Transcript of taped interview between William K. Stuckey and Lee Harvey Oswald, Aug. 17, 1963 Commission Exhibit # 2

STOCKEY: This isy the first of a series of Latin Listening Post interviews of persons more or less directly concerned with the conflict between the United States and Cuba. In subsequent programs, we will present talks with people who are connected with the Cuban refugee organizations, people who are connected with President Batista, and United States citizens with direct stakes in the outcome of the Cuban situation. Tonight we have with us a representative of probably the most controversial organization connected with Cuba in this country. The organization is the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. The person, Lee Oswald, secretary of the New Orleans chapter for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. This organization has long been on the Justice Department's black list and is a group generally considered to be the leading pro-Castro body in the nation. As a reporter of Latin American affairs in this city for several years now, your columnist has kept a lookout for local representatives of this pro-Castro group. None appeared in public view until this week when young Lee Oswald was arrested and convicted for disturbing the peace. He was arrested passing out pro-Castro literature to a crowd which included several violently anti-Castro Cuban refugees. When we finally tracked Mr. Oswald down today and asked him to participate in Latin Listening Post, he told us frankly that he would because it may help his organization to attract more members in this area. With that in mind, and knowing that Mr. Oswald must have had to demonstrate a great skill in dialectics before he was entrusted with his present post, we now proceed on the course of random questioning of Lr. Oswald. Mr. Oswald, if I may, how long has the Fair Play for Cuba Committee had an organization in New Orleans?

OSWAID: We have had members in this area for several months now. Up until about two months ago, however, we have not (sic) organized our members into any sort of active group, until as you say, we had decided to feel out the public, what they think of our organization, our aims and for that purpose we have been as you said, distributing literature on the street for the purpose of trying to attract new members and feel out the public.

STUCKEY: Do you have any other activities other than distributing literature at the present time?

OSWAID: Well, I assume you mean do I have any organizational duties myself?

WKS

STUCKEY EXHIBIT No. 2

STUCKEY: Yes.

OSWALD: Yes, as secretary I am responsible for the keeping of the records and the protection of the members' names so that undue publicity or attention will not be drawn to them, as they do not desire it. My duties are as the duties of a secretary of any organization. However, our organization has a president, a secretary and a treasurer. The entire duties of those people would be more or less self-evident than those that are my duties. I do not however belong to any other organizations at all.

STUCKEY: Are you at liberty to reveal the membership of your organization?

OSWALD: No, I am not.

STUCKEY: For what reason?

OSWALD: Well, as secretary, I believe it is standard operating procedure that our organization, consisting of a political minority, protect the names and addresses of its members and I have every, uh, that is my duty and that is my reason to do that.

STUCKEY: Mr. Oswald, there are many commentators in the journalistic field in this country that equate the Fair Play for Cuba Committee with the American Communist Party. What is your feeling about this and are you a member of the American Communist Party?

OSTAID: Well, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee with its headquarters at 799 Broadway in New York has been investigated by the Senate sub-committees who are occupied with this sort of thing. They have investigated our organization from the viewpoint of taxes, subversion, allegiance and in general, where and how and why we exist. They have found absolutely nothing to connect us with the Communist Party of the United States. In regards to your question about whother I myself am a Communist, as I said I do not belong to any other organization.

STUCKEY: I notice from your pamphlets, one bears the title of "Hands Off Cuba". I am curious as to whether this applies to the Soviet Union as well as to the United States.

OSWAID: This organization is not occupied at all with the problem of the Soviet Union or the problem of International Communism. Hands Off Cuba is the main slogan of this committee. It means, it follows our first principle, which has to do with non-intervention, in other words keeping your hands off a foreign state which is supported by the constitution, and so forth and so on. We have our

WK5

OSWAID: (Cont.)
own non-intervention laws, that is what Hands Off Cuba means. As
I say we are not occupied at all with the problem of the Soviet
Union.

STUCKEY: Does your group believe that the Castro regime in Cuba is not actually a front for a Soviet colony in the Western Hemisphere?

OSWALD: Very makint definitely. Castro is an independent leader of an independent country. He has ties with the Soviet Union, with the eastern bloc, however, I think it is rather obvious as to why and whom they are because of the fact that we certainly don't have any trade with them. We are discouraging trade with that country, with our allies and so forth, so of course he has to turn to Russia. That does not mean, however, that he is dependent unpon Russis. He receives trade from many countries, including Great Britain to a certain extent, France, certain other powers in the Western Hemisphere. He is even trading with several of the more independent African states, so that you cannot point at Castro and say that he is a Russian puppet. He is not. He is an independent person. An independent leader in his country and I believe that was pointed out very well during the October crisis when Castro very definiting definitely said that although Premier Khrushchev had urged him to have on-site inspection at his rocket bases in Cuba, that Fidel Castro refused.

STUCKEY: Do you feel that the Fair Play for Cuba Committee would maintain its present line as far as supporting Premier Castro if the Soviet Union broke relations with the Castro regime in Cuba?

OSWALD: We do not support the man. We do not support the individual. We support the idea of an independent revolution in the Western Hemisphere, free from American intervention. We do not support, as I say, the individual. If the Cuban people destroy Castro, or if he is otherwise proven to have betrayed his own revolution, that will not have any bearing upon this committee. We are a committee who do believe that Castro has not so far betrayed his country.

STUCKEY: Do you believe that the Castro regime is a Communist regime?

OSWAID: They have said, well, they have said that they are a Marxist country. On the other hand, so is Ghana, so is several other countries in Africa. Every country which emerges from a sort of funds feudal state as Cuba did, experiments, usually in socialism, in Marxism. For that matter, Great Britain has socialized medicine. You cannot say that Castro is a Communist at this time,

WKS

OSWALD: (Cont.)
because he has not developed his country, his system this far. He
has not had the chance to become a Communist. He is an experimentor,
a person who is trying to find the best way for his country. If he choose
a socialist or a Marxist or a Communist way of life, that is something
upon which only the Cuban people can pass. We do not have the right
to pass on that. We can have our opinions, naturally, but we cannot
exploit that system and say it is a bad one, it is a threat to our
existence and then go and try to destroy it. That would be against
our principles of Democracy.

STUCKEY: As a representative of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, do you feel that Capitalism in any form, or at least Capitalism in any form, my has any place in the future of Cuba?

OSWAID: Well, so far the situation has developed where they, Cuba, is irrevocably lost as for as Capitalism goes and there will never be a Capitalist regime again in Cuba. Cuba may go the way of Ozeohoslovakia, Yugoslavia or it may go the way to the other extreme. It may go the way of China, in other words, a dogmatic Communist system, that depends on how we handle the matter here in the United States.

STUCKEY: Does the Fair Play for Cuba Committee have any particular position in the Cuban, or rather the Chinese and Russian conflict? Has it taken sides as opposed to China's position or as opposed to Russia's position?

OSWAID: Well, no, we do not believe in international situations of that sort. As the name implies, Fairzim Play for Cuba Committee, we are occupied only with the one narrow point of Cuba, the problem of Cuba and what it is to us. We are not occupied at all with the problems of the ______ Russians or the Yugoslavian-Russian problems whatsoever.

STUCKEY: I have here with me tonight various pieces of literature that Mr. Oswald has been distributing on street corners here in the last week. I'd like to read to you some of the titles. The first is a yellow handbill entitled "Hands Off Cuba. Join the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New Orleans, Charter Member Branch." There is another pamphlet by the name of "The Revolution Must Be a School of Unfettered Thought -- Fidel Castro". There is still another pamphlet entitled "Fidel Castro Denounces Bureaucracy and Sectarianism." And a fourth pamphlet entitled "Ideology and Revolution" by Jean Paul Sartre. I am curious about a fifth pamphlet I have, Mr. Oswald. This, to me, was the most interesting. It is entitled "The Crime Against Cuba" by Corliss Lamont. The theme of this pamphlet is that the fact that the United States max committed a grave injustice when it backed the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Now, it has probably a complete ideology here for the National Liberation

inks

STUCKEY: (Cont.)
Movement type of philosophy that we hear of in the new countries.
Picking among the paragraphs, I see one here that I'd like to
hear Mr. Oswald's comment on, and I'd like to quote: "It is well
to recall that the national emergency proclaimed by President
Trumen in 1950 during the Korean War is still in effect in the
United States and has been utilized constantly for the curtailment
of civil liberty." What is your comment about the veracity of this
statement?

OSWAID: Well of course, that is the last paragraph of a very long page. That has to do with the fact that propaganda in the United States is slanted and has shown Cuba and Castro to be in a very bad light. Now, they have mentioned, the United States government, has mentioned that Castro has declared an emergency in Cuba. He has not held elections for instance because of the fact that there is an emergency situation in Cuba. Now, the Castro government is declaring that ix it is doing just what this points out. It is doing what we did in 1950 and you recall what happened in 1950. That was during the beginning of the Korean War when we felt that we were going to be in a very, very dangerous situation. We adopted an emergency law which restricted newspapers, broadcasters, radio and TV from gnxingxanax giving any opinions, any comments which we not already checked out by certain administrative bureaus of the United States government. That was under our emergency. At this time, Fidel Castro has his emergency. It is because of us and our attitude and because of the attitude of certain other people, certain other countries in Latin America, certain other countries. This is the parallel, the parallel which this is talking about. An emergency in our country at that time and an emergency in their country at this

STUCKEY: Mr. Oswald, this is very interesting to me to find out about the restriction on newspapers in 1950 because I was in the newspaper business at that time and I do not recall seeing any such government bureau established in my office to tell us what to print. Exactly what do you have reference to?

OSWAID: Well, I have reference to the obvious fact that during war time, haphazard guesses and information are not given by anyone. In regards to military strategical comments, such as comments or leaks about new fronts or movements and so forth, news was controlled at that time to that extent, as it is always controlled during a war or a national emergency, always.

STUCKEY: Do you feel that news is controlled in the United States today regarding Cuba?

WK5

OSWALD: It is a self control, yes, imposed by most newspapers. Of course, I don't know whether I am being fair, but of course I would have to point to the Times Firmar Picayune-States Item syndicate, since it is the only newspaper we have in New Orleans and a very restricted paper it is. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee has often approached this paper with information or comments and this paper has consistently refused, because of the fact that it is sympathetic to the anti-Castro regime. It has systematically refused to print any objective matter, giving the other man's viewpoint about Cuba.

STUCKEY: Would you care to list the dates and the persons who you talked to at the paper that refused to print your material?

OSWAID: I do not know the name of the reporter. I did speak to the city editor. I spoke to him one week ago and I spoke to him yesterday, Friday, which was immediately after our demonstration when I and several other of my members had a demonstration in front of the International Trade Mart which was filmed by WDSU-TV andxxxxxxx shown last night on the news. At that time, 2 p.m., I went to the Times-Picayune, informed them of our demonstration, which was very well covered by WDSU-TV and they told me at that time that due to the fact that they were not sympathetic to this organization or to the aims and ideals of this organization that they would not print any information that I gave them. They did se that if I would care to write a letter to the editor they might put that in the letter to the editor column.

STUCKEY: Mr. Oswald, does it make any difference to you if any of the activities of the local branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee benefit the Communist Party or the goals of international Communism?

OSWALD: Well, that is what I believe you would term a loaded question. However, I will attempt to answer it. It is inconsistent with my ideals to support Communism, my personal ideals. It is inconsistent with the ideals of the FairPlay for Cuba Committee to support ideals of international Communism. We are not occupied with that problem. We are occupied with the problem of Cuba. We do not believe under any circumstances that in supporting our ideals about Cuba, our pro-Castro ideals, we do not believe that that is inconsistent with believing in democracy. Quite the contrary, we believe that it is a necessity in supporting democracy to support Fidel Castro and his right to make his country any way he wants to. Not so much the right to destroy us of our rights about defense. In other words, we do not feel that we are supporting international Communism or Communism in supporting Fidel Castro.

STUCKEY: What other political leaders in Latin America do you feel fulfill the Fair Play for Cuba Committee's requirements for a Democratic political leader?

OSWAID: Well, you know, there's a funny story about Intin America. It goes something like this. Coffee, bananas, sugar and a few other products. In other words, that refers to the so-called banana countries which like Cuba up to this time had a one-crops agriculture, a one-crop economy and where did those crops go? They went to the United States. Now the attitude of those countries who are controlled by the United States, whose economy depends almost 100 per cent upon how much money the United States pours into them, those countries can not be expected to give an independent viewpoint on Cuba or Castro. The few countries which abstained at certain international inter-American meetings during the last year, are those countries which are big enough to support themselves. Those countries being only Brazil, Argentina and perhaps on some occasions the democratic republic of Costa Rica, which is by the way, the only democratic republic in all of Central America.

STUCKEY: What is your definition of democracy?

OSWALD: My definition, well, the definition of democracy, that's a very good one. That's a very controversial viewpoint. You know, it used to be very clear, but now it's not. You know, when our forefathers drew up the constitution, they considered that democracy was creating an atomosphere of freedom of discussion, of argument, of finding the truth. The rights, well, the classic right of having life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In Latin America, they have none of those rights, none of them at all. And that is my definition of democracy, the right to be in a minority and not to be suppressed. The right to see formmentally yourself without government restrictions such countries as Cuba, and we are restricted from going to Cuba.

STUCKEY: Mr. Oswald, when was the last time you were in Latin America?

OSWAID: I have been only to Mexico in my life, sir. I em not fully acquainted with Latin America personally, but then I am not the president of this organization either, I om only a volunteer, a secretary of this local chapter. I do not claim to be an expert on Latin America, but then very few people do. Certainly, it is obvious to me, having been educated here in New Orleans and having been instilled with the ideals of democracy and objectiveness, that Cuba and the right of Cubans to self-determination is more or less self evident, and one does not have to travel through Central and South America. One does not have to travel through these countries to see the poverty in Chile or Peru or the suppression of democratic liberties by the Somoa (sie) brothers in Nicaragua in order to draw one's conclusions about Cuba.

STUCKEY: Does the Fair Play for Cuba Committee have any opinion about the suppression of democratic liberties in Hungary in 1956 or the poverty in any of the eastern bloc countries today?

OSWALD: Officially no, but of course we have our own opinions about such situations. We consider that Russian imperialism is a very bad thing. It was a bad thing in Hungary. We certainly do not support dictatorships or the suppression of any peoples anywhere, but as I say and as I must stress, we are preoccupied only with the problem of Cuba, officially.

STUCKEY: Mr. Oswald, you have the title of secretary of the New Orleans chapter of the fair Play for Cuba Committee, however, ou have just said that you have never been to Latin America except for a few ventures into Mexico. In that case, just exactly how do you get your information concerning Latin American affairs or Latin American conditions?

OSWAID: Well, as I say, we are preoccupied with the problem of Cuba. There are correspondents that correspond with the headquarters in New York, directly from Cuba, that is where we get the information about Cuba. Now, in regards to Latin and Central America, you do not have your own correspondent there. The AP and the UP cover it very well and they certainly give a very clear picture of the situation in certain countries, Nicaragua, and so forth, as I mentioned, which have very undemocratic regimes, dictatorships, and as I say these things are well known by everyone and they are accepted as truth. For instance, who will be able to find any official or any person who knows about Latin America, who will say that Nicaragua does not have a dictatorship?

STUCKEY: Very interesting that you should mention dictatorships in Nicaragua, because we, naturally familiar with the place, have heard about these dictatorships for many, many years, but it is curious to me why no Nicaraguans fled to the United States last year, whereas we had possibly 50,000 to 60,000 Cubens fleeing from Cuba to the United States. What is the Fair Play for Cuba Committee's official reply to this?

OSWAID: Well, a good question. Niceraguan situation is considerably different from Castro's Cuba. People xxx are inclined not to flee their countries unless some new system, new factor, enters into their lives. I must say that very surely no new factors have entered into Micaragua for about 300 years, in fact the people live exactly as they have always lived in Niceragua. I am refering to the overwhelming majority of the people in Niceragua.

WKS

OSWALD: (Cont.)

which is a feudal dictatorship with 90 per cent of the people engaged in agriculture. These peasants are uneducated. They have one of the lowest living standards in all of the western hemisphere and so because of the fact that no new factor, no liberating factor, has entered into their lives, they remain in Nicaragua. Now the people who have fled Cuba, that is an interesting situation. Needless to say, there are classes of criminals; there are classes of people who are wanted in Cuba for crimes against humanity and most of those people are the same people who are in New Orleans and have set themselves up in stores with blood money and who engage in day to day trade with New Orleanians. Those are the people who would certainly not want to go back to Cuba and who would certainly want to flee Cuba. There are other classes. There are peasants who do not like the

reason or the other in their legitimate reasons, reasons of opinion, for floeing Cuba. Most of these people flee by legal means. They are allowed to leave after requesting the Cuban government for exit visas. Some of these people for some reasons or another do not like to apply for these visas or they feel that they cannot get them; they flee, they flee Cuba in boats, they flee any way they can go and I think that the opinion and the attitude of the Cuban government to this is good riddence.

collectivization in Cuban agriculture. There are others who have one

STUCKEY: Mr. Oswald, this is very interesting because as a reporter in this field for some time I have been interviewing refugees now for about three years and I'd say that the last Batista man, officially, that I talked to left Cuba about two and a half years ago and the rest of them I've talked to have been taxicab drivers, laborers, cane cutters, and that sort of thing. I thought this revolution was supposed to bonefit these people. What is the Fair Play for Cuba Committee's position on this?

OSWALD: Well, as I say there are different classes. A minority of these people are as A 344 people who were Batista criminals and so forth. However, it may not be true that the people fleeing nowadays are completely cleansed of Batista elements, certainly some of these Batistaites have been hiding or have been engaged in counter-revolutionary activities ever since the Bay of Pigs invasion and even before that, just after the revolution. In other words, they have remained underground. E Undoubtedly the overwhelming majority of people during the last year, for instance, who have fled Cuba have been non-Batistaites, rather peasant class. You say the revolution is supposed to benefit these people. You know, it's very funny about revolutions. Revolutions require work, revolutions require sacrifice, revolutions, and our own included, require a certain amount of rationing, a certain amount of calluses, a certain amount of sacrifice. Sacrificing one's own personal ideas about countries, citizenship, work, indicates people who have fled Cuba have not been able to adapt themselves to these new factors which have entered

CSWALD: (Cont.) these people are the uneducated. These people are the people who do not remain in Cuba to be educated by young people, who are afraid of the alphabet, who are afraid of these new things which are occuring, who are afraid that they would lose something by collectivization. They were afraid that they would lose something by seeing their sugar crops taken away and in place of sugar crops, some other vegetable, some other product, planted, because Cuba has always been a one-product country, more or less. These are the people who have not been able to adapt.

STUCKEY: Mr. Oswald, you say their sugar crops. Most of the Cubans I have talked to that have had anything to do with agriculture in the last year and a half have not owned one single acre of ground, they were cane cutters.

OSWAID: That is correct and they are the ones that are fleeing the Castro regime. That is correct sir. That is very, very true and I am very glad you brought that point up. You know, it used to be that these people worked for the United Fruit Company or American companies engaged in sugar refining, oil refining in Cuba. They worked a few months every year during the cane cutting or sugar refining season. They nover owned anything, and they feel now that that little bitait of right, the right to work for five months a year has been taken away from them. They feel that now they have to work all year round to plant new crops, to make a new economy and so they feel that they have been robbed of the right to do as they please because of the fact that the government now depends upon its people to build its economy, to industrialize itself, so they figure they have been robbed. What they do not realize is that they have been robbed of the right to be exploited, robbed of the right to be cheated, robbed of the right of New Orleanean companies to take away what was rightfully theirs. Of course, they have to share now. Everybody gets an equal portion. This is collectivization and this is very hard on some people, on people prefering the dog-eat-dog economy.

STUCKEY: What do you refer to as the dog-eat-dog economy? Is that Capitalism in your definition?

OSWAID: No, that is an economy where the people do not depend on each other, they have no feelings of nationality, they have no feelings of culture, they have no feelings of any ties whatsoe on a high level. It is every man for himself. That is what I refer to by dog-eat-dog.

STUCKEY: Are you familiar with the existence of a black market in Soviet Russia or in Red China, where the majority of the populace gets their food, their truck crops and vegetables and such from this market. Do you know of such a market?

WKS

OSWALD: Well, I know about the fact that there is a market in the Soviet Union only for western apparel, and certain other items. There is no black market in the Soviet Union for food, none whatever. By black market, I assume that you mean a situation where food is either stolen or grown in one area, and taken to another area and sold covertly, under cover. No such system exists in Russia.

STUCKEY: Mr. Oswald, I am curious about your personal background. If you could tell something about where you came from, your education and your career to date, it would be interesting.

OSWAID: I would be very happy to. I was born in New Orleans in 1939. For a short length of time during my childhood, I lived in Texas and New York. During my junior high school days, I attended Beaurogard Junior High School. I attended that school for two years. Then I went to Warren Easton High School and I attended that school for over a year. Then my family and I moved to Texas where we have many relatives and I continued my schooling there. I entered the United States Marine Corps in 1956. I spent three years in the United States Marine Corps, working my way up through the ranks to the position of buck sergeant and I served honorably, having been discharged. Then I went back to work in Texas and have recently arrived in New Orleans with my family, with my wife and my child.

STUCKEY: What particular event in your life made you decide that the Fair Play for Cuba Committee had the correct answers about Cuban-United States relations?

OSWALD: Well, of course, I have only begun to notice Cuba since the Cuban revolution, that is true of everyone, I think. I became acquainted with it about the same time as everybody else, in 1960. In the beginning of 1960x. I always felt that the Cubans were being pushed into the Soviet bloc by American policy. I still feel that way. Our policy, if it had been handled differently and many others much more informed than I have said the same thing, if that situation had been handled differently, we would not have the big problem of Castro's Cuba now, the big international political problem. Although I feel that it is a just and right development in Cubstill we could be on much friendlier relations with them and had the government of the United States, itim its government agencies, particularly certain covert, under-cover agencies like the now defunct CIA.

STUCKEY: Now defunct?

WKS

OSWALD: Well, its leadership is now defunct. Allen pulles is now defunct. I believe that without all that meddling, with a little bit different humanitarian handling of the situation, Cuba would not be the problem it is today.

STUCKEY: Is there any particular action of the United States government do you feel that pushed Castro into Soviet arms?

OSWAID: Well, as I say, Castro's Cuba, even after the revolution was still a one-crope economy, busing its economy on sugar. When we slashed the Cuban sugar quota, of course, we cut their threats. They had to turn to some other country. They had to turn to some other hemisphere in xxx which to sell this one product. They did so, and they have sold it to Russia and because of that, Russian sugar is now down quite a bit, whereas our is going up and up and up and I believe that was the big factor, the cutting of the sugar quota.

STUCKEY: Do you think that the United States government, under President Eisenhower, ever wanted to help the Castro regime? Ever offered or shown any help to it?

OSWAID: True to our democratic policies, certain policies were adopted, very late, but adopted, but the government helped Fidel Castro while he was still in the mountains, that is very true. We cut off aid to Batista just before the revolution, just before it. That was too late. We had already done more harm than we could have done before. We were just rats leaving a sinking ship, you see. That was not the thing to do. We have, however, as I say, helped him. We have now cut off all that help.

STUCKEY: There is one point of view which I have heard to the effect that Castro turned left because he could not get any aid for industrialization in Cuba from the United States. Does the Fair Play for Cuba Committee believe that?

OSWAID: Not entirely, no. We feel that was a factor, certainly. But the current of history is now running to that extreme, in other words, countries emerging from imperialist domination are definitly adopting socialistic solutions, Marxist even on occasion what will be in the future, Communist regimes and Communist inclinations. You m see, this is something which is apparently a world trend.

STUCKEY: Does the FairPlay for Cuba Committee believe that this trend should also be copied in the United States?

13 Oswald-Stuckey interview

OSWAID: No, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee is occupied only with the Cuban problem. I do not think that they feel that way, no.

STUCKEY: Tonight we have been talking with Loe Harragx Oswald, secretary of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New Orleans (ect., standard close).

####