

Summers 1989 edition

CONSPIRACY

by

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Updated and expanded edition



A president in death. The last picture of the face known to millions, taken at autopsy in Washington. Post-mortem photographs were first seen by U.S. television viewers in 1988, on PBS *Nova* program, presented by Walter Cronkite. Many say such pictures should not be published, but they are relevant as well as shocking. The neck wound, shown in this picture, remains the subject of medical controversy.


PARAGON HOUSE
New York

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briefly of getting them published. Then he seems to have had second thoughts, for he did not respond at all when a persistent local reporter tried to discuss them with him. Now, though, Oswald handed over his detailed notes to de Mohrenschildt and respectfully asked for his opinion. Possibly the papers were promptly copied and passed to de Mohrenschildt's friend in the local CIA, Jim Moore. De Mohrenschildt's son-in-law, Gary Taylor, was to tell the Warren Commission that Oswald became puffy in de Mohrenschildt's hands. "Whatever his suggestions were, Lee grabbed them and took them, whether it was what time to go to bed or where to stay." In October 1962 Oswald followed his older friend's advice in a way that changed the direction of his life.

On October 7 a group of Russians, including the de Mohrenschildts with their daughter and son-in-law, visited the Oswalds at their rundown apartment in Fort Worth. Oswald announced that he had lost his job at a nearby metal factory, a claim that was not true, and thus sparked a discussion as to what he should do next. It was George de Mohrenschildt who volunteered what seemed a ready-made plan. He suggested that Oswald would have a better chance of finding work in Dallas, thirty miles away, and that Marina would be better off staying awhile with one of the emigré families. Everyone present had been aware of tension between Oswald and Marina, and some believed Oswald had been beating his wife. De Mohrenschildt's proposals seemed reasonable and were accepted. Much later, some of those present would remember that George de Mohrenschildt was overdoing things a bit, that he seemed strangely clear about Oswald's job prospects in Dallas. He even gave the impression that he was personally supplying Oswald with funds. Perhaps significantly, Oswald—for all his apparent poverty—had just finished repaying the \$200 his brother had lent him to help with the travel from New York. The day after the meeting at his apartment, Oswald followed de Mohrenschildt's advice to the letter. He walked out of his perfectly good job in Fort Worth, without notice or explanation, and traveled to Dallas. Apart from a few days at the city YMCA, it is not known where Oswald stayed for the best part of the next month.

He rented a post-office box, a system which—assuming no

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official surveillance—ensured the receipt of mail with absolute privacy. Oswald used a post-office box wherever he went from now on. Four days after arriving in Dallas he also secured a new job—one which paid, within a few cents, exactly the same as his old job in Fort Worth. Although technically the work was found for Oswald by the Texas Employment Commission, George de Mohrenschildt's wife and daughter both say de Mohrenschildt organized it. Instead of factory chores the job involved photography, a skill Oswald was keen to learn. It was to be an odd setting for a young man who had sullied his name by defecting to the Soviet Union and offering to give away military secrets.

Oswald's new employment was with a graphics-arts company called Jaggars-Chiles-Stovall. The firm not only prepared advertisements for newspapers and trade catalogues but also handled contracts for the U.S. Army Map Service. Much of the Army work involved material obtained by the very U-2 planes Oswald had once watched in Japan, and only employees with a special security clearance were supposed to see it. In practice everybody—including Oswald—worked in cramped conditions which made secrecy impossible. He worked side by side with a young man named Dennis Ofstein who had previously worked in the Army Security Agency. Oswald was closetmouthed about his background, but loosened up a little when he found Ofstein knew some Russian. Ofstein later recalled the curiously professional way his new colleague discussed matters of military interest he had observed in the Soviet Union. Oswald mentioned "the dispersement of military units, saying they didn't intermingle their armored divisions and infantry divisions and various units the way we do in the United States, and they would have all of their aircraft in one geographical location and their infantry in another. . . ." Once, when Ofstein helped Oswald enlarge a picture, he said it had been taken in Russia and showed "some military headquarters and that the guards stationed there were armed with weapons and ammunition and had orders to shoot any trespassers." Over a period of six months at Jaggars-Chiles-Stovall, Oswald became acquainted with sophisticated camera techniques. He also acquired items of photographic equipment which seemed unlikely possessions for a youngster living on a pittance. When police seized Oswald's effects in

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November 1963, after the assassination, they found a Minox camera—the sort usually referred to as a “spy camera.” This fact remained obscure until very recently.

Dallas police detective Gus Rose says he found the Minox camera in Oswald's old Marine seabag. It was listed with other confiscated possessions in Dallas police headquarters and kept there until the FBI took over the inquiry and carried off all evidence, including the camera, to Washington. Two months later the FBI contacted the Dallas police and tried unsuccessfully to have the manifest of Oswald's possessions changed. They now claimed that the equipment found had not been a camera at all, but a Minox *light meter*. The police declined to change the manifest, and today Detective Rose remains adamant that it was indeed a Minox camera he found. He is emphatically supported by Assistant District Attorney Bill Alexander. He saw the Minox camera just after its seizure. He scoffs at FBI attempts to say the camera never existed, recalling that he personally worked the mechanism on Oswald's Minox. As a professional investigator, Alexander is familiar with the workings of the Minox camera and owns one to this day. He regards the FBI behavior over the camera as further indication that before the assassination, Oswald had some connection with a government agency. Warren deBruyck, the FBI agent who took Oswald's possessions to Washington and monitored his activities during part of 1963, today says he “cannot remember” the Minox camera. Now retired from the Bureau, deBruyck adds, however, that there are “imitations as to what I can say. . . . I have signed the secrecy agreement before leaving the Bureau.” In the recent proceedings of Congress Assassinations Committee, a staff lawyer made it clear that the item seized was indeed a Minox camera.

Along with the camera, police confiscated a whole array of other equipment after the assassination, including rolls of exposed Minox film. In 1978, after a legal suit under the Freedom of Information Act, the FBI released twenty-five pictures developed from the Minox cassettes. The majority show scenes shot in Europe, and five show military scenes apparently photographed in Asia or Latin America. Apart from the Minox material, the police also seized three other cameras, a 15-power telescope, two pairs of

fieldglasses, a compass, and even a pedometer. None of those who knew Oswald in the two years before the assassination have remembered him as a cross-country hiking enthusiast. The total cost of all this equipment must have been hundreds of dollars.

Oswald's address book, also confiscated after the assassination, contained the words “micro dots,” written alongside the entry for the firm of Jaggars-Chiles-Stovall.™ The microdot technique is used to store and transmit intelligence information. By a system of photographic reduction a mass of written material can be transferred to a tiny spot like a punctuation mark and then concealed in an apparently innocent document, such as a letter. It is a technique that has little use outside espionage. Taken together, Oswald's activities, possessions, and associations all jar with his public image of a hard-up workingman. There is no avoiding the strong suspicion that he was, in reality, something else.

In the weeks before Christmas 1962, Lee and Marina appeared to lurch from crisis to crisis in their married life. For a while they were separated again—and the Russian exile colony buzzed with rumors of Lee's cruelty toward his wife. Oswald, for his part, complained that Marina had her faults—not least a weakness for gossiping to others about their sex life. Many of the local Russians, who had at first befriended the Oswalds, swiftly backed away from the marital strife. George de Mohrenschildt, however, did not. He continued to spend time with Oswald, talking politics with him—largely in English, a language Marina still had trouble following.

As the fateful year of 1963 began, Oswald moved into a new phase. Ostensibly he plunged once again into a lonely obsession with left-wing causes, this time with a tragic spiral into violence. The conventional wisdom for a long time was that Oswald was now set on a course which would lead him—and him alone—to Dealey Plaza, as the assassin of President Kennedy. Today, with the Assassinations Committee finding that at least two gunmen were involved, the signposts point in new directions. So far as the role of triggerman is concerned, Oswald may even have been the fall guy he claimed to be.

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- 576 HSCA XII.60, noting that Cogswell generated information on de Mohrenschildt for HSCA.
AID: "Who Was George de Mohrenschildt?" article in *Clandestine America*, autumn 1977.
Note 61: The role of AID in the 1964 Chilean election was exposed in the *Washington Post* many years later. It quoted a U.S. official as saying "U.S. intervention was blatant and almost obscene."
The article, by Laurence Stern, reported that AID cooperated with the CIA in funneling up to \$20 million into Chile (Marchetti/Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 39n).
CIA and de Mohrenschildt as source: CIA document 18-522.
de Mohrenschildt offer to State Department: Report p. 283.
Photograph: seen by author during interview with Jeanne de Mohrenschildt, 1978.
de Mohrenschildt service for State Department: VIII.425 (testimony of Mrs. Igor Voshnin).
196 Orlov interview: with E. J. Epstein for *Legend*, p. 314.
Bouhe: VIII.355 (testimony of Bouhe).
Note 62: de Mohrenschildt discussed his meetings with Moore when visited in Haiti after the assassination by FBI agent James Wood. He documented his "harmless lunatic" quote in a letter to a Dallas associate. Jeanne de Mohrenschildt's version of the de Mohrenschildt/Moore exchange comes from her interviews with the author in 1978. De Mohrenschildt stated in his Warren testimony that he asked Moore and Fort Worth lawyer Max Clark whether it was "safe" to help Oswald (HSCA XII.54).
Moore: (background) HSCA Report p. 217-; HSCA XII.54; (interview in 1976) from "Three Witnesses," article by Dick Russell in *New Times*, June 24, 1977; (de Mohrenschildt last comment) *Dallas Morning News*, March 30, 1978; and see main sources for de Mohrenschildt.
198 Ford: Ford/Stiles, *op. cit.*
199 Oswald "delightful": from "Three Witnesses," article in *New Times*, June 24, 1977.
Reporter: John Tackett of *Fort Worth Press*, interviewed by the author, 1979.
200 Taylor: IX.96, testimony of Gary Taylor; author's interview, 1978.
\$200 repaid to brother: Warren Report pp. 741-42.
YMCA and post-office box: Report pp. 719-720.
Jagars-Chiles-Stovall: Report p. 719 and sources to same.
201 Olstein: X.202, testimony of Dennis Olstein.
Minox: *Dallas Morning News*, Earl Golz article, August 7, 1978; (Alexander) interviewed by author, 1978; (HSCA) HSCA XII.390 and 373.

SOURCES AND NOTES

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- 203 Micro dots: XVI.53.
Note 63: Oswald may have used equipment available at Jagars-Chiles-Stovall to forge the "Hidel" draft card. An FBI expert has said that the forgery involved a very accurate camera "such as are found in photographic laboratory and printing plants." (IV.388)
- 12. "Hunter of the Fascists"
- 204 Oswald quote: I.233 (Marguerite Oswald).
New Year greeting and reading material: Report p. 722; (*Time*) CD 1231; XXII.270.
Suggestion Martina return to U.S.S.R.: I.35 (Martina testimony).
Letter to Soviet Embassy: I.35; XVI.10.
Mail orders: Report p. 723 and Chapter IV.
Reports on Walker shooting: Warren Report p. 20 and HSCA Report p. 61.
206 JFK on extremism: speech in Los Angeles, November 18, 1961, "Public Papers of the President," 1961 (p. 733), U.S. Government Printing Office.
Oswald conversations on right wing: IX.256—George de Mohrenschildt, *op. cit.*, p. 259, citing Martina; FBI interview with Volkmar Schmidt, in National Archives (unrecorded).
207 Reconnaissance photographs: Report p. 185.
Note 64: The money order for the rifle was purchased on March 12. The mail-order coupon for the revolver was filled in, ostensibly by Oswald, under the date January 27; however, mail-order company records show the revolver was not being processed until March 13, which suggests the coupon for it was sent off at the same time as the order for the rifle, March 12 (see Report p. 174, 119).
Martina on rifle at home: Report pp. 723-24.
Photograph with guns and newspapers: Report pp. 125-28.
Oswald fired: Report p. 724; for unsatisfactory work—CD7.128; CD 6 and 8; XXIII.696; use of Oswald—XIII.529 (time cards); XXII.278 (pay checks).
Walker incident: Report pp. 183-187.
208 Walker ballistics: Warren Report p. 186; HSCA VII.370, I.472; (neutron tests) HSCA I.502; (press reports) *Dallas Morning News*, April 11, 1963, p. 1; and April 12, 1963, p. 5; *New York Times*, April 12, 1963, p. 12; (police report) HSCA Report p. 98n4, Warren XXIV.39.