

OSWALD IS VIEWED AS A FAME-SEEKER

'Outrageous Act' Was Aim
in Life, Writer Believes

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An American writer who interviewed Lee H. Oswald in Moscow four years before his murder as the accused assassin of President Kennedy summed him up then as a person who "had to perform a yet more memorable, and outrageous, act than his defection to the Soviet Union."

Priscilla Johnson, a student of Soviet affairs, gave this judgment in an article in the April issue of Harper's magazine, just published. She had talked with Oswald all one evening when she was a correspondent in the Soviet capital for the North American Newspaper Alliance.

By a quirk, Miss Johnson was also acquainted with President Kennedy. In 1953, when he was a Senator, she worked briefly in his office as a researcher on Southeast Asia.

She did not believe that envy of President Kennedy's "wealth and good looks, his happy fortune in general," was an important factor in Oswald's attitude. She believes that to him the President was "a surprisingly abstract being, a soulless personification of authority."

"I believe that Oswald yearned to go down in history as the man who shot the President," she wrote.

Oswald Sought Celebrity

She recalled that when she asked him how ordinary Russians viewed his defection, he replied, "The Russians I meet don't treat me as any celebrity," and she sensed that "to himself, Lee Oswald really was a celebrity."

Suggesting that defection seemed to have led him as a way of proving his differentness, she wrote:

"Back in Texas, people forgot all about him. Even among the Russians, he ceased after a while to stand out as a curiosity. To be marked as the extraordinary person he needed to be, he had to perform a yet more memorable, and outrageous, act."

Miss Johnson says her notes on the five or six-hour interview bore the repeated marginal reminder, "He's bitter." Although he was guarded in his replies to her questions about his family background,

she says he denied being indignant about his mother's hard life, explaining it as part of "what happens to workers in the United States."

"In spite of Oswald's effort to depersonalize," she wrote, "to blame his mother's suffering on Marxist social processes, I felt that here was a bitterness too deep for tears."

Her "biggest surprise," she wrote, was that he was leading a "dismally lonely" life in Moscow, waiting in his hotel room in hope that when the telephone rang it would be a Soviet official announcing that his request for citizenship had been granted.

"Oswald's own walled-in existence led me to conclude that he was strangely blind," she commented. "Not only was he not looking at the life all around him. He was making a heroic effort not to see it."

Marxist economics interested him most during the interview, she wrote, but she concluded that his views were "rigid and naive" and that "he did not know his Marxism very well." Since "Marxism has traditionally rejected assassination as a weapon of political struggle," she wrote, she saw a "terrible irony" in the assassination of the President—"if Oswald was, in fact, the assassin."

She says she saw in him two qualities, single-mindedness and secretiveness, which "could have been crucial to his success," first, in arranging his defection to the Soviet Union, and, later, in purchasing a rifle and placing himself on Mr. Kennedy's route in Dallas without arousing suspicion.

Miss Johnson, entering "again into the realm of speculation," wrote that she considered it unlikely from the start "that Oswald would confess to shooting the President. She believes that refusal to cooperate with authority, expressed in a refusal to confess, would have been nearly as much a part of the social protest he was trying to make as the act of assassinating himself."