ She had "the impression that he was just pushed, pushed, pushed, and she [Marina Oswald] was probably nagging, nag-

ging, nagging.”⁴⁴⁵ She thought that he might not have become involved in the assassination if people had been kinder to him.⁴⁴⁶

In spite of these difficulties, however, and in the face of the economic problems that were always with them, things apparently went quite smoothly from the time Oswald returned from Mexico until the weekend of November 16-17, 1963.⁴⁴⁷ Mrs. Paine was planning a birthday party for one of her children on that weekend and her husband, Michael, was to be at the house. Marina Oswald said that she knew her husband did not like Michael Paine and so she asked him not to come out that weekend, even though he wanted to do so. She testified that she told him “that he shouldn’t come every week, that perhaps it is not convenient for Ruth that the whole family be there, live there.” She testified that he responded: “As you wish. If you don’t want me to come, I won’t.”⁴⁴⁸ Ruth Paine testified that she heard Marina Oswald tell Oswald about the birthday party.⁴⁴⁹

On Sunday, November 17, 1963, Ruth Paine and Marina Oswald decided to call Oswald⁴⁵⁰ at the place where he was living, unbeknownst to them, under the name of O. H. Lee.⁴⁵¹ They asked for Lee Oswald who was not called to the telephone because he was known by the other name.⁴⁵² When Oswald called the next day his wife became very angry about his use of the alias.⁴⁵³ He said that he used it because “he did not want his landlady to know his real name because she might read in the paper of the fact that he had been in Russia and that he had been questioned.”⁴⁵⁴ Oswald also said that he did not want the FBI to know where he lived “Because their visits were not very pleasant for him and he thought that he loses jobs because the FBI visits the place of his employment.”⁴⁵⁵ While the facts of his defection had become known in New Orleans as a result of his radio debate with Bringuier,⁴⁵⁶ it would appear to be unlikely that his landlady in Dallas would see anything in the newspaper about his defection, unless he engaged in activities similar to those which had led to the disclosure of his defection in New Orleans. Furthermore, even though it appears that at times Oswald was really upset by visits of the FBI, it does not appear that he ever lost his job because of its activities, although he may well not have been aware of that fact.⁴⁵⁷

While Oswald’s concern about the FBI had some basis in fact, in that FBI agents had interviewed him in the past and had renewed their interest to some extent after his Fair Play for Cuba Committee activities had become known, he exaggerated their concern for him. Marina Oswald thought he did so in order to emphasize his importance.⁴⁵⁸ For example, in his letter of November 9, 1963, to the Soviet Embassy in Washington, he asked about the entrance visas for which he and his wife had previously applied. He absolved the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City of any blame for his difficulties there. He advised the Washington Embassy that the FBI was “not now” interested in his Fair Play for Cuba Committee activities, but noted that the FBI “has visited us here in Dallas, Texas, on November 1. Agent James P. Hasty warned me that if I engaged in F.P.C.C. activities in Texas

the F.B.I. will again take an 'interest' in me." ⁴⁵⁹ Neither Hosty nor any other agent of the FBI spoke to Oswald on any subject from August 10, 1963, to the time of the assassination. ⁴⁶⁰ The claimed warning was one more of Oswald's fabrications. Hosty had come to the Paine residence on November 1 and 5, 1963, but did not issue any such warning or suggest that Marina Oswald defect from the Soviet Union and remain in the United States under FBI protection, as Oswald went on to say. ⁴⁶¹ In Oswald's imagination "I and my wife strongly protested these tactics by the notorious F.B.I." ⁴⁶² In fact, his wife testified that she only said that she would prefer not to receive any more visits from the Bureau because of the "very exciting and disturbing effect" they had upon her husband, ⁴⁶³ who was not even present at that time. ⁴⁶⁴

The arguments he used to justify his use of the alias suggest that Oswald may have come to think that the whole world was becoming involved in an increasingly complex conspiracy against him. He may have felt he could never tell when the FBI was going to appear on the scene or who else was going to find out about his defection and use it against him as had been done in New Orleans. ⁴⁶⁵ On the other hand, the concern he expressed about the FBI may have been just another story to support the objective he sought in his letter.

Those arguments, however, were not persuasive to Marina Oswald, to whom "it was nothing terrible if people were to find out that he had been in Russia." ⁴⁶⁶ She asked Oswald: "After all, when will all your foolishness come to an end? All of these comedies. First one thing and then another. And now this fictitious name." ⁴⁶⁷ She said: "On Monday [November 18, 1963] he called several times, but after I hung up on him and didn't want to talk to him he did not call again. He then arrived on Thursday [November 21, 1963]." ⁴⁶⁸

The events of that evening can best be appreciated through Marina Oswald's testimony:

Q. Did your husband give any reason for coming home on Thursday?

A. He said that he was lonely because he hadn't come the preceding weekend, and he wanted to make his peace with me.

Q. Did you say anything to him then?

A. He tried to talk to me but I would not answer him, and he was very upset.

Q. Were you upset with him?

A. I was angry, of course. He was not angry—he was upset. I was angry. He tried very hard to please me. He spent quite a bit of time putting away diapers and played with the children on the street.

Q. How did you indicate to him that you were angry with him?

A. By not talking to him.

Q. And how did he show that he was upset?

A. He was upset over the fact that I would not answer him. He tried to start a conversation with me several times, but I

would not answer. And he said that he didn't want me to be angry at him because this upsets him.

On that day, he suggested that we rent an apartment in Dallas. He said that he was tired of living alone and perhaps the reason for my being so angry was the fact that we were not living together. That if I want to he would rent an apartment in Dallas tomorrow—that he didn't want me to remain with Ruth any longer, but wanted me to live with him in Dallas.

He repeated this not once but several times, but I refused. And he said that once again I was preferring my friends to him, and that I didn't need him.

Q. What did you say to that?

A. I said it would be better if I remained with Ruth until the holidays, he would come, and we would all meet together. That this was better because while he was living alone and I stayed with Ruth, we were spending less money. And I told him to buy me a washing machine, because two children it became too difficult to wash by hand.

Q. What did he say to that?

A. He said he would buy me a washing machine.

Q. What did you say to that?

A. Thank you. That it would be better if he bought something for himself—that I would manage.⁴⁶⁹

That night Oswald went to bed before his wife retired. She did not speak to him when she joined him there, although she thought that he was still awake. The next morning he left for work before anyone else arose.⁴⁷⁰ For the first time he left his wedding ring in a cup on the dresser in his room.⁴⁷¹ He also left \$170 in a wallet in one of the dresser drawers. He took with him \$13.87⁴⁷² and the long brown package that Frazier and Mrs. Randle saw him carry and which he was to take to the School Book Depository.⁴⁷³

The Unanswered Questions

No one will ever know what passed through Oswald's mind during the week before November 22, 1963. Instead of returning to Irving on November 15 for his customary weekend visit, he remained in Dallas at his wife's suggestion because of the birthday party. He had argued with her over the use of an alias and had not called her after that argument, although he usually telephoned once or twice a day. Then on Thursday morning, November 21, he asked Frazier for a ride to Irving that night, stating falsely that he wanted to pick up some curtain rods to put in an apartment.⁴⁷⁴

He must have planned his attack at the very latest prior to Thursday morning when he spoke to Frazier. There is, of course, no way to determine the degree to which he was committed to his plan at that time. While there is no way to tell when he first began to think specifically of assassinating the President it should be noted that mention of

the Trade Mart as the expected site of the Presidential luncheon appeared in *The Dallas Times Herald* on November 15, 1963.⁴⁷⁵ The next day that paper announced the final approval of the Trade Mart as the luncheon site and stated that the motorcade "apparently will loop through the downtown area, probably on Main Street, en route from Dallas Love Field" on its way to the Trade Mart on Stemmons Freeway.⁴⁷⁶ Anyone who was familiar with that area of Dallas would have known that the motorcade would probably pass the Texas School Book Depository to get from Main Street onto the Stemmons Freeway. That fact was made precisely clear in subsequent news stories on November 19, 20, and 22.⁴⁷⁷

On November 15, 1963, the same day that his wife told him not to come to Irving, Oswald could have assumed that the Presidential motorcade would pass in front of his place of work. Whether he thought about assassinating the President over the weekend can never be known, but it is reasonably certain that over the weekend he did think about his wife's request that he not come to Irving, which was prompted by the birthday party being held at the Paine home. Oswald had a highly exaggerated sense of his own importance, but he had failed at almost everything he had ever tried to do. He had great difficulty in establishing meaningful relations with other people. Except for his family he was completely alone. Even though he had searched—in the Marine Corps, in his ideal of communism, in the Soviet Union and in his attempt to get to Cuba—he had never found anything to which he felt he could really belong.

After he returned from his trip to Mexico where his application to go to Cuba had been sharply rejected, it must have appeared to him that he was unable to command even the attention of his family. He could not keep them with him in Dallas, where at least he could see his children whom, several witnesses testified, he seemed to love.⁴⁷⁸ His family lived with Mrs. Paine, ostensibly because Oswald could not afford to keep an apartment in Dallas, but it was also, at least in part, because his wife did not want to live there with him.⁴⁷⁹ Now it appeared that he was not welcome at the Paine home, where he had spent every previous weekend since his return from Mexico and his wife was once again calling into question his judgment, this time concerning his use of an alias.

The conversation on Monday, November 18, 1963, ended when Marina Oswald hung up and refused to talk to him. Although he may long before have decided on the course he was to follow and may have told his wife the things he did on the evening of November 21, 1963, merely to disarm her and to provide a justification of sorts, both she and Mrs. Paine thought he had come home to make up after the fight on Monday.⁴⁸⁰ Thoughts of his personal difficulties must have been at least partly on his mind when he went to Irving on Thursday night and told his wife that he was lonely, that he wanted to make peace with her and bring his family to Dallas where they could live with him again.

The Commission does not believe that the relations between Oswald and his wife caused him to assassinate the President. It is unlikely that the motivation was that simple. The feelings of hostility and aggression which seem to have played such an important part in Oswald's life were part of his character long before he met his wife and such a favorable opportunity to strike at a figure as great as the President would probably never have come to him again.

Oswald's behavior after the assassination throws little light on his motives. The fact that he took so little money with him when he left Irving in the morning indicates that he did not expect to get very far from Dallas on his own and suggests the possibility, as did his note to his wife just prior to the attempt on General Walker, that he did not expect to escape at all. On the other hand, he could have traveled some distance with the money he did have and he did return to his room where he obtained his revolver. He then killed Patrolman Tippit when that police officer apparently tried to question him after he had left his roominghouse and he vigorously resisted arrest when he was finally apprehended in the Texas Theatre. Although it is not fully corroborated by others who were present, two officers have testified that at the time of his arrest Oswald said something to the effect that "it's all over now."⁴⁸¹

Oswald was overbearing and arrogant throughout much of the time between his arrest and his own death.⁴⁸² He consistently refused to admit involvement in the assassination or in the killing of Patrolman Tippit.⁴⁸³ While he did become enraged at at least one point in his interrogation, the testimony of the officers present indicates that he handled himself with considerable composure during his questioning. He admitted nothing that would damage him but discussed other matters quite freely.⁴⁸⁴ His denials under questioning, which have no probative value in view of the many readily demonstrable lies he told at that time⁴⁸⁵ and in the face of the overwhelming evidence against him which has been set forth above, only served to prolong the period during which he was the center of the attention of the entire world.

Conclusion

Many factors were undoubtedly involved in Oswald's motivation for the assassination, and the Commission does not believe that it can ascribe to him any one motive or group of motives. It is apparent, however, that Oswald was moved by an overriding hostility to his environment. He does not appear to have been able to establish meaningful relationships with other people. He was perpetually discontented with the world around him. Long before the assassination he expressed his hatred for American society and acted in protest against it. Oswald's search for what he conceived to be the perfect society was doomed from the start. He sought for himself a place in history—a role as the "great man" who would be recognized as having been in advance of his times. His commitment to Marxism and communism appears to have been another important factor in his motivation. He

also had demonstrated a capacity to act decisively and without regard to the consequences when such action would further his aims of the moment. Out of these and the many other factors which may have molded the character of Lee Harvey Oswald there emerged a man capable of assassinating President Kennedy.