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THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

IT WAS suggested in the BBC's recent Panorama programme that Oswald may have been the "patsy" in a Mafia plot to assassinate Kennedy. What do you think of the strength of this theory?

As far as I can see it is not based on evidence but a *cui bono* form of induction. The thesis being: Kennedy was after the Mafia, therefore the Mafia killed Kennedy. The same sort of *cui bono* logic could be applied more realistically to Castro, the North Vietnamese, or any other enemy of Kennedy's.

The Kennedy assassination did not occur, however, in a factual vacuum. X-rays of Kennedy's body have now established that the shots came from behind from the direction of the book depository (both critics and supporters of the Warren Commission who have examined the X-rays and autopsy photographs now agree on this conclusion). Moreover, one bullet and fragments match a rifle found in the book depository, belonging to Oswald. Four witnesses saw a rifleman firing from the book depository. And during his interrogation by Dallas police afterwards, in which Oswald discussed the case, he showed consciousness of guilt by

lying systematically about his ownership of the rifle.

Even if it accepted that Oswald was the rifleman, it need not be accepted, of course, that Oswald did the act alone. Any unknown party could have paid, encouraged or inspired him.

A good deal still remains unknown about Oswald's secret life; but from what is known, it is clear Oswald associated with pro- and anti-Castro Cubans in New Orleans, Cuban officials in Mexico, Soviet intelligence agents in Mexico and Russia, and scientists, geologists and an educated elite of White Russians in Dallas. No links between Oswald and organised crime have been established. To be sure, it is always possible an assassin is recruited under a "false flag"—that is, he does not know the true allegiance of his recruiter—and that Oswald, thinking he was working for the Cubans, was actually induced to work on the behalf of another interest.

Oswald would be a likely candidate for such a recruitment. He had already written from Russia (in a letter intercepted by the CIA) that he would kill any American that opposed the USSR, and demonstrated to many people in Dallas that he was a revolutionary in search of a cause. His

shooting at General Edwin A. Walker in April 1963, further demonstrated his willingness to murder for political ends. His wife Marina said that he regarded Walker as a dangerous fascist.

● *You contend that the FBI and CIA suppressed evidence relating to Oswald that should have gone to the Warren Commission. What was their motive for such actions?*

What was being concealed was aspects of the security case against Oswald which existed before the assassination. The FBI did not even tell President Johnson that it had an open security case against Oswald at the time; and when J. Edgar Hoover evaluated the failure of the FBI to keep Oswald under surveillance in December 1963, he concluded that the FBI was guilty of "gross incompetency" which would forever destroy the FBI as an investigative agency—if it became public. The interest

A recent Panorama television programme quickened interest in the Kennedy assassination by suggesting that his killer, Lee Harvey Oswald, was being used by the Mafia or the CIA and by reopening vexed issues such as the possibility that a picture of Oswald with a rifle was a forgery. In the past three weeks The Sunday Times has published extended

extracts from an important new book by EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN, which indicates strongly that Oswald was an agent of the KGB. Today Epstein discusses the issues raised by Panorama and looks at other unanswered questions such as the true role of the shadowy George De Mohrenschildt and the series of deaths involving key figures in the affair.

of Hoover was thus to conceal the fact that the FBI had any reason to suspect Oswald of espionage activities before the assassination.

Hoover knew that Oswald had refused a lie detector test, had made contact with a Soviet agent in Washington (Gerasimov) who was under FBI surveillance at the time as a paymaster for Soviet espionage, and had made contact with a Soviet agent in Mexico (Kostikov) who had been observed by FBI agents handling other "illegal" agents for Soviet intelligence. But none of this information was turned over to the Warren Commission. If it had been, it would raise inevitable questions of why the FBI had not kept closer tabs on Oswald.

Moreover, the FBI destroyed all evidence that Oswald was capable of a violent act. He had written a letter to FBI Agent James Hosty threatening to blow up the FBI offices in Dallas. After Oswald was killed, Hosty, on orders from his superiors, destroyed the note. Hoover could then testify the FBI had no reason to believe Oswald was a person capable of violence. If Hoover knew about the letter—as William Sullivan, head of FBI counter-intelligence, insists he did—he perjured himself before the Warren Commission.

The CIA had an obvious interest in concealing the existence of the assassination plots against Castro. If it became public that on the very day Kennedy was assassinated a CIA case officer was handing a weapon to Rolands Cubella, minister without portfolio in Cuba, who had agreed to murder Castro, it would compel the Warren Commission to undertake an investigation of the most closely-guarded secrets of the CIA.

● *How relevant is it then that the CIA was actively engaged in plots to kill Castro to the assassination of President Kennedy?*

It could provide the motive for the assassination. The following

facts are now established by the CIA's Inspector-General:

1. In the summer of 1963 the CIA became involved with Cubella in a plot to assassinate Castro.
2. Cubella satisfied himself that the Kennedy Administration was behind the plot through a meeting with Desmond Fitzgerald, a high-ranking CIA official who represented himself as an emissary of Robert Kennedy (and was, indeed, an identifiable friend of RFK's).
3. Castro learned of this plot in the autumn of 1963 (probably through Cubella himself), and issued a public warning that American leaders would not be

safe if plots against Cuban leaders persisted. (Oswald, an avid follower of Castro, possibly read the Press reports of this warning before his trip to Mexico in September 1963.)

At the very least, then, it is established that Castro had a real motive for inspiring the attempted assassination of an American leader. Whether he did or not is another question.

But the Cubans certainly had the opportunity to inspire Oswald to undertake a violent act. He travelled to Mexico on September 28, according to his wife for the purpose of proving his loyalty to the Cubans—and being accepted as a friend of the Cuban revolution. Oswald appears to have had at least three meetings with Cuban officials. What happened at these meetings is unclear, but according to various reports, Oswald appears to have got into an argument with the Cubans about whether he had performed sufficient service for the Cuban revolution to be accepted in Cuba.

Although this is purely speculative, it does not seem incon-



● Edward Jay Epstein, 42, holds a PhD in government from Harvard University. His first book, *Inquest*, originally his undergraduate thesis, raised early questions about the Warren Commission's methods and findings and became a best-seller. His book on Oswald and Kennedy, in which he reveals the possibility that members of US intelligence agencies are working for the Russians, involved two years of research employing four full-time and four part-time staff. Legend: the Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald will be published in Britain by Hutchinson on April 24 at £5.50.

ceivable to me that in the heat of these discussions some Cuban officials mentioned either the assassination plots against Castro or Castro's warning to American leaders. It may then have been that Oswald took this as marching orders to attempt such an assassination and that he chose his own target, Kennedy, to win the approval of the Cubans.

Your book makes the case that Oswald was a low level agent of Soviet intelligence who ran amok. Is it not equally possible that Oswald was a low-level CIA agent sent to Russia as a phoney defector?

I considered this possibility when I began my research. If Oswald had been a CIA agent dispatched on such a sensitive mission I assumed as a working hypothesis that he would have to have been recruited and trained by the CIA sometime between 1957, when he joined the Marines as a 17-year-old high school dropout, and September 1959 when he defected to Russia. As a practical matter this would require some interlude in his Marine service when he was detached from duty and trained. Since the Warren Commission interviewed only one Marine who knew Oswald during his tour of Japan and the Pacific, and left a number of intriguing blanks in his service record, it seemed at least conceivable that he had been separated from his regular duty.

However, when I located some sixty other Marines who served with Oswald at various points in his career, these gaps were gradually filled in. Marines were found who served with Oswald in his basic training unit, his training courses, during transit to and from Japan, during the manoeuvres in the Pacific and in hospital. Even the doctors who treated him for a gunshot wound and VD were interviewed. At every point, Marines were found who shared quarters with Oswald, drank with him, played cards with him, and served long hours on radar duty with him. Some considered themselves close friends, and produced snapshots and records showing Oswald was indeed on duty with them.

What emerges is a fairly complete and believable account of Oswald's time in the Marines. There seems to be no period during this time when he could conceivably be detached and trained by the CIA, and certainly none of the men who lived with him had any clue that suggested he had any special sort of duty. (And his recalcitrant behaviour hardly suggests him as a candidate for any such assignment.)

Furthermore, Oswald activities

in the Soviet Union do not seem consistent with a CIA mission. It seems at least implausible that the CIA would allow him to marry a Soviet citizen, and thus complicate his repatriation. Finally, it would seem reasonable to expect that if Oswald had risked his life

on a dangerous CIA mission, he would be amply rewarded on his return in 1962. In fact Oswald received an undesirable discharge from his reserve unit and returned to a life of near-poverty in Texas.

On the other hand, the evidence that Oswald was associated with Soviet intelligence is cogent. He defected to the Soviet Union, with unknown funds, and then offered the Soviets, according to his own admission, classified military secrets of special interest. As proof of his sincerity to the Soviets, he handed his passport to the US Embassy in Moscow, and announced his intention of providing the Soviets with US military secrets. In effect, he put himself completely in Soviet hands for a two-and-a-half year period. In return, the MVD, a Ministry associated with Soviet intelligence, provided Oswald with a subsidy to live on, a plush apartment, job and other amenities.

After Oswald returned to the US, he refused a FBI request to submit to a lie detector test, kept constantly in contact with Soviet Embassy officials, and contacted a known KGB officer, Kostikov, in Mexico City.

Finally, some effort seemed to have been made to cover Oswald's

associations with Soviet intelligence. Oswald fabricated a "legend," or false biography, for himself before returning to the US, lied in FBI interviews, and attempted to conceal his movements.

● *The Warren Commission, the FBI and many other sleuths over the past fifteen years have investigated the Oswald case. How can you hope to come up with any new facts or different answers?*

I began by rejecting the idea that there was something new to be found out about bullets, wounds, or the grassy knoll. Instead I asked: Why did Lee Harvey Oswald defect to the Soviet Union in 1959? It seemed incredible to me that a 20-year-old Marine would suddenly decide to leave his family and friends and go to live in a strange country. I became interested in the question of motive.

I wanted to know what hap-

pened to Oswald in the Marine Corps. The Warren Commission had questioned only one Marine who served with Oswald at the Atsugi air base in Japan. With the help of four researchers, I

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OSWALD

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found 104 Marines who had known Oswald or had worked with him in Japan. It then became possible to reconstruct Oswald's activities in the Marine Corps before he defected.

● *What did you learn from the Marines?*

Oswald was a radar operator who, along with the other men in his unit, frequently saw the U-2 taking off and landing and heard its high-altitude requests for weather information on the radio.

● *How was this important?*

I didn't know at the time. But I questioned the designer of the U-2 at Lockheed, Clarence Johnson, and Richard Bissell, former special assistant to the director of the CIA, who was in charge of the U-2 programme in 1958. I found out that acquiring detailed information about the altitude and flight patterns of this novel spy plane was the No 1 priority of Soviet intelligence. I also questioned Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot shot down over Russia in 1960.

● *Powers died in 1977, when his helicopter ran out of fuel over Los Angeles. Didn't two other witnesses you interviewed die violent deaths?*

Yes, William C. Sullivan, former head of counter-intelligence for the FBI, who was killed in a hunting accident in 1977, and George De Mohrenschildt who shot himself after the second day of our prearranged four-day interview. It is tempting to see a connection between these deaths, but I don't. After all, I interviewed over 200 witnesses.

● *De Mohrenschildt became a good friend of Oswald's after Oswald returned from Russia in 1962. What did he tell you?*

He arranged a good part of Oswald's life in Dallas, but said he never would have done so had he not been encouraged by a CIA officer, J. Walter Moore, the head of the Domestic Contact Service in Dallas, a unit which inter-

viewed individuals who had returned from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

De Mohrenschildt said he had discussed Oswald with Moore and Moore had told him that Oswald was "harmless." But De Mohrenschildt strongly suggested that Moore was interested in what Oswald had to say. De Mohrenschildt didn't detail any specific arrangement he had with Moore.

However, it seemed plausible enough that the CIA would want to debrief Oswald. He was one of the few Americans to spend two years in Minsk and he could have contributed invaluable information to the biographic files on

Soviet leaders maintained by the CIA. More important, he had crucial information on the procedures which the Soviets applied to defectors (which could prove very useful if Western intelligence ever wanted to send a phoney defector to the USSR).

It also seems plausible that the CIA would attempt to debrief Oswald through a procedure which he was not aware of since he was regarded as hostile after he refused the lie detector test. The normal procedure for such a debriefing is to place someone in Oswald's path, who would befriend him. De Mohrenschildt would be well-qualified for such a job.

De Mohrenschildt may, however, have been lying to me and casting suspicion on the CIA to hide a more sinister relation he had with a foreign intelligence agency. I found De Mohrenschildt a highly competent person, brilliantly in command of what he disclosed, and perfectly capable of devising a cover story or red herring.

● *The CIA denied in the Warren Report and in every proceeding that it had ever had any interest in Oswald. What did Moore or other members of the CIA make of De Mohrenschildt's allegation?*

Moore refused to speak to me for the reason that he was still a CIA officer and CIA officers were not allowed to be interviewed. The CIA public-relations man refused comment on the allegation. Finally, I asked Melvin Laird, now a Washington editor for the Reader's Digest, if he would try to contact Admiral Turner of the CIA and ask him about the charge. Turner apparently consulted with his PR people and then coined a new verb by replying: "We're no-commenting it."

● *It's odd that other CIA and FBI officers were willing to give you almost all the facts about the case. How did you get them to talk?*

The CIA men were former

officers, retired or fired. I would usually begin by writing them a letter stating either that someone else had discussed the case they were involved in, and that I needed clarification from them, or that I had received some documents under the Freedom of Information Act which mentioned them or their case. Usually I found this piqued their curiosity. If they would agree to see me, I would usually do most of the talking, telling them what other people told me or what I had found out in documents.

● *But why did they talk?*

One device that almost always worked was showing them Freedom of Information documents mentioning their name or operational details of a case. Predictably, their first reaction was fury that the CIA would ever release this information. Their second reaction was to be

offended that someone in the present CIA had it in for them. They were soon eager to correct the record or fill out the context of a case. Their reasoning was that if the government could release information under Freedom of Information, why should they keep their lips sealed.

● *Is this how you got the CIA officer who handled Nosenko to speak about his case?*

Yes. He is now living in retirement in Europe, and when I first phoned him and wrote to him he refused to see me. Finally, after I had written a draft of my book, I tried again. This time I wrote stating the facts I was about to divulge, facts which included his name and his involvement in the case. He then agreed to see me.

We met at the Waterloo battlefield in Belgium, and I showed him about a hundred pages of documents that involved him. I had acquired these documents under Freedom of Information. He then told me that I was "deeply wrong" because I was missing a crucial element of the Nosenko case, but he was not sure that he was willing to provide it.

A few weeks went by and he agreed to meet me again, this time at Saint-Tropez in France. We then spent three weeks together, going mainly to the Club 55, a beach club, where he gave me what he considered to be the crucial context on the case, which was what Nosenko had done in 1962.

● *And what was that?*

Nosenko had been sent by the Soviets to the CIA to paint false tracks away from the trail of a Soviet mole in the CIA. [A mole is someone working for one



● *An "expert" claimed on the BBC's Panorama programme that the photograph showing Oswald holding his rifle is a fake. What is your evaluation of this?*

The following evidence has to be considered. First, Marina Oswald admitted taking the photograph, even though it was an incriminating admission, and admitted destroying another copy inscribed by Oswald to his daughter June.

Secondly, Marguerite Oswald, Oswald's mother, admitted seeing the inscribed photograph before Oswald was killed, and further admitted that she assisted Marina in destroying this incriminating evidence. Since it seemed against her interest to make such an admission, serious weight has to be given to it.

Thirdly, photographic experts have undisputedly determined that the photograph was taken by Oswald's camera.

Finally, George De Mohrenschildt produced in 1977 another copy of the photograph which was inscribed to him in Oswald's handwriting and dated April 5, 1963. Further, it had a note on it written by Marina in Russian.

In order to believe the photograph is faked, one has to believe (1) Marina perjured herself (2) Marguerite Oswald perjured herself (3) Both Oswald and Marina's handwriting was forged on the De Mohrenschildt copy—and all for no apparent reason, since there was sufficient evidence linking Oswald to the rifle.

My conclusion is that Marina took the photograph in 1963.

intelligence agency while being under the control of another, eg Philby.]

● *Did you ever get to see Nosenko? And if so, how?*

Yes. The CIA put me onto him.

● *How do you explain that?*

I presume that it found out I was writing a book on Lee Harvey Oswald and it wanted me to put Nosenko's message in it. Nosenko's message was that Oswald was a complete loner in the Soviet Union and never had any connection or debriefing by the KGB. I spent about four hours

interviewing Nosenko.

● *Your book strongly suggests that Nosenko is a fake. Do you believe the CIA was trying to mislead you by sending you to him?*

Yes. It sent me Nosenko as a legitimate witness to Oswald's activities in the Soviet Union without telling me that Nosenko had been suspected of being a Soviet disinformation agent.

● *When did you first become suspicious of Nosenko?*

A few weeks after I interviewed Nosenko, I had lunch in Washington with the Soviet Press officer, Igor Agou. I had set up the meeting in the hope of per-

suading the Soviets to allow me to go to Russia to interview the Soviet citizens who had known Oswald there. Agou, however, made it clear that the Soviets would not be receptive to such an idea. Mr Agou then said in a very quiet voice: "Perhaps I shouldn't be saying this . . . but you might be interested in knowing that there is someone in America who could help you . . . a former KGB officer named Yuri Nosenko, who had handled the Oswald case and who knows as much about Oswald as anyone in the Soviet Union."

● *You mean that this Soviet Embassy officer was actually recommending that you see Nosenko?*

Yes. I was a bit dumbfounded. Here was an official from the Soviet Embassy recommending that I see someone who was a traitor. And I couldn't believe that Mr Agou was just trying to be helpful to me.

● *Your book makes frequent references to James Angleton, the former head of counter-intelligence for the CIA. Why did he agree to see you?*

Because I had already interviewed Nosenko. Angleton knew that since Nosenko was working

for the CIA, he wouldn't have seen me unless the CIA had sent him. Angleton, who had been fired from the CIA by William Colby, wanted to know why, after keeping Nosenko in isolation for thirteen years, the CIA would suddenly send him to see a journalist doing a story about Oswald.

● *What did Angleton tell you?*

For the first three meetings in Washington, he refused to discuss anything about Nosenko, Oswald, the CIA, or anything else bearing on what I was writing. He was far more interested in finding out what I knew than in telling me anything, and so I decided to look up the members of his staff.

● *How do you know that these former CIA officers weren't misinforming you?*

Of course, I have to assume that they had axes to grind. A number of CIA officers whose careers rested on the Nosenko case wanted to see it resolved in one way or another. I also realised that I could never be sure that crucial facts were not withheld.

● *What did you consider the greatest failure in your investigation?*

The failure to run down a lead

concerning Pavel Voloshin. Voloshin's name turns up both in Oswald's address book and on a letter (from the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow) found among Oswald's effects. I got a CIA "trace" on Voloshin, and he turned out to be a KGB officer who had been in the Far East at the same time Oswald was there with the Marines, and who had visited California in 1959 when Oswald was preparing to defect. He had been in Moscow when Oswald was there, and finally had been in Amsterdam when Oswald passed through on his way back to the United States in 1962. One former CIA counter-intelligence officer suggested to me that Voloshin might, have been the person who recruited Oswald or arranged for his defection.

● *What was Voloshin doing in California?*

He was supposedly working as a Press officer for a Russian dance troupe passing through California. I asked Oswald's fellow Marines who served with him in California whether Oswald had ever talked about this dance troupe. None of them remembered, one of his friends, Nelson Delgado, remembered, however, that Oswald had talked to a man in a raincoat for an hour and a half one night when he was on guard duty. Another Marine also remembered this incident. They were impressed by the man's raincoat because it was about 90 degrees that night.

I wanted to show these Marines a photograph of Voloshin to see if he could conceivably be the man they had seen. I knew that the FBI had Voloshin under surveillance, and that the CIA had a photograph of him in its file, but they refused to turn it over to me.

● *You mention the CIA's misleading you over Nosenko's bonafides; did they try to mislead you anywhere else?*

When we were checking the book, my researcher was told by the CIA that the CIA headquarters was only six storeys high—a small detail. Later I found out that Richard Helms's office was on the seventh floor and that it was common knowledge that the office was on the seventh floor. I still wonder why the CIA was giving me inaccurate information. Possibly it was to make it appear that my own research was slipshod.

● *What about the FBI?*

It provided me with very little information, but what they did give me was generally straightforward, and I think they tried to be as helpful as they could.

● *Were there any witnesses that you were unable to find?*

Yes. I had hoped to interview James Allen Mintkenbaugh, an American who admitted spying for the Soviets and who was subsequently tried and imprisoned. He went to Moscow in the same

month that Oswald did and the Soviets tried to arrange to have him marry a Soviet agent, whom he would bring back to the United States. I was curious to know what he thought of Oswald, and if he ever met him or Marina in the Soviet Union.

● *Do you think the mole that Stone [code name of a defector] pointed to is still tunnelling his way up through American intelligence?*

He hasn't been caught yet, and it is entirely conceivable that one was planted. We know that the Soviets placed so many moles in West German intelligence that they effectively took it over, but more important, the CIA is particularly vulnerable to penetration since so many of its agents recruited after World War II are individuals of East European origin. As Angleton pointed out to me, the odds are always in favour of recruiting one mole.

● *Is the hunt that Angleton started for the mole still on?*

The former CIA officers who were involved in the hunt tell me that the "new" CIA has now made a policy decision to believe moles do not exist. All speculation on this subject has been officially designated "sick think."

● *Was James Angleton fired because he was onto the mole Stone had talked about?*

Not directly. According to his former aides, Angleton and his counter-intelligence staff were too strongly challenging Colby's sources in Russia. Accordingly, Colby got rid of Angleton and his key staffers, one of whom, Newton Miler, told me that Colby wanted to close down or drastically revise the role of counter-intelligence in the CIA.

● *Might there be a mole in the FBI?*

Yes. Indeed, Sullivan was convinced that the Soviets had penetrated at least the FBI's New York office. And the former deputy chief of the CIA's Soviet Russia Division told me that there was absolutely no way the Soviets could run the Fedora operation without the aid of a mole in the New York office.

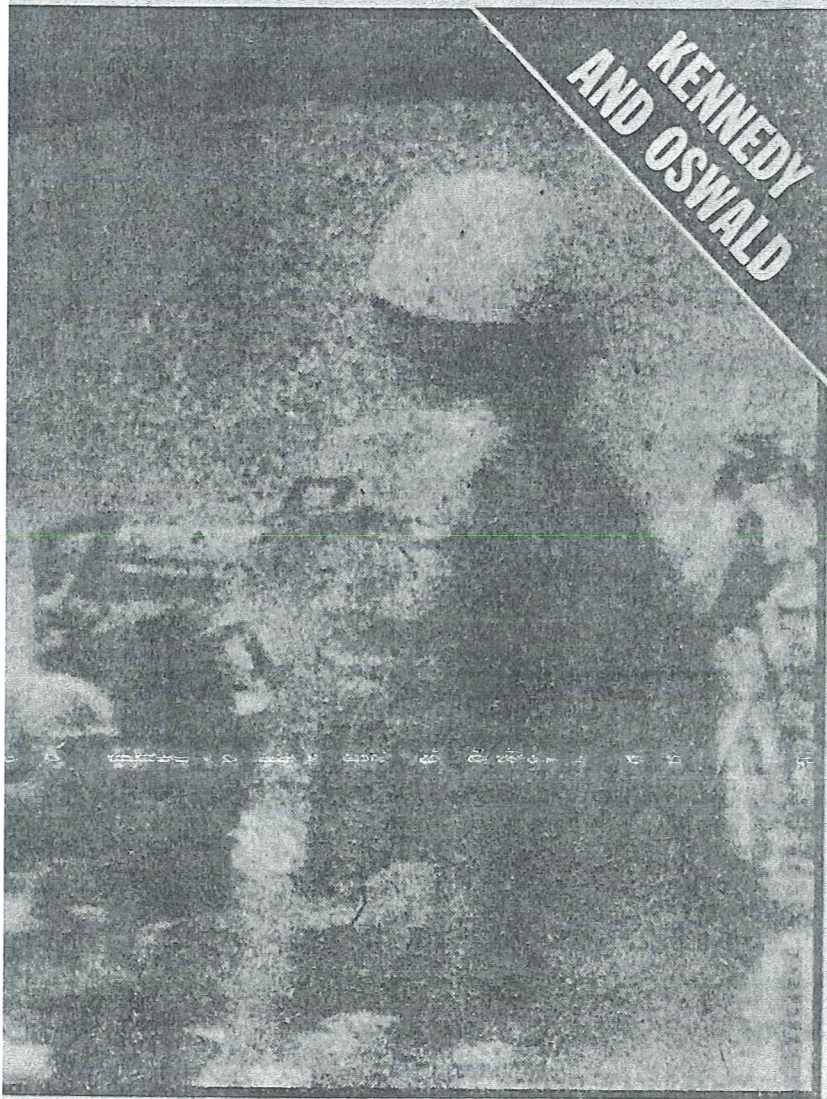
● *Does James Angleton really know who the mole in the CIA is?*

Angleton refuses to say, but one of his ex-staff members told me with a wry smile: "You might find out who Colby was seeing in Rome in the early

1950s." When I pressed him about Rome, he changed the subject to Vietnam and told a long story about Colby's having dined with a Frenchman who turned out to be a Soviet agent. Colby should have reported the contact but didn't, and when Angleton raised the issue, Colby became enraged. I asked Angleton about this confrontation, and he mentioned some CIA inspector general's report. He then switched to one of his favourite subjects —the cymbidium orchid. ●

...and that Oswald was there. Stone (code name of a defector)

**KENNEDY
AND OSWALD**



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