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The CIA has publicly stated that it never interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald. Numerous allegations have arisen over the years since President Kennedy's assassination that Oswald either had been or should have been debriefed by the CIA upon his return from the Soviet Union since he appeared to be in a position to provide useful information due to the ^{unusual duration} length of his residence and employment there. The ^{response} claim that no records exist which indicate a debriefing of Oswald has stimulated speculation that Oswald may have had some kind of agency relationship either because the contact was not reported through normal channels or because the CIA communicated with Oswald in another ^{obviated(?)} manner which ^{obviated(?)} alleviated the necessity for a routine debriefing.

The HSCA attempted to determine: 1) whether Oswald was, in fact, interviewed by the CIA upon his return from the Soviet Union; 2) whether there is an official report of the interview if one was conducted; and 3) the reasons why Oswald would not have been interviewed if that was ^{actually} ^{potentially} the case.

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Black text on a blue background indicates content
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I did my best to be accurate in revealing what is new,
but please confirm with the original sources
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was it, or
was it not
in response
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Meloni's affidavit was ^{partially} ~~partially~~ motivated by the appearance of
an article on 28 February 1964 in the Northern Virginia Sun which
made the following allegation:
~~alleged that~~ "State Department records show that Oswald had several
meetings with the CIA representative in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow."

During this period, the assassin was seeking to renounce his citizenship.

One State Department cable, No. 234, dated November 2, 1959, reports that

Oswald was interviewed by the CIA and the embassy officials. (CIA FOIA Doc#
AID-609-756)

The CIA memorandum reporting this ^{story} ~~information~~ both internally and

to the Warren Commission advises that this allegation is totally unfounded.

(~~ibid.~~ and CIA FOIA Document #610-263). The ^{memorandum} ~~internal~~ explains that the

reference to the State Department "cable" is erroneous and that the document

to which the article was referring is undoubtedly a State Department

"despatch" No. 234, which was dated 2 November 1959 from the U.S. Embassy

in Moscow. (~~ibid.~~) (not a new paragraph)

→ According to the internal memorandum, the despatch contained no state-

ment reference that Richard E. Snyder, who ^{was} the Second Secretary of the

U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the only person mentioned by name in

the despatch, had any CIA connection. ^{CIA FOIA No. 17-161-751}

However, the memorandum acknowledged that Holt Snyder and Edward

W. Fries, the State Department official who signed the despatch, had

had some past connection with the Agency. Snyder had been employed

by the CIA for less than one year in 1950 when he resigned in order

to assume a position with the State Department. ^{Although the CIA's records indicate the existence of a history of Agency interest in}

~~actually was employed by the~~

Fries, he was never actually employed by the CIA. (Holt.)

The record of the Central Intelligence Agency throughout the years is consistent with its position ~~that~~ ^{as stated} to the Warren Commission

that the CIA never interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald. A 9-February

1972 letter from Bernard Fensterwald to the Assistant Director of

the CIA requests any records pertaining to a "debrieffing" of Oswald

by or on behalf of the CIA following his return from the Soviet

Union. This request for information contrary to the Agency's previously

~~stated position appears to be generated by a statement made by~~
stated position appears to be generated by a statement made by

Richard Helms on 14 April 1971 before the American Society of Newspaper

Editors that "... if there is a chance that if a private citizen travelling

abroad has acquired foreign information that can be useful to the

American policymakers, we are certainly going to try to interview

(CIA FOIA b6, # 961-927-A6).

Sen. J. Fensterwald cites Oswald as appearing to be such a person.

There follows an exchange of letters between Fensterwald and

August M. Thuermer, who was the Assistant to the Director of the CIA

in which Thuermer refers Fensterwald to the testimony of Malone and

Helms before the Warren Commission. Thuermer states that "the testimony is still relied; therefore the information you request does not exist" (CIA FOIA b6 #962-227-AM).
When Lee Harvey Oswald responds to this answer with a request for Thuermer's own position with respect to the records rather than "conclusions based upon statements of persons other than yourself," Thuermer ends the exchange by stating that his previous response was "a simple declarative statement in the best possible authority that the Agency never had any contact with Oswald and that, therefore, the information sought by you in your letter of February 9th does not exist and never did exist." (CIA FOIA b6 #970-327-AP).

In April of 1973, the HSCA requested that the CIA provide a statement as to whether Lee Harvey Oswald was ever contacted, spoken to or interviewed by anyone directly or indirectly representing the CIA. (HSCA 1-112 to CIA, 4/15/73).

The Agency responded in the same manner it had used in responding to numerous requests from other sources, by way of referring the Committee

to the testimony of Helms and Malone before the Warren Commission and to Malone's affidavit denying any Agency contact with Oswald. (CIA Statements Pertaining and Con- 4/17/73 - T-101753).

A 25 November 1963 CIA Memorandum (now located in LHO's

201 file as CIA FOIA #435-173-A) is the only documented evidence

of any CIA interest in interviewing Oswald. ^{The memorandum written} ~~the author of the memo,~~

by Thomas B. Caserio, stated: "As soon as I had heard Oswald's

name, I recalled that as Chief of the 6 Branch I had discussed ^{sometime} ~~with~~

^{in Summer} ~~the~~ 1960 - with the then Chief and Deputy Chief of the 6 Research

Section the laying on of interviews through (KUTUNA) or other suitable

channels. At the moment I don't recall if this was discussed while

Oswald and his family were en route to this country or if it was

after their arrival." (CIA FOIA Document #435-173-A).

(Caserio) was interviewed by ^{the} HSCA staff ~~workers~~ on August 17, 1978.

In this interview, he stated that he worked as Chief of the 6 Branch

from September 1960 until his reassignment in September 1962. ^(CIA Staff Interview of CIA Employee) ^{SH/TTS, p.1} ~~He~~

advised that the function of the 6 Branch was **to amass information**

from defectors concerning details about Soviet life which could

that he used to assist persons working inside the Soviet Union. (Ibid.)

The 6 Branch also relied upon the CIA's Contacts Division and the FBI as sources of this type of information, as well as collecting information from the State Department and the press concerning Americans in the Soviet Union. (Ibid., p.4)

During this interview (Casasini's) recollection of the discussion mentioned in the 25 November 1963 memo was that it took place during the last days of his tenure with the 6 Branch. (Ibid., p.4) This would have placed the discussion sometime in July 1962. He stated that the date cited for the discussion in the memo must have been erroneous as he was travelling with his family between assignments in the summer of 1960 and did not begin his assignment with the 6 Branch until September of that year. (Ibid., pp. 4-5)

(Casasini) stated that at the time the Oswald case was discussed, he assumed that Oswald must have been sent out of the Soviet Union by the KGB. (Ibid., p.4) Therefore, exercising caution, he did not attempt

to debrief Oswald that suggested that Oswald be debriefed by (KUTUMP)

which represented the Office of Operations, an office which debriefed persons through its Contacts Division or "other suitable channels"

by which he meant the FBI or the Immigration and Naturalization

(Ibid., pp. 4-5) Service. He ^{stated that} did not believe that this had been done at

that time because ^{this} type of information would have been routinely

passed on to the CIA and to this section if such a debriefing had

occurred. (Ibid., p. 5) He stated that the information he had on Oswald at the time was in

the form of State Department dispatches. (Ibid.)

In the memorandum, (Casas) states that he told his subordinates

something to the effect of "Don't push too hard to get the information

we need, because this individual looks odd." He explained in the (CIA FOIA Document # 435-173-A).

interview that this statement reflected the CIA's assessment of

Oswald based on the unusual facts that Oswald was permitted by

the Soviets to remain in the USSR and was further permitted to marry

a Soviet citizen. (HSCA Staff Interview of CIA Employee, 8/17/75, p. 5)

(Lisavici) stated that his interest in Oswald as expressed in the memorandum was just a lead and that it was not unusual that there had been no follow-up regarding a debriefing of Oswald. ^(Ibid., p. 9) He wrote no memo at the time of the discussion as it was not customary to write memos regarding leads that were discussed and subsequently ~~dismissed~~ ^{dismissed} as being ~~unimportant~~ ^{of little} importance. (Ibid.)

(Walter P. Hattigan), the person to whom (Casasins) 25 November 1963

letter was written, was then employed by the CIA as Chief of

(HSCA Staff Interview of CIA employee, 6/13/78, p.1) (Hattigan's recollection was in
the Soviet section of the (Paris station). ~~for 1963. He was not in an~~

interview with HSCA staff members that because of the nature of

(Casasins) position under (non-official) cover, (Casasins) frequently

wrote informal memos such as the one in FDIA #435-173-A which

were then passed on through the use of out-lets to the (Paris station). (Ibid.)

These memoranda would then be forwarded to CIA Headquarters,

generally by (Hattigan). However, in this particular instance, Robert G.

(Kempell), who served under (Hattigan), received and forwarded

the memorandum to Headquarters. (Hattigan) was in the hospital. (Ibid.)

~~for the time being~~

(Hattigan) expressed the general Agency opinion that had the CIA

wished to contact a returning defector, it would have done so through

the contacts Division of the
the Office of Operations but that it was not standard operating

procedure to interview ^{returning defectors} because this job fell within the FBI's

jurisdiction. (Ibid., p. 2)

11 (Haines) also told the HSCA
(Haines) stated that the CIA had a specific interest in Minak

^{as it was}
~~known~~ know that the city contained some type of special design plants

that may have involved aviation, nuclear energy or bacteriological

(Haines) interviewed of CIA employee, pp. 5-6.

surface. Consequently, although (Haines) ^{think} did not believe that LHO was

working in any type of security facility, ^{he believed that} ~~anyone~~ ^{who} would have been in

the area of those plants would have been of interest to the Agency. (Ibid., p. 6)

However, even with the presence of the design plants, Minak was
not identified as a security or military priority area. (Ibid.)

(Haines) believed that the CIA maintained a large volume of
information in the Minak radio factory in which Oswald worked. ^(Ibid.) This

information was stored in the Office of Research and Reporting. This office

was controlled by another CIA employee. Another former CIA employee,

(Donald Deenlyga) ⁰³ who worked in the Foreign Documents Division

in the Soviet Branch of the Directorate of Intelligence in 1962.

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told the HSCA that he specifically recalled collecting intelligence

regarding the Minsk Radio Plant. (HSCA 201- Interview of CIA Employee, 9/24/78, p.1).

in fact, ⁰³ [Benevise] claims that, during the summer of 1962, he reviewed a contact report from representatives of the CIA's New York field

office who interviewed a former Marine who had worked at the

Minsk Radio Plant following his defection to the USSR. (Ibid.) This

person, ⁰³ [Benevise] believes may have been Oswald, had been living with his family in Minsk. (Ibid.) ⁰³ [Benevise] advised the Committee that

the contact report was filed in a volume concerning the Minsk Radio Plant

which should be retrievable from the Industrial Registry Branch, which was

then a component of the Office of Central Reference, at that time. (Ibid.)

The HSCA requested that the CIA provide the Committee with the above-

described contact report and the volume of materials concerning the Minsk

Radio Plant. (HSCA 201- Interview of CIA Employee, 9/24/78, p.1). A review of the documents in the volume on

the Minsk Radio Plant revealed that no such contact report existed in that file.

(Outside Source Report of 10/17/78, JFK 201- #012,023).

The file review did indicate that in 1975, Daniel Selmon had made a similar request and was refused by the CIA that no such report existed. (Ibid.)

The Select Committee on Assassinations requested that the Central Intelligence Agency provide a written statement indicating whether

^{the CIA}
~~whether~~, from 1958-1963, interviewed or debriefed returning American

defectors to the Soviet Union as a matter of standard operating
(HSCA letter to CIA, 4/15/78).

procedure. The Agency was also requested to indicate the circum-

stances under which an interview would be initiated if such inter-

views were not conducted as standard operating procedure. (Ibid.)

The Agency's response indicated that the Counterintelligence Staff

reviewed the files of 117 persons who had "defected" to the USSR

between 1958 and 1963 and who had subsequently returned to the United States. (CIA Memorandum B. Hugh Tovar to Special Assistant to RFO for External Oversight, 4/20/78).

This review revealed that only ten of the 117 individuals had

been contacted, and that the CIA had no procedure for the systematic

debriefing of such persons. (Ibid.) ^{stated} the Agency maintained that

the contacts that were initiated ap-
peared to be based on "opportunity and circumstance." (Ibid.)

Another memorandum explained that the CIA had no standard operating procedure with respect to debriefing returning American defectors

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as the Agency relied upon the FBI for reporting the results of interviews

it may have conducted in connection with its responsibility for internal

(CIA Memorandum, Forw. to Special Asst. to Dir. for External Oversight, 5/25/78).

security matters. The Agency further stated that there were no manuals or

regulations for the period of 1958-1963 which specifically address the sub-

ject of American defectors. (Ibid.)

In fact, the ten persons with whom the CIA admitted having

had contact did not strictly meet the specific requirements as requested.

Seven of the ten individuals had not actually

defected to the USSR during the period 1958-1963, but had resided

(CIA Memo from Towar, 4/26/75)

there for at least ten years prior to 1958. Three of the ten individuals

returned to the United States and were subsequently debriefed after 1963. (Ibid.)

The CIA employee who conducted the research in preparation for the

Agency's response told the HSCA that the requirements he had utilized in arriving at his conclusions had been somewhat broader than those requested

in order to include all those persons regarded as defectors who were residing

in the Soviet Union during the time period in question, rather than just those who

actually defected at that time. (HSCA Staff Interview of CIA Employee, 7/26/75)

The House Select Committee on Assassinations conducted ~~in~~ a review of defectors' files in order to determine whether defectors

other than Oswald were routinely debriefed upon their return to the United States. The Committee requested that the CIA provide a

list of persons travelling to the Soviet Union during the period from 1958 to 1963, including both visitors and those persons considered by

the Agency to be "defectors." ^{In response,} ~~The Committee~~ ^{the Committee}

^{the CIA} ~~has~~ provided a computer listing of 380 individuals entitled "U.S.

Persons Who Have or May Have Defected to the USSR Between 1958-1963."

(Attachment to 27 January 75 Memo, E. Hugh Jones to S.A. to R&D) The Agency

stated that this listing represented ^{U.S. persons,} ~~individuals~~, including some non-

U.S. citizens who owed some measure of allegiance to the United States,

who had either defected ^{had} or shown some intention of defecting to the

USSR ^{within} the requested time period. (27 January 75 Memo, E. Hugh Jones to R&D)

As this list was compiled from a more detailed computer program

on American defectors, a more detailed description concerning these individuals was requested and provided in an expanded version of the original list. This machine listing included the following information ^{wherever available} ~~wherever available~~ for each individual: name, date and place of birth, 201 file number, ^{date} arrival in Soviet Union, departure from Soviet Union, employment in Soviet Union, most current address, and other miscellaneous information compiled from the individuals

201 file and for third agency documents regarding this individual. ("Expanded Computer List of U.S. Persons....")

The Committee compiled a list of persons who appeared from the information available in the Agency's expanded list, to be U.S. citizens born in the United States, who defected or attempted to defect to the Soviet Union between the years of 1958 and 1963 and who re-turned to the United States within the same period of time. ^{In addition,} ~~Reborn -~~

The Committee included ~~cluded in the list~~ individuals from an October 1960 State

Department ^{request for} ~~information~~ information from the CIA regarding ^{these} persons whom they considered to be defectors to the Soviet Union or Soviet bloc countries.

125 letters from State Department to CIA

like
Tennyson's
"Brooks
goes on
and on"

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The HSCA requested files on twenty-nine individuals who fit the above-described criteria and the CIA provided files on twenty-eight individuals on whom they maintained records. ^{These} 201 files were reviewed as well

as any existing Domestic Contact Division files regarding these persons.

The HSCA file review revealed that, in the case of six of the individuals, there is no indication that they ever returned to the United States. In some of these cases, the files contained a report from a source who observed or spoke with the subject and then reported the contact to the CIA, but there is no indication of direct contact with any of these persons on the part of the CIA.

In regard to the other twenty-two defectors, the file review ^{shows that} indicates there is no record of CIA contact with thirteen of them. Again, four of these

files contain a report by a source who advised the Agency of their contact. ^(Kissel, Kauter, 1977)

One file regarding a former military person contains a report of a debriefing conducted by military intelligence.

The circumstances of the CIA's contact with the four remaining defectors differed in each case. The file of one individual reflects that he had

actually been living in the USSR since 1933 and returned to the United

States in 1962. He was debriefed ^{in 1964} by a CIA officer using ²⁹ (Department of)

(Defense) Power after applying for employment in response to a newspaper ad-

vertisement. (Rev. H. Irving ^{in 1964}) Another returning defector, Harold Litvinell,

was unwittingly interviewed by a CIA ¹⁰ ~~in the American embassy~~ ^{office} in Copen-

hagen upon his departure from the Soviet Union en route to the United States.

Litvinell's file indicates that the Agency considered it desirable

that a full and controlled debriefing by the CIA and FBI be conducted

and Hagleton wrote to the FBI suggesting a joint debriefing, there is no

evidence in Litvinell's ²⁰ file nor in any OCS documents which suggest

further contact on the part of the CIA.

More extensive debriefings were conducted of the other two defectors. Robert E.

Hickman, a plastics expert with the Reed Development Corporation whose

defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 was widely publicized, returned to the

United States in June of 1962. Hickman had been employed in the

Soviet Union at the Leningrad Scientific Institute of Polymeric Materials.

Shortly after his return to the United States, Nikolai was debriefed in his

home territory by representatives from the CIA's Office of Operations and

SR/6 ^{in conjunction with representatives} ~~and~~ from the Air Force. It was decided that a more intensive

debriefing was in order and Nikolai was subsequently brought to the Washington,

D.C. area where he was debriefed for a period of two weeks. The debriefing

reports include a chronology of Nikolai's life and the CIA's assessment of

him as well as a large body of information regarding life in the Soviet

Union, Nikolai's work there and biographic information on persons he

had met during his residence there.

Likewise, Stefano Ricciardelli who had lived in the Soviet Union for

nearly four years, was contacted for purposes of debriefing ^{soon} after

his return to the United States ^{late} June of 1963. His initial debriefing

included such subjects as his motivation to defect to the USSR as well

as well as activities engaged in during his Moscow stay, selection

from Moscow to Rome and general aspects of life such as residence controls

and costs. While the CIA felt it was unfeasible to debrief Ricciardelli

more thoroughly due to their current status of attempting to regain U.S. citizenship. The Agency expressed an interest in eliciting more information on such topics as cost of living, medical care, consumer goods, telephone, transportation and restrictions upon travel within Kiev.

It becomes clear from the review of files on these defectors that debriefing of defectors ^{by the CIA} was, in fact, somewhat of a random occurrence. However, in the instances in which the Agency did choose to debrief returning American defectors, the Agency appeared to be interested in topics of general interest regarding life in certain areas of the Soviet Union. In this regard, the persons who were debriefed were similar to Oswald in that they defected and returned ^{within} the same general time period and ^{each} ~~also~~ spent this time in the Soviet Union in areas of interest to the CIA.

It appears from an examination of all available materials, that Lee Harvey Oswald was not interviewed by the CIA following his return to the United States from the Soviet Union. Although persons in a branch of the Soviet Russia Division expressed an interest in interviewing Oswald, they never followed up on this interest. There is also no indication that the ~~Director~~^{Collection Division} of the Office of Operations interviewed Oswald.

While the CIA did conduct interviews of some tourists who visited the Soviet Union during ~~the~~^{the} period 1959-1963 as well as some American citizens who defected to the Soviet Union and then returned to the United States, there was no standard policy to interview all persons in either category. Thus, the fact that Oswald was not interviewed

was more the rule than the exception according to procedures followed by the CIA at that point in time.

HSCA was advised that at the time of Oswald's return, there were many Soviet citizens leaving USSR & defecting program probably concentrated on Moscow.
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