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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 <sup>unusual duration</sup> length of his residence and employment there. The <sup>response</sup> 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 alleviated the necessity for a routine debriefing.

alleviated(?)

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 <sup>activity</sup> <sup>potential</sup> the case.

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the allegation  
from the  
the response

In response to the Warren Commission's request of  
John A. Malone, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, submitted  
an affidavit stating that the CIA had had no relationship  
of any kind with Lee Harvey Oswald. <sup>The affidavit,</sup> ~~he then~~ dated 18 May 1964,

~~states~~ <sup>certifies</sup> that "the Agency never contacted him, interviewed him,  
talked with him, or received or collected any reports or information  
from him, or communicated with him, directly or indirectly, in

(W.C. 566) = 870, 17H 566)  
any other manner." <sup>Mr. Malone's testimony before the Warren Com-</sup>  
<sup>on May 14, 1964 gave the same report on</sup>  
<sup>mission reflects the same assertion as to</sup> the Agency's lack of contact  
with Oswald. <sup>specifically</sup> Mr. Malone was asked whether the CIA had had  
any contact with Oswald during his stay in the Soviet Union.

Malone replied, "No; not to my knowledge, nor to the knowledge  
of those who would have been in a position to have made such  
(Warren Commission Hearing: Exhibit, SH 123)  
contact, nor according to any record we have." He also responded  
negatively to the question of whether the CIA had any personal contact  
with Oswald subsequent to his return to the United States. (Ibid.)

was it, or  
was it not,  
in response  
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McLone's affidavit was <sup>partially</sup> ~~partially~~ investigated 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 other embassy officials. (CIA FOIA Docu-  
ment #609-756)

The CIA memoranda reporting this <sup>story</sup> ~~information~~ both internally and  
to the Warren Commission advises that this allegation is totally unfounded.

(Ibid. and CIA FOIA Document #610-263). The <sup>memoranda</sup> ~~internal~~ explain 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 C. Snyder, who <sup>was</sup> the Second Secretary of the

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

the despatch, had any CIA connection. <sup>CIA FILE # 62-104755</sup>

However, the memorandum acknowledged that Holt Snyder and Edward

E. Finner, 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. <sup>Although the CIA's internal review</sup>

records indicate the existence of a history of Agency interest in ~~actually being employed by the~~

Finner, 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~~ <sup>as stated</sup> to the Warren Commission

that the CIA never interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald. A February

1972 letter from Bernard Fensterwald to the Assistant Director of

the CIA requests any records pertaining to a "derisive" 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~~ <sup>stated position</sup> 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 policymaker, we are certainly going to try to interview  
(CIA FOIA Rev. # 961-427-A6)

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

There follows an exchange of letters between Fensterwald and

Angus M. Thuermer who was the Assistant to the Director of the CIA

in which Thuermer refers Fensterwald to the testimony of Malone and

Holmes before the Warren Commission. Thuermer states that "the testimony

is still relied; therefore the information you request does not exist." (CIA FOIA  
#962-927-AM)

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Thuermer: When Oswald responds to this answer with a request for

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Thuermer's own position with respect to the records rather than "conclu-

sions based upon statements of persons other than yourself," Thuermer

ends the challenge by stating that his previous response was

"a simple declarative statement in the best possible authenticity 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 #962-927-AP).

In April of 1978, the HSCA requested that the CIA provide a state-

ment as to whether Lee Harvey Oswald was ever contacted, spoken to

or interviewed by anyone directly or indirectly representing the CIA.  
(HSCA H-10 to CIA, 4/1/78)

The Agency responded in the same manner it had used in responding to

previous requests from other sources, by way of referring the Committee

to the testimony of Holmes and Malone before the Warren Commission and to Malone's  
affidavit denying any Agency contact with Oswald. (CIA Statement Pertaining to HSCA  
Request, 7/11/78)

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A 25 November 1963 CIA Memorandum (Now located in LHA's  
RON file as CIA FOIA #435-173-A) is the only documented evidence  
of any CIA interest in interviewing Oswald. <sup>The memorandum written</sup>  
~~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 <sup>sometimes</sup> ~~with~~

<sup>in Summer</sup> ~~the then~~ 1960 - with the then Chief and Deputy Chief of the 6 Research

Section the laying on of interviews through KUTAMP 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 <sup>the</sup> HSCA staff members 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. <sup>(CIA Staff Interview of CIA Employee, 5/17/78, p. 1)</sup> He

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

from defectors concerning details about Soviet life which could

then 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, Casarin'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 after 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)

Casarin 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

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to debrief Oswald who 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. <sup>stated that</sup> He did not believe that this had been done at

that time because <sup>this</sup> ~~such~~ type of information would have been routinely

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

occurred. <sup>(Ibid., p. 5)</sup> ~~Relative~~ information he had on Oswald at the time was in

the form of State Department dispatches. (Ibid.)

In the memorandum, Casassa states that he told his subordinates

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

(CIA FOIA Document # 435-173-A).

we need, because this individual looks odd." He explained in the

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, 8/17/85, p. 5)

Casaretti 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. <sup>(Ibid., p. 9)</sup> 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~~ <sup>dismissed</sup> as being ~~unimportant~~ <sup>unimportant</sup>. (Ibid.)

Walter P. Haltigan, the person to whom Casaccia's 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) Haltigan's reflection was in the Soviet section of the Paris station. ~~for 1963. He replaced [redacted] in an~~

~~interview with HSCA staff members~~ that because of the nature of

Casaccia's position under non-official cover, Casaccia frequently

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

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

These memoranda would then be forwarded to CIA Headquarters,

generally by Haltigan. However, in this particular instance, Robert L.

Kempell, who served under Haltigan, received and forwarded

the memorandum to Headquarters (as Haltigan was in the hospital. (Ibid.)

~~for 1963/1964~~

Haltigan expressed the general Agency opinion that had the CIA

wanted 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 <sup>returning defectors</sup> because this got fell within the FBI's  
jurisdiction. (Ibid., p. 2)

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Mr. Thomas also told the HSCA  
Lasasna stated that the CIA had a specific interest in Minsk

<sup>as it was</sup>  
~~known~~ known that the city contained some type of special design plants

that may have involved aviation, nuclear energy or bacteriological

(HSCA Staff Interview of CIA employee, pp. 5-6).

surface. Consequently, although <sup>Lasasna</sup> ~~he~~ did not <sup>think</sup> ~~believe~~ that LHO was

working in any type of security facility, <sup>he believed that</sup> ~~anyone~~ <sup>who</sup> 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, Minsk was

not identified as a security or military priority area. (Ibid.)

Lasasna believed that the CIA maintained a large volume of

information in the Minsk radio factory in which Oswald worked. <sup>(Ibid.)</sup> This

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

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

Donald Dennisly, who worked in the Foreign Documents Division

in the Soviet Branch of the Directorate of Intelligence in 1962

told the HSCA that he specifically recalled collecting intelligence  
regarding the Minsk Radio Plant. (HSCA Case Interview of CIA Employee, 9/24/78,  
p.1).  
In fact, Bereznya claims that, during ~~months~~ <sup>the summer of 1962</sup>, 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, who Bereznya believes may have been Lee Oswald, had been doing  
with his family in Minsk. (Ibid.) Bereznya 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 MORG. (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 Case Interview of CIA Employee, 9/24/78, p.1). A review of the documents in the volumes in  
the Minsk Radio Plant revealed that no such contact report existed in that file.

(CIA Case Interview of CIA Employee, 9/24/78,  
p.12, 623)

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

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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 procedure. (NSA letter to CIA, 4/5/78.) The Agency was also requested to indicate the circumstances under which an interview would be initiated if such interviews 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 RMO for External Oversight, 4/20/78.) This review revealed that only ten of the 117 individuals had been contacted <sup>by any component within the CIA</sup> and that the CIA had no procedure for the systematic debriefing of such persons. <sup>(Ibid.)</sup> ~~Instead,~~ <sup>the Agency maintained that</sup> the contacts that were initiated appeared 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 security matters. (CIA Memorandum, Tovar to Special Asst. to Dir. for External Oversight, 5/25/78). The Agency further stated that there were no manuals or regulations for the period of 1958-1963 which specifically address the subject of American defectors. (Ibid.)

In fact, the ten persons with whom the CIA admitted having contact did not strictly meet the specific requirements as requested in the HSCA's request. Seven of the ten individuals had not actually defected to the USSR during the period 1958-1963, but had resided there for at least ten years prior to 1958. (CIA Memo from Tovar, 4/26/78) 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's Document of CIA Employee, 7/21/78)

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The House Select Committee on Assassinations conducted ~~its own~~ 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." (TOLSON to WEAVER, 11/1/63) <sup>In response</sup> ~~The Committee~~ <sup>the CIA</sup> ~~has~~ provided a computer listing of 350 individuals entitled "U.S.

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

(Attachment to 27 January 75 Memo, B. Hugh Jones to SA, to HAO) The Agency stated that this listing represented <sup>U.S. persons,</sup> ~~individuals~~, including some non-U.S. citizens who owed some measure of allegiance to the United States, who had either defected <sup>led</sup> or shown some intention of defecting to the USSR <sup>within</sup> the requested time period. (27 January 75 Memo, B. Hugh Jones to HAO)

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 <sup>wherever it was available</sup> ~~where available~~ for each individual: name, date and place of birth, 201 file number, <sup>date</sup> arrival in Soviet Union, departure from Soviet Union, employment in Soviet Union, most current address, and other miscellaneous information compiled from the individual's 201 file and/or third agency documents regarding this individual. ("expandable 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 returned to the United States within the same period of time. <sup>In addition,</sup> ~~known~~

<sup>the Committee included</sup> ~~cluded in the list~~ were individuals from an October 1960 State Department <sup>request for</sup> ~~information~~ information from the CIA regarding <sup>these</sup> persons whom they considered to be defectors to the Soviet Union or Soviet bloc countries. (25 letters from State Department to CIA)

Like  
Tennyson's  
"Brooks"  
goes on and  
on, and on

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. <sup>These</sup> 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 <sup>shows that</sup> 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 <sup>(Kissel, Kantor, 2/11/72)</sup>. 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 <sup>in 1964</sup> by a CIA officer using

JFK Act 5 (g)(2)(D)

[redacted] Ever after applying for employment in response to a newspaper advertisement (<sup>Rev. H. Irving</sup> <sup>Am. Soc. of Life</sup>) another returning defector, Harold Litvinell,

was unwittingly interviewed by a CIA <sup>officer</sup> [redacted] in open-

JFK Act 5 (g)(2)(D)

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

While Litvinell's file indicates that the Agency considered it desirable

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

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

evidence in Litvinell's 201 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.

Nichols, a plastics expert with the Reed Development Corporation whose

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

United States in June of 1962.

Nichols had been employed in the

Soviet Union at the Leningrad Scientific Institute of Polytechnical Sciences.

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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 <sup>in conjunction with representatives</sup> SR/6 ~~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, Levko Kucenidelle who had lived in the Soviet Union for nearly four years, was contacted for purposes of debriefing <sup>soon</sup> shortly after his return to the United States <sup>in</sup> 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, relocation from Moscow to Kiev and general aspects of life such as residence, contacts and costs. While the CIA felt it was unfeasible to debrief Kucenidelle

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more thoroughly due to his 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, highways, transportation and restrictions upon travel within Kieo.

It becomes clear from the review of files on these defectors that debriefing of defectors <sup>by the CIA</sup> 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 <sup>within</sup> ~~to the~~ the same general time period and <sup>each</sup> ~~also~~ spent his time in the Soviet Union in areas of interest to the CIA.

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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 ~~Directorate~~ <sup>Collection Division</sup> of the Office of Operations interviewed Oswald.

While the CIA did conduct interviews of some tourists who visited the Soviet Union during ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> 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 time of Oswald's return, there were many Soviet citizens leaving USSR & defecting program probably concentrating on them.