

# The Last Days Of Oswald's Soviet Friend

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WASHINGTON, April 1 — When George de Mohrenschildt disappeared in Brussels, Belgium, last March 7, he could have been tabbed either as just another eccentric or someone out to profit by his acquaintance with Lee Harvey and Marina Oswald.

Or, just possibly, he could have been the man responsible for Oswald's behavior when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, as he is reported to have acknowledged in the manuscript of a book he had written.

But today, this much is certain about the 65-year-old Russian-born emigre:

—He is now in the morgue in Palm Beach, Fla., dead of an apparently self-inflicted shotgun wound.

—He was of sufficient interest to the House Committee on Assassinations that one of its investigators was in Palm Beach Tuesday to try to interview him when the ostensible suicide occurred.

—He is once again of considerable interest to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which devoted a major portion of Book 9 of the Warren Commission Report to De Mohrenschildt.

If De Mohrenschildt had a motive for committing suicide in his daughter's house, it is not known. Nor is it known why he was negotiating with Dutch publishers to sell his book about the Kennedy case when he disappeared in the Belgian capital soon after meeting a Soviet diplomat.

He has been categorized as either an opportunist or as a man with a history of mental illness who was subject to wild changes of mood. But he cannot be ignored so long as the House investigative panel and the FBI are genuinely interested in finding out what role, if any, De Mohrenschildt played in the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

It has long been known that De Mohrenschildt, as part of the Dallas Russian-speaking community, was close to Oswald and his Russian wife. The FBI says it checked him out every way possible in the days and weeks after the presidential assassination. He was a witness before the Warren Commission, and what he said then can be found in 118 pages of the commission's report.

What is not known is what his motive was for writing the manuscript of a book entitled "I'm a Patsy, I'm a Patsy" and contending that it was the story of how he was responsible for Oswald's alleged role in the assassination of Kennedy.

The mysterious recent history of De Mohrenschildt is largely attributable to a Dutch journalist named Willem Oltmans. Oltmans, who had been cultivating De Mohrenschildt as a news source and a friend for the last 10 years, is the man who told the House Assassinations Committee earlier this month about De Mohrenschildt's decision to tell his version of the assassination.

It was this appearance before a committee staff members by Oltmans on March 11 that prompted the panel to send investigator Gaeton Fonzi to Palm Beach last Monday to try to question De Mohrenschildt. Oltmans says this is the erratic story of the Russian college professor's last weeks of life:

Oltmans had known De Mohrenschildt for a decade in periodic visits to Dallas. He knew De Mohrenschildt to be an emigre Russian count, a petroleum engineer, a

teacher of French at Bishop College and a close friend of the Oswalds. Oltmans visited George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt two or three times a year.

In January 1976, De Mohrenschildt wrote Oltmans that he was preparing a book and sent several pages to him for consideration. By June the book was completed, but Jeanne De Mohrenschildt told Oltmans she was upset when she read it. She told her husband he would go to jail if it was published because it was about the assassination of Kennedy and mentioned names of Central Intelligence Agency and FBI agents throughout.

Last November, Oltmans went to Dallas and called De Mohrenschildt, only to be told by his wife that he had been in a hospital for several months. Oltmans said he called De Mohrenschildt's attorney, Pat S. Russell, and was told De Mohrenschildt was in a mental hospital suffering from a persecution complex and undergoing heavy shock treatments.

Oltmans says the manuscript is in Russell's custody. Oltmans reportedly has not read it.

Oltmans went back to Dallas Feb. 23, 1977, and had lunch with De Mohrenschildt, who was then back at work. The journalist said this exchange took place in the Bishop College library:

De Mohrenschildt: "How would it hit the media if I came out and said I felt responsible for Oswald's behavior?"

Oltmans: "You mean what Oswald did? Shot or not shot, he was involved in the shooting. You have links here to the shooting of the President of the United States."

De Mohrenschildt: "I realize that and I don't want to inculpate myself directly. But I am convinced that what Oswald finally set up we completely agreed upon."

Oltmans: "But you were in Haiti on the day of the assassination."

De Mohrenschildt: "Yes."

Oltmans said De Mohrenschildt "was a guy very cleverly saying 'I knew exactly what Oswald was going to do and I have proof of it.'"

Oltmans said he asked De Mohrenschildt if he was ready to make a statement. He said the professor replied, "Yes, but never in America. I am being followed. I find my house all the time searched. So I am scared to death. I first must get out of the country."

Oltmans said he called his boss and was told to bring De Mohrenschildt to Holland. As Oltmans tells it, De Mohrenschildt had several changes of mind but finally said he was ready to go. With a man named David Russell, they arrived in Amsterdam March 3. They began talks with Dutch television and publishing executives, meanwhile checking with attorney Russell in Dallas to be sure that the manuscript was still in his office.

On March 5, Oltmans and De Mohrenschildt drove to Brussels to meet a friend of the Dutch reporter, a Soviet diplomat he identified only as "Kuznetsov." The three men chatted and De Mohrenschildt said he would go for a walk before lunch. "He never returned from that walk," said Oltmans.

On March 7, back in Holland, De Mohrenschildt's disappearance was reported to the United States.