

Oswald-de Mohrenschildt link offends a decent man's name

By RICHARD L. STAW

I FEEL COMPELLED to write in defense of George de Mohrenschildt about whom there have been several speculative articles in the press in recent days. In the view of this writer, the news articles, mostly emanating from the wire services, have been irresponsible and full of inaccuracies.

Examples: Headline in Honolulu Advertiser for March 31 reads: "Victim of Suicide Believed Linked to Killer of JFK." The Rocky Mountain News for April 2 headlined a news dispatch by David Nagy of UPI "De Mohrenschildt Death Intensifies JFK Mystery." In another article appearing in various newspapers, dated Palm Beach, Fla., (UPI), an unknown reporter refers to de Mohrenschildt as a "one time crony of Lee Harvey Oswald."

THE ASSASSINATIONS committee of the House, looking into the murders of the late President Kennedy and of Martin Luther King Jr., affords a backdrop for various seekers of sudden publicity, if not for fame. And the apparent suicide of Mr. de Mohrenschildt is made of order for the sensation seekers of the press and the assassinations committee. Foremost among the publicity seekers is the so-called "Dutch journalist," Willem Oltmans.

Oltmans has made some serious charges, mostly in the form of insinuations and innuendos, by which he claims to quote the now deceased de Mohrenschildt as having prior knowledge of the later murderous actions of Oswald.

As one who has been a friend of Mr. de Mohrenschildt for over 25 years, I do not believe the allegations and innuendos made about him in the press. I first met George de Mohrenschildt in

never working on a project having to do with the petroleum industry in the western Colorado. He was a petroleum engineer and he worked with the United States as well as abroad. He was a man of exceptional linguistic ability, a master of at least six separate languages. As a result of his language ability he frequently traveled abroad as a petroleum consultant.

THIS WRITER REPRESENTED Mr. de Mohrenschildt in the 1950s in different oil matters; and saw him at scattered times over the years, mainly in Colorado and Texas.

On about May 1975, Mr. de Mohrenschildt was a guest in my home during a time when he was also visiting other Colorado friends. I brought up the subject of his having been questioned by the Warren Commission investigators after the slaying of President Kennedy. He stated that he was still being hounded by members of the press 12 years after the assassination, and that he was thoroughly sick of having his time wasted. He stated that he had told everything he knew about Oswald to the Warren Commission, and could not understand why he was still being hounded. He said he was convinced that the unwanted publicity of having been slightly acquainted with Oswald had hurt his professional business considerably. He said that was one reason why he was teaching at Bishop College near Dallas.

He stated that Oswald had sought him out because he, de Mohrenschildt, was born in Russia and naturally spoke fluent Russian. Very few other people in Dallas could speak Russian. Oswald wanted to talk with someone so that he

could practice his limited knowledge of the Russian language, and de Mohrenschildt and his wife did, in fact, converse with Oswald for that express purpose on various occasions. They also helped Oswald's Russian wife, Marina, in her struggle to learn English. De Mohrenschildt expressed contempt and ridicule for Oswald, however, stating that he was a complete misfit and a person of very limited education.

KNOWING de Mohrenschildt as I have over the past quarter century, I am sure that he would not willingly have spent 15 minutes of his time with Oswald except to be obliging in the matter of helping him with the Russian language. De Mohrenschildt was a man of superior intelligence and education; a true intellectual; and there simply would not have been any intellectual compatibility between him and Oswald. Furthermore, de Mohrenschildt was an outgoing, friendly man with a fine sense of humor and a full appreciation of life; in contrast to Oswald.

If de Mohrenschildt became depressed in the last two or three years of his life, it may well be because he did, in fact, suffer certain personal tragedies about which he also talked at our last meeting in May 1975. Among those personal tragedies were the loss of two of his children, whom he dearly loved, who were struck down by the fatal childhood disease of cystic fibrosis. After the death of his son and later a daughter from this disease, George de Mohrenschildt and his wife, Jeanne, took a trek on foot all the way from southern Mexico through Central America. The trip took nearly a year.

Another point should be made to demonstrate that the hounding of the press to the effect that

de Mohrenschildt was a "crony of Lee Harvey Oswald" is simply trash. The fact is that de Mohrenschildt was a White Russian whose family fled from the Bolshevik Revolution after World War I. De Mohrenschildt became a naturalized American citizen and was very proud of this fact. My recollection is that he was sworn in as an American citizen before the late Federal Judge Symes or possibly Federal Judge Knous in the early 1950s in Denver.

As a refugee from his own native land because of the Bolshevik Revolution, and as one who prized his freedom as a naturalized American citizen, I have heard de Mohrenschildt many times declaim his intense hatred for the Russian Communists. It is inconceivable to me that de Mohrenschildt would have had anything to do with Oswald, if he had had any inkling that Oswald had Communist leanings. Thus, it is also inconceivable that de Mohrenschildt would have had anything to do with Cuban sympathizers of the Communist government of Castro.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS should not be a license to destroy the reputation of a deceased man whom I believe was a good and law-abiding American citizen. Suicide is not proof of insanity or of guilt. Any psychologist or psychiatrist, if he knew of de Mohrenschildt's personal tragedies as well as the constant emotional pressures suffered at the hands of the press and the government by this sensitive man, could anticipate a temporary depression leading to self-destruction.

I invite George's friends to come to his defense.

Editor's note: Shaw is a Denver lawyer