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Mystery Man's Profile: Where's JFK Link?

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At 2:21 p.m. last Tuesday, a tape machine in the bedroom of a Florida mansion recorded the ghostly sound of footsteps, and a door closing, and the sudden death of George de Mohrenschildt.

The bang of a 20-gauge shotgun drowned out the TV soap opera dialogue the machine had been recording at precisely 15 seconds past 2:21. The muzzle was in de Mohrenschildt's mouth. The coroner ruled it suicide.

George de Mohrenschildt: 65, Russian-born master of six languages, ladies' man, suicidal mental patient, petroleum geologist, world traveler, reputed CIA agent. Friend and benefactor of Lee Harvey Oswald. Man of mystery. Man on the run.

The man who said he knew who killed Jack Kennedy. The man who supposedly wrote down — and hid in a safe — the details of a fantastic murder conspiracy among federal agents, Texas oilmen, anti-Castro Cubans, Jack Ruby, Oswald ... and George de Mohrenschildt.

"He was a crucial witness for us, based on the new information he had," said House Assassinations Committee member Richardson Preyer, D-N.C. "He was intimately involved with Oswald."

De Mohrenschildt left no suicide note, police said.

But when he died, a man named Gaetan J. Fonzi, investigator for the assassinations panel, was in the vicinity of the Palm Beach, Fla., mansion, waiting to question de Mohrenschildt and promising to be back at 8:30 p.m.

De Mohrenschildt learned that from his daughter, Alexandra, 33, when he returned from lunch to the waterfront house owned by Mrs. Charles Tilton III, his former sister-in-law. He walked upstairs to a second floor study, near the bedroom where a maid had left the tape machine recording "The Doctors."

No one heard the shot.

"Mr. de Mohrenschildt was petrified," says Willem Oltmans, a Dutch journalist who claims to have been the dead man's confidant. "This man had a



WILLEM OLTMANS
Victim "petrified."

feeling that if things came out ... he would be killed, like some other people disappeared or were killed who were connected with the Kennedy assassination."

Police said they found a brown leather briefcase in the death room, containing papers referring to Oswald. They would say no more.

His personnel file at Bishop College in Dallas, where he taught Russian and French until he started running a month ago, says that, in a previous career as a professional petroleum geologist, he was a State Department adviser in Pakistan, Ghana and Nigeria from 1956 to 1959.

A check of State Department records shows it had no paid adviser by that name at that time. It is possible he was an unpaid adviser.

A UPI source in Miami, who investigated the Kennedy assassination, says de Mohrenschildt worked for the CIA in Haiti in 1963. He was, in fact, there, officially working in petroleum geology, the day Kennedy died.

Oltmans says de Mohrenschildt never said anything about CIA employment in the 11 years they knew each other. De Mohrenschildt himself publicly denied he was ever an agent.

But, no doubt about it, he knew Oswald in Dallas in 1963, and he was a brilliant, mentally unstable man of the world.

Born in czarist Russia, he emigrated to Belgium as a child during the Bolshevik revolution. He made his way later to the United States, earned a degree in petroleum geology, pursued that profession through the 1950s and 60s

and made Dallas his home base.

There, in the Russian-American social community, he met Lee and Marina Oswald.

He told the Warren Commission in 1964 that he and his wife became chummy with the Oswalds, talked politics and personal problems with them, pitied their hand-to-mouth existence and gave them a little cash now and then.

"It was just a misfortune that we helped them," he testified in hindsight. "We should have known better."

The commission concluded de Mohrenschildt had no connection with Oswald's deed.



GEORGE de MOHRENSCHILDT
Running scared for a month.

But enter now Willem Oltmans, the Dutch journalist who claims to have been recording de Mohrenschildt's "shocking confessions." He says the commission didn't ask the right questions.

"De Mohrenschildt said he told the Warren Commission he was absolutely sure that Oswald killed Kennedy even before Oswald was arrested," Oltmans said Friday. "And he added, 'but the Warren Commission never asked me why I was so sure.'"

Why was he?

After three hours of closed-door testimony before the assassinations committee Friday, Oltmans told reporters that de Mohrenschildt, close to tears, answered that question Feb. 27 in Dallas:

"He said Oswald acted on his instructions. They discussed the assassination from A to Z, and they knew they were going to kill Kennedy."

Oltmans claimed de Mohrenschildt also implicated CIA agents, FBI agents, anti-Castro Cubans, Texas oil millionaires including the late H.L. Hunt, and Ruby, Oswald's assassin.

Hunt's family denied the late magnate ever knew de Mohrenschildt, and called Oltman's story "ludicrous" and "vicious."

George de Mohrenschildt led a scared life after his Warren Commission appearance.

He worked as a petroleum adviser to the government of Haiti until 1967, then claimed he was frozen out of that profession because of his association with Oswald.

Records at Parkland Hospital—where Kennedy was pronounced dead on Nov. 22, 1963—show de Mohrenschildt was admitted for psychiatric treatment last October and remained until Dec. 30.

His attorney, Pat Russell, said his client was depressed by Congress' revival of the Kennedy probe and tried to kill himself at least twice.