

Oswald, The Marine

Marxism Was

By **KERRY THORNLEY**

The Warren Commission's star witness

Lee Harvey Oswald once told me he found Marxism the only modern philosophy with a vital, relevant connection to life on this planet. Through some Marxists lose all feeling for people as individuals and worry only about the state, this did not happen to Oswald.

I have never known a person more motivated by what appeared to be a genuine concern for the human race than Lee Harvey Oswald. He was moved by what people usually call the purest humanitarian sentiments. Oswald was a philanthropist.

As I told you last week, I first got to know Lee Harvey Oswald in the late winter of 1959. I had been transferred into his outfit, Marine Air Control Squadron Nine, in Santa Ana, California. After we got to know each other better, we had quite a few long discussions.

Sometimes we both took the side of the atheists (which we both were) and argued with the more excitable Christians in the outfit.

At other times we practiced our arguments on each other. The result was that we developed a close kinship tempered with sharp differences.

We were never close friends. Oswald wasn't the type to form close friendships. Yet I came to know him pretty well because of our disagreements.

Oswald's Concern for Mankind

For example, I soon learned

that his concern for other people—as a mass, not as individuals—was so real that he couldn't concentrate on his own affairs.

Instead, he was busy solving mankind's problems.

Famines, plagues, revolutions and wars were more challenging to him than, say, whether his shoes were shined before tomorrow's inspection. So he always stood inspection with unshined shoes.

When he was punished for it, he said he was being picked on, but that it didn't matter.

He would be remembered and his tormentors would be forgotten, he said.

As I told the Warren Commission, "He looked upon the eyes of future people as some kind of tribunal, and he wanted to be on the winning side so that 10,000 years from now people would look in history books and say, 'Well, this man was ahead of his time.'"

You see how his mind worked.

What could this "man or the future" care if his shoes were smudged?

Marxism and his own place in the future world were not all that Oswald thought about.

He had some definite ideas about the U.S. and capitalism.

He thought that the capitalist nations, and especially the U.S., were moving toward dictatorship.

And he definitely thought his country was playing the imperialist role in the Far East. (I'll have more to say about this later because it had a lot to do with Lee's defecting to the Soviet Union after he got out of the Marines.)

But if freedom was being choked off in his own country, Oswald believed it must exist somewhere.

And the only possible place for such freedom had to be on the other side of the Iron

Curtain. If freedom wasn't there, it was nowhere.

So despite some hesitation, Lee meant it when he said his religion was Communism.

And, tragically, his religion was Communism not because it was superior, but because he couldn't find a better alternative in the United States.

An Object Of Ridicule

As I said, Lee had great ideas. But to execute them he needed power.

And as a private in the Marine Corps, he didn't have too much of that.

Instead, as far back as he could remember Oswald was an object of ridicule. For instance, in 1952, when he moved with his

mother to New York other children teased him about his Texas accent.

And in 1954, upon returning to the South, he found the children in his ninth grade class laughed at him because of his acquired northern accent.

After he joined the Marines in 1956, he got nicknamed "Ozzie Rabbit," after a cartoon character.

Like many men who are laughed at Lee took refuge in being a comedian. He made jokes at his own expense, per-



JFK was to become the victim of a man who wanted to find a place for himself in history.

naps in hopes he would beat others to the punch.

He joked a lot about Communism. Once when our section chief told us to gather around him and listen, Lee

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Lee Harvey Oswald's Only Religion

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exclaimed in a mock Russian accent, "Ah, a collective farm lecture!"

Sometimes he referred to himself and others as "comrade." Even when his jokes had no direct relation to Communism, he still cracked them in his Russian accent.

In a group, Lee was loud and boisterous, joking or arguing the case for Communism, or both.

As you might expect, his loud-mouthed wit often got him in trouble when he tried it on a superior officer.

And when he ended up swabbing, raking or picking up cigarette butts he would complain he was being picked on.

Oswald The Great

But he didn't mind it when the other troops returned his smart-alec quips. And he did not seem to mind such nicknames as "Comrade Oswald-ovich" as long as he was the center of attention in a large group.

However, he didn't go for teasing on a person-to-person basis.

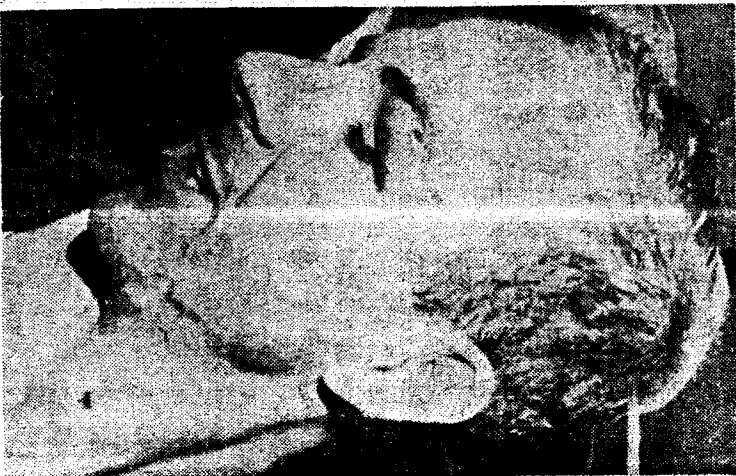
I remember one time I answered one of his complaints about the Corps by saying:

"Well, Lee, when the revolution comes you can change all that."

He gave me a look of pained surprise and shouted, "Not you too, Thornley!" And he walked away without an-



Oswald, a young man concerned about humanity problems.



Oswald, a young man who sought fame through assassination.

other world.

When he wasn't in a crowd, he wasn't so bad, especially in a serious discussion.

Then he didn't have a front to keep up and, without an audience, he would more often admit he was wrong on a point.

By observing Oswald a long time in a group, I was able to draw some more conclusions about this unhappy Marine.

I learned that in Oswald's own eyes he was two conflicting things. On one hand, he was Oswald the Oppressed. On the other he was Oswald the Great, the future liberator of the human race.

Oswald the Great lived within the shell of Oswald the Oppressed.

All that Oswald the Oppressed had to do was throw off his chains, at which time Oswald the Great would step out of the shell and Oswald the Oppressed would be destroyed forever.

U.S. "Imperialism"

I saw Oswald for the last time when I transferred to Japantown where Lee had already served.

But instead of forgetting about Lee, I became more aware of his thinking because of conditions that he and I both observed in Japan.

Oswald, the Warren Commission reported, once said, "The thing that turned me to Marxism was my service in Japan."

He said conditions over there convinced him something was wrong with the American system, and that Marxism was the probable answer.

It was in Japan, he said, that he made up his mind to go to Russia and see for himself how a revolutionary society operates.

I did not find conditions in Japan that bad. But Lee was

very disturbed about what he called U.S. imperialism.

This imperialism, Oswald said, was the conduct of U.S. servicemen in their dealing with the Japanese and other Far Eastern peoples.

Just before I shipped out, Lee and I had a heated discussion on the subject.

I challenged him to back up Soviet propaganda about U.S. imperialism.

At this he became very excited. "If you ever go overseas, Thornley, you'll see what I mean," adding that our fellow

Marines equalled any Nazi storm trooper for brutality, given the opportunity to get away with it.

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His face became chalky as he discussed this and he appeared to be genuinely sickened, so I

did not press him for details. In the course of my tour I saw perhaps a half-dozen incidents of brutality on the part of Americans toward natives of the Far East.

These ranged from the beating of taxi drivers to the dropping of a garbage-filled crate from a ship onto an old man's back.

I heard a dozen more, usually in the form of boasts.

I call this sort of thing juvenile delinquency. Oswald called it U.S. imperialism.

(Continued Next Week)



As President Kennedy lay mortally wounded on his wife's shoulder, Lee Harvey Oswald started his escape from the Book Depository.