had been made because "he saw a chance to make a few dollars on the side." 514

Klause's testimony receives some corroboration from Bernard Weissman's testimony that he saw a copy of one of the "Wanted for Treason" handbills on the floor of General Walker's station wagon shortly after November 22. 515 Other details of the manner in which the handbills were printed have also been verified. 516 Moreover, Weissman testified that neither he nor any of his associates had anything to do with the handbill or were acquainted with Surrey, Klauser, Lettercraft Printing Co., or Johnson Printing Co. 517 Klauser and Surrey, as well as General Walker, testified that they were unacquainted with Lee Harvey Oswald and had not heard of him prior to the afternoon of November 22, 518 The Commission has found no evidence of any connection between those responsible for the handbill and Lee Harvey Oswald or the assassination.

Contacts With the Cuban and Soviet Embassies in Mexico City and the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Eight weeks before the assassination, Oswald traveled to Mexico City where he visited both the Cuban and Soviet Embassies.* Oswald's wife knew of this trip before he went, 519 but she denied such knowledge until she testified before the Commission. 520 The Commission undertook an intensive investigation to determine Oswald's purpose and activities on this journey, with specific reference to reports that Oswald was an agent of the Cuban or Soviet Governments. As a result of its investigation, the Commission believes that it has been able to reconstruct and explain most of Oswald's actions during this time. A detailed chronological account of this trip appears in appendix XIII.

Trip to Mexico -- Oswald was in Mexico from September 26, 1963, until October 3, 1963. 521 (See Commission Exhibits Nos. 2478, 2481, p. 800.) Marina Oswald testified that Oswald had told her that the purpose of the trip was to evade the American prohibition on travel to Cuba and to reach that country. 522 She cautioned her that the trip and its purpose were to be kept strictly secret. 523 She testified that he had earlier laid plans to reach Cuba by hijacking an airliner flying out of New Orleans, but she refused to cooperate and urged him to give it up, which he finally did. 524 Witnesses who spoke with Oswald while he was on a bus going to Mexico City also testified that Oswald told them he intended to reach Cuba by way of Mexico, and that he hoped to meet Fidel Castro after he arrived. 525 When Oswald spoke to the Cuban and Soviet consular officials in Mexico City, he represented that he intended to travel to the Soviet Union and requested

*Note at bottom of page: The Soviet Embassy in Mexico City includes consular as well as diplomatic personnel in a single building. The Cuban Embassy and Cuban Consulate in Mexico City, though in separate buildings, are in the same compound. Both the Soviet and the Cuban establishments will be referred to throughout the report simply as Embassies.

Page 300

This page reproduces COMMISSION EXHIBITS No. 2481 and 2478: Oswald's Application for Tourist Card and Mexican Tourist Card

Page 301

an "in-transit" Cuban visa to permit him to enter Cuba on September 30 on the way to the Soviet Union. Marina Oswald has testified that these statements were deceptions designed to get him to Cuba. 526 Thus, although it is possible that Oswald intended to continue on to Russia from Cuba, the evidence makes it more likely that he intended to remain in Cuba. 527
Oswald departed from New Orleans probably about noon on September 25 and arrived in Mexico City at about 10 a.m. on September 27.528 In Mexico City he embarked on a series of visits to the Soviet and Cuban Embassies, which occupied most of his time during the first 2 days of his visit. At the Cuban Embassy, he requested an "in-transit" visa to permit him to visit Cuba on his way to the Soviet Union. 529 Oswald was informed that he could not obtain a visa for entry into Cuba unless he first obtained a visa to enter the U.S.S.R.,530 and the Soviet Embassy told him that he could not expect an answer on his application for a visa for the Soviet Union for about 4 months.531 Oswald carried with him newspaper clippings, letters and various documents, some of them forged or containing false information, purporting to show that he was a "friend" of Cuba.532 With these papers and his record of previous residence in the Soviet Union and marriage to a Soviet national, he tried to curry favor with both Embassies.533 Indeed, his wife testified that in her opinion Oswald's primary purpose in having engaged in Fair Play for Cuba Committee activities was to create a public record that he was a "friend" of Cuba.534 He made himself especially unpopular at the Cuban Embassy by persisting in his demands that as a sympathizer in Cuban objectives he ought to be given a visa. This resulted in a sharp argument with the consul, Eusebio Azque.535

By Saturday, September 28, 1963, Oswald had failed to obtain visas at both Embassies. 536 From Sunday, September 29, through Wednesday morning, October 2, when he left Mexico City on a bus bound for the United States, Oswald spent considerable time making his travel arrangements, sightseeing and checking again with the Soviet Embassy to learn whether anything had happened on his visa application.537 Marina Oswald testified that when she first saw him after his return to the United States he was disappointed and discouraged at his failure to reach Cuba.538

The general outlines of Oswald's activities in Mexico, particularly the nature and extent of his contacts at the Cuban Embassy, were learned very early in the investigation. An important source of information relating to his business at the Cuban Embassy was Senora Silvia Tirado de Duran, a Mexican national employed in the visa section of the Cuban Embassy, who was questioned intensively by Mexican authorities soon after the assassination. 539 An excerpt from the report of the Mexican Government summarized the crucial portion of Senora Duran's recollection of Oswald. In translation it reads as follows:

... she remembered ... [that Lee Harvey Oswald] was the name of an American who had come to the Cuban Consulate to

Page 302

obtain a visa to travel to Cuba in transit to Russia, the latter part of September or the early part of October of this year, and in support of his application had shown his passport., in which it was noted that he had lived in that country for a period of three years; his labor-card from the same country written in the Russian language; and letters in that same language. He had presented evidence that he was married to a Russian woman, and also that he was apparently the leader of an organization in the city of New Orleans called "Fair ... [Play] for Cuba," claiming that he should be accepted as a "friend" of the Cuban Revolution. Accordingly, the declarant, complying with her duties, took down all of the information and completed the appropriate application form; and the declarant, admittedly exceeding her responsibilities, informally telephoned the Russian consulate, with the intention of doing what she could to facilitate issuance of the Russian visa to Lee Harvey Oswald. However, they told her that there would be a delay of about four months in processing the case, which annoyed the applicant since, according to his statement, he was in a great hurry to obtain visas that would enable him to travel to Russia, insisting on his right to do so in view of his background and his loyalty and his activities in behalf of the Cuban movement. The declarant was unable to recall accurately whether or not the applicant told her he was a member of the Communist Party, but he did say that his wife ... was then in New York City, and would follow him, ... [Senora Duran stated] that when
Oswald understood that it was not possible to give him a Cuban visa without his first having obtained the Russian visa, ... he became very excited or angry, and accordingly, the affiant called Consul Ascue [sic], ... [who] came out and began a heated discussion in English with Oswald, that concluded by Ascue telling him that "if it were up to him, he would not give him the visa," and "a person of his type was harming the Cuban Revolution rather than helping it," it being understood that in their conversation they were talking about the Russian Socialist Revolution and not the Cuban. Oswald maintained that he had two reasons for requesting that his visa be issued promptly, and they were: one, that his tourist permit in Mexico was about to expire; and the other, that he had to get to Russia as quickly as possible. Despite her annoyance, the declarant gave Oswald a paper ... in which she put down her name, "Silvia Duran," and the number of the telephone at the consulate, which is "11-28-47" and the visa application was processed anyway. It was sent to the Ministry of [Foreign] Relations of Cuba; from which a routine reply was received some fifteen to thirty days later, approving the visa, but on the condition that the Russian visa be obtained first, although she does not recall whether or not Oswald later telephoned her at the Consulate number that she gave him.540

Page 303

This page reproduces COMMISSION EXHIBIT No. 2564: Oswald’s Application for a Visa for Travel to Cuba and the Reply of the Cuban Government

Page 304

With the dates of Oswald’s entry into and departure from Mexico, which had been obtained from the records of the Mexican Immigration Service very shortly after the assassination, the Government of Mexico initiated a thorough investigation to uncover as much information as possible on Oswald’s trip.541 Representatives of U.S. agencies worked in close liaison with the Mexican law enforcement authorities. The result of this investigative effort was to corroborate the statements of Senora Duran and to verify the essentials of Oswald’s activities in Mexico as outlined above.

Senora Duran is a well-educated native of Mexico, who was 26 years old at the time of her interrogation. She is married to Senor Horacio Duran Navarro, a 40-year-old industrial designer, and has a young child. Although Senora Duran denies being a member of the Communist Party or otherwise connected with it, both Durans have been active in far left, political affairs in Mexico, believe in Marxist ideology, and sympathize with the government of Fidel Castro.542 and Senor Duran has written articles for El Dia, a pro-Communist newspaper in Mexico City.543 The Commission has reliable evidence from a confidential source that Senora Duran as well as other personnel at the Cuban Embassy were genuinely upset upon receiving news of President Kennedy’s death. Senora Duran’s statements were made to Mexican officials soon after the assassination,544 and no significant inaccuracies in them have been detected. Documents fitting the description given by Senora Duran of the documents Oswald had shown her plus a notation which she said she had given him, were found among his possessions after his arrest.545

The Cuban Government was asked to document and confirm the essentials of Senora Duran’s testimony. Its response, which has been included in its entirety in this Report, included a summary statement of Oswald’s activities at the Cuban Embassy,546 a photograph of the application for a visa he completed there,547 and a photograph of the communication from Havana rejecting the application unless he could first present a Soviet visa.548 (See Commission Exhibit No. 2564, p. 306.) The information on these documents concerning Oswald’s date of birth, American passport number and activities and statements at the Embassy is consistent with other information available to the Commission.549 CIA experts have given their opinion that the handwriting on the visa application which purports to be Oswald’s is in fact his and that, although the handwritten notations on the
bottom of the document are too brief and faint to permit a conclusive determination, they are probably Senora Duran's.550 The clothes which Oswald was wearing in the photograph which appears on the application appear to be the same as some of those found among his effects after the assassination, and the photograph itself appears to be from the same negative as a photograph found among his effects.551 Nothing on any of the documents raises a suspicion that they might not be authentic.

Page 305

By far the most important confirmation of Senora Duran's testimony, however, has been supplied by confidential sources of extremely high reliability available to the United States in Mexico. The information from these sources establishes that her testimony was truthful and accurate in all material respects. The identities of these sources cannot be disclosed without destroying their future usefulness to the United States.

The investigation of the Commission has produced considerable testimonial and documentary evidence establishing the precise time of Oswald's journey, his means of transportation, the hotel at which he stayed in Mexico City, and a restaurant at which he often ate. All known persons whom Oswald may have met while in Mexico, including passengers on the buses he rode, 552 and the employees and guests of the hotel where he stayed, 553 were interviewed. No credible witness has been located who saw Oswald with any unidentified person while in Mexico City; to the contrary, he was observed traveling alone to and from Mexico City, 554 at his hotel, 555 and at the nearby restaurant where he frequently ate.556 A hotel guest stated that on one occasion he sat down at a table with Oswald at the restaurant because no empty table was available, but that neither spoke to the other because of the language barrier.557 Two Australian girls who saw Oswald on the bus to Mexico City relate that he occupied a seat next to a man who has been identified as Albert Osborne, an elderly itinerant preacher.558 Osborne denies that Oswald was beside him on the bus.559 To the other passengers on the bus it appeared that Osborne and Oswald had not previously met, 560 and extensive investigation of Osborne has revealed no further contact between him and Oswald. Osborne's responses to Federal investigators on matters unrelated to Oswald have proved inconsistent and unreliable, and, therefore, based on the contrary evidence and Osborne's lack of reliability, the Commission has attached no credence to his denial that Oswald was beside him on the bus. Investigation of his background and activities, however, disclose no basis for suspecting him of any involvement in the assassination.561

Investigation of the hotel at which Oswald stayed has failed to uncover any evidence that the hotel is unusual in any way that could relate to Oswald's visit. It is not especially popular among Cubans, and there is no indication that it is used as a meeting place for extremist or revolutionary organizations.562 Investigation of other guests of the hotel who were there when Oswald was has failed to uncover anything creating suspicion.563 Oswald's notebook which he carried with him to Mexico City contained the telephone number of the Cuban Airlines Office in Mexico City; 564 however, a Cuban visa is required by Mexican authorities before an individual may enplane for Cuba, 565 and a confidential check of the Cuban Airlines Office uncovered no evidence that Oswald visited their offices while in the city.566

Allegations of conspiracy.—Literally dozens of allegations of a conspiratorial contact between Oswald and agents of the Cuban Government have been investigated by the Commission. Among the claims made were allegations that Oswald had made a previous trip to

Page 306

This page reproduces COMMISSION EXHIBIT NO. 1400: map showing Lee Harvey Oswald's
movements in Mexico City.

Page 307

Mexico City in early September to receive money and orders for the assassination, 567 that he had been flown to a secret airfield somewhere in or near the Yucatan Peninsula, 568 that he might have made contacts in Mexico City with a Communist from the United States shortly before the assassination, 569 and that Oswald assassinated the President at the direction of a particular Cuban agent who met with him in the United States and paid him $7,000. 570 A letter was received from someone in Cuba alleging the writer had attended a meeting where the assassination had been discussed as part of a plan which would soon include the death of other non-Communist leaders in the Americas. 571 The charge was made in a Cuban expatriate publication that in a speech he delivered 5 days after the assassination, while he was under the influence of liquor, Fidel Castro made a slip of the tongue and said, "The first time Oswald was in Cuba," thereby giving away the fact that Oswald had made one or more surreptitious trips to that country. 572

Some stories linked the assassination to anti-Castro groups who allegedly were engaged in obtaining illicit firearms in the United States, one such claim being that these groups killed the President as part of a bargain with some illicit organizations who would then supply them with firearms as payment. 573 Other rumors placed Oswald in Miami, Fla., at various times, allegedly in pro-Cuban activities there. 574 The assassination was claimed to have been carried out by Chinese Communists operating jointly with the Cubans. 575 Oswald was also alleged to have met with the Cuban Ambassador in a Mexico City restaurant and to have driven off in the Ambassador's car for a private talk. 576 Castro himself, it was alleged, 2 days after the assassination called for the files relating to Oswald's dealings with two members of the Cuban diplomatic mission in the Soviet Union; the inference drawn was that the "dealings" had occurred and had established a secret subversive relationship which continued through Oswald's life. 577 Without exception, the rumors and allegations of a conspiratorial contact were shown to be without any factual basis, in some cases the product of mistaken identification.

Illustrative of the attention given to the most serious allegations is the case of "D," a young Latin American secret agent who approached U.S. authorities in Mexico shortly after the assassination and declared that he saw Lee Harvey Oswald receiving $6,500 to kill the President. Among other details, "D" said that at about noon on September 18, waiting to conduct some business at the Cuban consulate, he saw a group of three persons conversing in a patio a few feet away. One was a tall, thin Negro with reddish hair, obviously dyed, who spoke rapidly in both Spanish and English, and another was a man he said was Lee Harvey Oswald. A tall Cuban joined the group momentarily and passed some currency to the Negro. The Negro then allegedly said to Oswald in English, "I want to kill the man." Oswald replied, "You're not man enough, I can do it." The Negro then said in Spanish, "I can't go with you, I have a lot to do." Oswald replied, "The people are waiting for me back there." The Negro then gave Oswald $6,500 in large-denomination American bills, saying, "This isn't much." After hearing this conversation, "D" said that he telephoned the American Embassy in Mexico City several times prior to the assassination in an attempt to report his belief that someone important in the United States was to be killed, but was finally told by someone at the Embassy to stop wasting his time.

"D" and his allegations were immediately subjected to intensive investigation. His former employment as an agent for a Latin American country was confirmed, although his superiors had no knowledge of his presence in Mexico or the assignment described by "D." Four days after "D" first appeared the
U.S. Government was informed by the Mexican authorities that "D" had admitted in writing that his whole narrative about Oswald was false. He said that he had never seen Oswald anywhere, and that he had not seen anybody paid money in the Cuban Embassy. He also admitted that he never tried to telephone the American Embassy in September and that his first call to the Embassy was after the assassination. "D" said that his motive in fabricating the story was to help get himself admitted into the United States so that he could there participate in action against Fidel Castro. He said that he hated Castro and hoped that the story he made up would be believed and would cause the United States to "take action" against him.

Still later, When questioned by American authorities, "D" claimed that he had been pressured into retracting his statement by the Mexican police and that the retraction, rather than his first statement, was false. A portion of the American questioning was carried out with the use of a polygraph machine, with the consent of "D." When told that the machine indicated that he was probably lying, "D" said words to the effect that he "must be mistaken." Investigation in the meantime had disclosed that the Embassy extension number "D" said he had called would not have given him the person he said he spoke to, and that no one at the Embassy--clerks, secretaries, or officers--had any recollection of his calls. In addition, Oswald spoke little, if any, Spanish. That he could have carried on the alleged conversation with the red-headed Negro in the Cuban Embassy, part of which was supposed to have been in Spanish, was therefore doubtful. "D" now said that he was uncertain as to the date when he saw "someone who looked like Oswald" at the Cuban Embassy, and upon reconsideration, he now thought it was on a Tuesday, September 17, rather than September 18. On September 17, however, Oswald visited the Louisiana State Unemployment Commission in New Orleans and also cashed a check from the Texas Employment Commission at the Winn-Dixie Store No. 1425 in New Orleans. On the basis of the retractions made by "D" when he heard the results of the polygraph examination, and on the basis of discrepancies which appeared in his story, it was concluded that "D" was lying.

The investigation of the Commission has thus produced no evidence that Oswald's trip to Mexico was in any way connected with the assassination of President Kennedy, nor has it uncovered evidence that the Cuban Government had any involvement in the assassination. To the contrary, the Commission has been advised by the CIA and FBI that secret and reliable sources corroborate the statements of Senora Duran in all material respects, and that the Cuban Government had no relationship with Lee Harvey Oswald other than that described by Senora Duran. Secretary of State Rusk also testified that after the assassination "there was very considerable concern in Cuba as to whether they would be held responsible and what the effect of that might be on their own position and their own safety." 579

Contacts with the Soviet Embassy in the United States.--Soon after the Oswalds reached the United States in June 1962 they wrote to the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C. Oswald requested information about subscriptions to Russian newspapers and magazines and ultimately did subscribe to several Russian journals. Soviet law required Marina Oswald, as a Soviet citizen living abroad, to remain in contact with her nation's Embassy and to file various papers occasionally.580 In 1963, after Oswald had experienced repeated employment difficulties, there were further letters when the Oswalds sought permission to return to the Soviet Union. The first such request was a letter written by Marina Oswald on February 17, 1963. She wrote that she wished to return to Russia but that her husband would stay in the United States because "he is an American by nationality." 581 She was informed on March 8, 1963, that it would take from 5 to 6 months to process the application.582 The Soviet Union made available to the Commission what purports to be the entire correspondence between the Oswalds and the Russian Embassy in the United States.583 This material has been
checked for codes and none has been detected. With the possible exception of a letter which Oswald wrote to the Soviet Embassy after his return from Mexico City, discussed below, there is no material which gives any reason for suspicion. The implications of all of this correspondence for an understanding of Lee Harvey Oswald's personality and motivation is discussed in the following chapter.

Oswald's last letter to the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C., dated November 9, 1963, began by stating that it was written "to inform you of recent events since my meetings with Comrade Kostin in the Embassy of the Soviet Union, Mexico City, Mexico." The envelope bears a postmark which appears to be November 12, 1963. Ruth Paine has testified that Oswald spent the weekend at her home working on the letter and that she observed one preliminary draft. A piece of paper which was identified as one of these drafts was found among Oswald's effects after the assassination. (See Commission Exhibits Nos. 15, 103, p. 311.) According to Marina Oswald, her husband retyped the envelope 10 times.

Information produced for the Commission by the CIA is to the effect that the person referred to in the letter as "comrade Kostin" was probably Valery Vladimirovich Kostikov, a member of the consular staff of the Soviet Union in Mexico City. He is also one of the KGB officers stationed at the Embassy. It is standard Soviet procedure for KGB officers stationed in embassies and in consulates to carry on the normal duties of such a position in addition to the undercover activities. The Commission has identified the Cuban consul referred to in Oswald's letter as Senor Eusebio Azque (also "Ascue"), the man with whom Oswald argued at the Cuban Embassy, who was in fact replaced. The CIA advised the Commission:

We surmise that the references in Oswald's 9 November letter to a man who had since been replaced must refer to Cuban Consul Eusebio Azque, who left Mexico for Cuba on permanent transfer on 18 November 1963, four days before the assassination. Azque had been in Mexico for 18 years and it was known as early as September 1963 that Azque was to be replaced. His replacement did arrive in September. Azque was scheduled to leave in October but did not leave until 18 November.

We do not know who might have told Oswald that Azque or any other Cuban had been or was to be replaced, but we speculate that Silvia Duran or some Soviet official might have mentioned it if Oswald complained about Azque's alteration with him.

When asked to explain the letter, Marina Oswald was unable to add anything to an understanding of its contents. Some light on its possible meaning can be shed by comparing it with the early draft. When the differences between the draft and the final document are studied, and especially when crossed-out words are taken into account, it becomes apparent that Oswald was intentionally obfuscating the true state of affairs in order to make his trip to Mexico sound as mysterious and important as possible.

For example, the first sentence in the second paragraph of the letter reads, "I was unable to remain in Mexico indefinitely because of my Mexican visa restrictions which was for 15 days only." The same sentence in the draft begins before the words are crossed out, "I was unable to remain in Mexico City because I considered useless..." As already mentioned, the Commission has good evidence that Oswald's trip to Mexico was indeed "useless" and that he returned to Texas with that conviction. The first draft, therefore, spoke the truth, but Oswald rewrote the sentence to imply that he had to leave because his visa was about to expire. This is false; Oswald's tourist card still had a full week to run when he departed from Mexico on October 3.

The next sentence in the letter reads, "I could not take a chance on requesting a new visa unless I
used my real name, so I returned to the United States." The fact is that he did use his real name for his tourist card, and in all dealings with the Cuban Embassy, the Russian Embassy and elsewhere. Oswald did use the name of "Lee" on the trip, but as indicated below, he did so only sporadically and probably as the result of a clerical error. In the opinion of the Commission, based upon its knowledge of Oswald, the letter constitutes no more than a clumsy effort to ingratiate himself with the Soviet Embassy.

Page 311

This page reproduces COMMISSION EXHIBIT 15: Oswald's Letter to the Embassy, U.S.S.R., WASHINGTON, D.C.; and COMMISSION EXHIBIT 103: Preliminary Draft

Page 312

Return to Top

Investigation of Other Activities

Oswald's use of post office boxes and false names.—After his return from the Soviet Union, Lee Harvey Oswald is known to have received his mail at post office boxes and to have used different aliases on numerous occasions. Since either practice is susceptible of use for clandestine purposes, the Commission has directed attention to both for signs that Oswald at some point made undercover contact with other persons who might have been connected with the assassination.

Oswald is known to have opened three post office boxes during 1962 and 1963. On October 9, 1962, the same day that he arrived in Dallas from Fort Worth, and before establishing a residence there, he opened box No. 2915 at the Dallas General Post Office. This box was closed on May 14, 1963, shortly after Oswald had moved to New Orleans. That portion of the post office box application listing the names of those persons other than the applicant entitled to receive mail at the box was discarded in accordance with postal regulations after the box was closed; hence, it is not known what names other than Oswald's were listed on that form. However, as discussed in chapter IV, Oswald is known to have received the assassination rifle under the name of A. Hitell and his Smith & Wesson revolver under the name of A. J. Hidell at that box. On June 3, 1963, Oswald opened box No. 30061 at the Lafayette Square Substation in New Orleans. Marina Oswald and A. J. Hidell were listed as additional persons entitled to receive mail at this box. Immediately before leaving for Mexico City in late September, Oswald submitted a request to forward his mail to the Paines' address in Irving, and the box was closed on September 26. On November 1, 1963, he opened box No. 6225 at the Dallas Post Office Terminal Annex. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee and the American Civil Liberties Union were listed as also being entitled to receive mail at this box.

Oswald's use of post office boxes is consistent with other information known about him. His frequent changes of address and receipt of Communist and other political literature would appear to have provided Oswald reason to have rented postal boxes. These were the explanations for his use of the boxes which he provided Postal Inspector H. D. Holmes on November 24. Moreover, on October 14, 1963, he had moved into a room on Beckley Avenue under the name of O. H. Lee 601 and it would have been extremely difficult for Oswald to have received his mail at that address without having disclosed his true name. The boxes cost Oswald only $1.50 or less per month.

Although the possibilities of investigation in this area are limited, there is no evidence that any of the three boxes was ever used for the surreptitious receipt of messages or was used by persons other than Oswald or his family. No unexplainable notes were found among Oswald's possessions after his arrest. Oswald's box on the day of the assassination, No. 6225, was kept under constant personal