

Director, FBI (105-82555)

SECRET

Sept. 30, 1969

Legat, Mexico City (105-3702) (RUC)

**LEE HARVEY OSWALD
IS - RUSSIA - CUBA**

CIA HAS NO OBJECTION TO
DECLASSIFICATION AND/OR,
RELEASE OF CIA INFORMATION
IN THIS DOCUMENT. *(K 3/1/97)*
AS SPW 11/26/69

ReBulet 9/12/69 to Assistant Attorney General, Internal Security Division, copies of which were forwarded to this office.

Enclosed herewith are two Xerox reproductions of the Mexico City file copies of Mr. CHARLES THOMAS' memorandum dated 12/10/65, and the memoranda from this office to the Ambassador dated 12/27/65 and 2/23/66.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED EXCEPT
WHERE SHOWN OTHERWISE.

Background

ELENA GARRO DE PAZ, or Miss GARRO as Mr. THOMAS calls her, is a well known figure in Mexican political, social and literary circles. She was a playwright and well known to many officials of the Embassy including the then Ambassador FULTON FREEMAN, the then Deputy Chief of Mission CLARENCE A. BOONSTRA, and many others. All of those officials expressed to me on various occasions the opinion that Miss GARRO is a very interesting person and a scintillating conversationalist, but that she has a vivid imagination and frequently appears to be unable to distinguish between truth and fiction. Although interesting, they all considered her as highly unreliable as a source of information except for Mr. THOMAS who apparently placed consistent credence in what Miss GARRO said.

When Miss GARRO visited this office in November 1964, she claimed that she had seen LEE HARVEY OSWALD at a party given at the home of RUBEN DURAN on September 30, October 1, or October 2, 1963, as reported in Mexico City letterhead memorandum of 12/11/64. As previously reported, Miss GARRO claimed that her daughter, ELENA PAZ GARRO, who accompanied her at that party, met for the first time a young man later identified by her as ARIO ALEJANDRO LAVAGNINI STENIUS. Identification of this individual, who had

- 4 - Bureau (Encs.-6)
- (1 - Liaison Section)
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merely been introduced at the party as "ALEJANDRO", was made on the basis of correspondence received by her daughter from ARIO ALEJANDRO LAVAGNINI STENIUS after the party. Miss GARRO was insistent that her daughter had not met that young man prior to the party. When it was pointed out to her that the letter from ARIO ALEJANDRO LAVAGNINI STENIUS was dated 9/1/63 and postmarked 9/2/63, she merely commented that probably the communists have facilities for falsifying postmarks.

When LAVAGNINI was interviewed, he was unable to fix the date of the party but he believed it was probably early in September and neither he nor the two acquaintances of his who accompanied him to the party could recall any Americans having been present.

On 12/10/65 while talking to former Foreign Service Officer CHARLES W. THOMAS, Miss GARRO claimed that the party where she had met OSWALD was held at the home of RUBEN DURAN "in September 1963, shortly after her return from abroad" as reported in Mr. THOMAS' memorandum of 12/10/65.

In her conversation with Mr. THOMAS on 12/25/65 as reported in his memorandum of that date, Miss GARRO claimed that she believed the party was about September 2 or 3, 1963, "a few days before the visit of Soviet astronaut GAGARIN".*

Inasmuch as the Bureau is in possession of all of Mr. THOMAS' memoranda concerning ELENA GARRO DE PAZ' story except his memorandum of 12/10/65 (his memoranda are dated the date of his conversations and not the date typed), copies of that memorandum are enclosed herewith for the completion of the Bureau's files. The Bureau will note that all the pertinent information contained therein is set forth in Mexico City cablegram of 12/17/65.

Observations

The following is submitted in response to the Bureau's request regarding my observations of Mr. THOMAS' statements in his memorandum furnished to the Secretary of State:

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* Mexico City newspapers show that Soviet astronaut GAGARIN was in Mexico from February 8 to 23, 1963.

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(1) With regard to paragraph 3 in which he refers to his meeting with me and Mr. WINSTON SCOTT, then head of CIA, Mexico:

I first met Mr. THOMAS, one of the officers assigned to the Political Section of the Embassy on 12/17/65, the day after I took over as Legal Attache, when Mr. SCOTT told me he had received a memorandum which he believed I should see. It was Mr. THOMAS' memorandum dated 12/10/65. As originally prepared that memorandum was designated for the Ambassador, the Deputy Chief of Mission, the Political Section, Political Research (CIA), and the Central Biographic Department. He subsequently furnished this office a copy although that dissemination does not show on the Embassy file copy of his memorandum. In view of the nature of the information, Mr. THOMAS was asked to join Mr. SCOTT and me in a conference. Since the investigation of the OSWALD case had been handled by a previous Legal Attache, I remained non-committal about the allegations made by Miss GARRO, but pointed out the Bureau's interest in that case. It was also pointed out to Mr. THOMAS that the information in his memorandum was incomplete in many respects, including the fact that Miss GARRO did not pinpoint the date of the alleged party but described it only as "in September 1963, shortly after her return from Europe". He stated that Miss GARRO was extremely reluctant to discuss the matter and doubted that she would discuss it with anyone else. He therefore volunteered to raise the subject again with her to obtain more details. He was thanked at that time for his cooperation.

(2) Regarding paragraph 5 in which Mr. THOMAS stated "he got no reaction from Messrs. SCOTT and FERRIS regarding his memorandum of 12/25/65":

In view of the expressed interest of the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission who had received copies of Mr. THOMAS' memoranda of 12/10 and 12/25/65 in the factualness of Miss GARRO's story, they were advised by memoranda from this office dated 12/27/65 and 2/23/66, copies of which are enclosed, that in view of the fact that Miss GARRO's allegations had previously been checked out without substantiation, no further action was being taken concerning her recent repetition of those allegations. Those memoranda were based on Buairtel 12/22/65 and Bulet 2/15/66. Both

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memoranda were sent on a circulation basis to Mr. THOMAS' superior, the Counselor for Political Affairs, who also had received a copy of Mr. THOMAS' memoranda. It can only be concluded that the Counselor for Political Affairs did not route this office's memorandum of 2/23/66 to Mr. THOMAS or that Mr. THOMAS does not recall it.

(3) Regarding paragraph 6 concerning Mr. THOMAS' interview with me relative to Miss GARRO again having changed the date of the alleged party to the end of September:

I never interviewed Mr. THOMAS alone. The first time I saw him was in the presence of Mr. SCOTT. When he visited my office I called the Agent to whom the case had been assigned to come in and sit in on the interview. I did not tell him that Miss GARRO had given the late September date "accurately" when she had come to the Embassy and made her first report. I did tell him that her newly revised date was the same time that she had given when she came to the Embassy in November 1964 to tell her story. The investigation conducted at that time, as reflected in Mexico City letterhead memorandum of 12/11/64, showed that the late September date was not accurate. Neither did I tell him that someone else who was at the party had stated that there were no Americans there. Frankly, although I had reviewed the file after this matter first came up in December 1965, I did not memorize all of the details and I did not recall this fact which I did not become aware of until my current review in connection with Mr. THOMAS' recent allegations. Neither did I tell him that I considered the case "closed". I would not have considered it to be of concern to him whether the case was closed or not. I did tell him in response to his inquiry, that it would not be necessary for him to pursue this matter any further with Miss GARRO since we had heard her story before and it had been checked out without being substantiated and I therefore considered her story to be a closed issue.

(4) Regarding paragraph 9 in which Mr. THOMAS referred to Mr. ALLEN WHITE's alleged statement that the Federal Security Police' interrogation of the DURANS was unsatisfactory and comment, "This transcript may be the source of Mr. FERRIS' belief that ELENA GARRO's story had been checked out and found to be untrue":

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This statement is uninformed speculation. I know nothing about Mr. WHITE's evaluation of the interrogation of the DURANS which so far as I know, had nothing to do with the story about the alleged party subsequently related by Miss GARRO. My "belief" was based on the investigation conducted by this office as reported in Mexico City letter and letterhead memorandum of 12/11/64, and the Bureau's concurring evaluation as set forth in Bureau airtel 12/22/65 and Bulet of 2/15/66.

(5) With regard to paragraph 10 in which Mr. THOMAS commented that "whereas the FBI has discounted ELENA GARRO's allegations, the CIA is still considerably disturbed by them":

I am aware of no foundations for this observation that CIA is "still considerably disturbed" by Miss GARRO's story. Mr. WINSTON SCOTT gave absolutely no indication of such reactions to me, but on the contrary indicated that he was well aware of Miss GARRO's unreliability.

With regard to Mr. THOMAS' claim that CIA may not have pressed further investigation for several reasons including "considering the sensitive overlap and subtle competition between two intelligence collection agencies, it had to yield to the FBI's jurisdiction":

This can only be described as a product of Mr. THOMAS' imagination. During the period in question, relations between this office and CIA in Mexico were maintained on a friendly, mutually cooperative basis with respect for the authority and responsibilities of the two parent agencies. The principal function of CIA in Mexico in connection with the investigation of the OSWALD case was in checking out allegations concerning possible Cuban aspects through their established sources and confidential coverage. The remaining points covered by Mr. THOMAS under items 2, 3 and 4, paragraph 10, are extraneous to Miss GARRO's story and appear to have been included gratuitously in his memorandum to the Secretary of State.

(6) With regard to Mr. THOMAS' terminal comment in paragraph 13 that the records should show that a representative of a major American publication has at least some knowledge of Miss GARRO's story:

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This office has no information indicating such to be a fact or that either Mr. THOMAS had given the story to such an individual or that Miss GARRO herself, in spite of her repeated protestations that she should not be revealed as the source of this information, had passed the story on to such an individual.

Comments

The significance is not known as to why the State Department disseminated Mr. THOMAS' memorandum under the subject "CHARLES WILLIAM THOMAS", instead of under the LEE HARVEY OSWALD investigation as Mr. THOMAS captioned his memorandum.

It appears that Mr. THOMAS has undergone a change in attitude since his departure from Mexico which is difficult to understand. This may possibly be a reaction to his separation from Foreign Service. According to Embassy sources, Mr. THOMAS is believed to have been "selected out", a phrase used when an officer is "retired" after having been in one grade for the maximum period of time and is not considered qualified for promotion to a higher grade. This involuntary separation from the Foreign Service may account for his present attitude which otherwise is difficult to comprehend.

During the time after I took over as Legal Attache on 12/16/65 until his departure from Mexico in 1967, I and other personnel of this office had very limited contact with Mr. THOMAS. He was one of various officers assigned to the Political Section and although he was ostensibly friendly, his assignment had little in common with the work of this office and therefore our relations, both official and personal, were closer with other officers in the Political Section. The only official contact I had with him was in connection with instant matter. Although at that time he exhibited somewhat of a "detective complex" in desiring to probe into the story recounted by Miss GARRO, he at no time demonstrated a desire to take over the OSWALD investigation from the authorized authorities.

Mr. THOMAS' current attitude as set out in his letter and memorandum to the Secretary of State dated 7/25/69 is obvious from his statement, "Since I was the Embassy officer in Mexico

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who acquired this intelligence information, I feel a responsibility for seeing it through to its final evaluation." It appears, therefore, that Mr. THOMAS has now decided that he and not the FBI or the Department of Justice is the one to decide how the story given by Miss GARRO is to be evaluated. The concept that every person who passes on to another government agency information relating to matters within the jurisdiction of that agency has the responsibility and authority to review and evaluate the action taken by that agency is, of course, untenable.

Further question concerning Mr. THOMAS' judgment is raised by item 3 of paragraph 10 of his memorandum furnished to the Secretary of State. Any reference to the [redacted] (S) relationship between the head of CIA Mexico and top Mexican officials, if true, is a very highly classified matter and any "leak" or revelation to unauthorized individuals concerning such an arrangement would, in view of the delicate Mexican political situation, be disastrous to the Mexican Government as well as to Mexican-American relations. The delicacy of the situation has recently been greatly augmented by the published Cuban allegation that one of the officers of the Mexican Embassy in Havana was acting as a CIA spy with the knowledge of the Mexican Government. Mr. THOMAS, however, included such a highly classified reference in a memorandum which he classified only as "confidential", contrary to regulations relative to classification of documents. While this reference relates to the activities and operations of another Government agency and therefore is not of primary concern to the Bureau, it is nevertheless called to the Bureau's attention for consideration in evaluating Mr. THOMAS' current allegations.

An additional copy of this letter is being forwarded for use in the event the Bureau desires to forward a copy to Dallas which received a copy of referenced letter.

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