

reading materials, Delgado saw *Das Kapital*, *Mein Kampf*, and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.*

Another Marine who knew Oswald even better was Kerry Thornley. When Thornley met him, around Easter 1959, "he [Oswald] had lost his clearance previously, and if I remember, he was assigned to make the coffee, mow the lawn, swab down decks, and things of this nature." Thornley enjoyed debating philosophy, politics, and religion with him. Thornley, who described himself as "an extreme rightist," thought Oswald such an unusual character that he wrote a preassassination novel based on him (it was not published until 1991).⁵² Over the course of half a dozen discussions, Thornley was convinced Oswald believed that capitalism exploited workers and that "Communism was the best system in the world." Oswald was also "quite sure that Castro was a great hero."⁵³ Once, Thornley recounted, "he looked at me and he said, 'What do you think of communism?' And I replied I didn't think too much of communism, in a favorable sense, and he said, 'Well, I think the best religion is communism.'"⁵⁴ Thornley found it difficult to debate issues regarding the Soviet Union since Oswald challenged any information "on the grounds that we were probably propagandized in this country and we had no knowledge of what was going on over there."

Thornley thought he was "emotionally unstable" and "unpredictable." "He got along with very few people," he recalled. "He seemed to guard against developing real close friendships."⁵⁵ Before long, Thornley and Oswald had a falling out, when Oswald

*Delgado tried to deflect Oswald's interest in Cuba by telling him to write to the Cuban embassy in Washington, D.C. Oswald later told Delgado he had been in contact with the Cuban consulate in Los Angeles, but Delgado thought he was lying until he saw a letter in Oswald's belongings with a gold seal on it and assumed it was from the Cubans. On another occasion, Oswald received a visitor at the base, and although Delgado did not see the person and did not even know if it was a man or woman, he assumed it might be someone from the Cuban government. He never asked Oswald. Although Delgado's speculation has no factual foundation and is only his hunch, some critics use it to assert Oswald may have had a Cuban intelligence connection. The Cuban government has officially denied having had any contact with Oswald in 1959.

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griped about a march they were scheduled to be in. Thornley commented, "Well, comes the revolution you will change all that." Oswald's voice cracked as he screamed at Thornley. He put his hands in his pockets, pulled his cap low over his eyes, and sat by himself. He never spoke to Thornley after that. "Well, at the time I just thought," recalled Thornley, "well, the man is a nut. . . . He had a definite tendency toward irrationality at times, an emotional instability." He also found Oswald "impulsive," burdened by a "persecution complex," and said that he never showed any affection to anyone, and nobody ever showed any in return.⁶⁶ By the end of their relationship Thornley thought Oswald was "pathetic."⁶⁷

There is, of course, the question of why the Marines tolerated Oswald's flagrant study of Russian and subscription to Russian-language newspapers as well as leftist publications like *The Worker*. None of his fellow Marines reported that he proselytized Communism during basic training or during his fourteen months in Japan. He complained about the Marines, but that was not thought to be unique. Oswald did study the Russian language, but not in the conspicuous way that he did later at El Toro. Even one of his commanding officers in Japan studied the language. While he may have been considered a Russophile, he gave the Marines no reason to believe he might be a security threat.

Only after arriving at El Toro, and following his two court-mar-

*Jim Garrison provides snippets of quotes from seven Marines saying they never heard Oswald talk about Communism, the Soviet Union, or Cuba. He concludes, "The statements of Oswald's other associates at the Marine base were almost uniform in their agreement that he had no inclination in the direction of communism or anything leftwing" (*On the Trail of the Assassins*, pp. 52-53). Garrison writes that Thornley "had not served with Oswald as long as a number of others and had not even lived on the same part of the base. . . . The other Marines' affidavits . . . overwhelmingly contradicted Thornley's claims." But Thornley did live on the same part of the base as Oswald, though they were in different Quonset huts (WC Vol. XI, p. 85). The other Marines' affidavits did not contradict Thornley's testimony—they only said Oswald did not talk to them about the same things he discussed with Thornley. Thornley is not even listed in the indexes for books by Robert Groden and Harrison Livingstone, Henry Hurt, John Davis, David Scheim, Mark Lane, and Josiah Thompson.

32 • CASE CLOSED

tials and nervous breakdown while on guard duty, did Oswald flaunt his controversial and brazen behavior. By then, he had been busted to buck private, had spent time in the brig, and was already known as an eccentric troublemaker. Instead of working as a trained radar operator, he had been reduced to doing janitorial work around the base.⁶⁸

Only one officer is known to have taken him seriously. When an El Toro mailroom clerk informed his operations chief, Captain Robert E. Block, that Oswald was receiving leftist literature, Block confronted him. Oswald dissembled that he was merely trying to indoctrinate himself in the enemies' philosophy, according to Marine Corps policy. Although skeptical, Block dropped the matter. Except for Block, others viewed Oswald as peculiar but harmless.

Near the end of his tour of duty, Oswald began a series of maneuvers intended to sever his Marine ties and prepare for his defection to the USSR. In March 1959, he applied for admission to a small liberal arts school in Churwalden, Switzerland, the Albert Schweitzer College.⁶⁹ After a discharge from the Marines, Oswald was expected to fulfill a three-year inactive-reserve commitment.⁶⁰ During that period, foreign travel was only allowed for a valid reason. Attending a Swiss school would qualify him for overseas travel. He lied extensively on the school application, and he was accepted.*

On August 17, Oswald submitted a request for a dependency discharge on the ground that his mother needed his support.⁶¹ A candy jar had fallen off a shelf while Marguerite was at work and hurt her nose. Although several doctors could find nothing wrong with her, she claimed she was totally disabled and finally found a physician who agreed.⁶² She sent her own affidavit, as well as affidavits from a doctor and two friends, attesting to her injury and maintaining she could not support herself.⁶³ Oswald's re-

*On the application, he said he intended to take a summer course at the University of Turku in Finland. He never contacted that school. However, since he intended to apply for a Soviet visa in the less-trafficked consulate in Helsinki, the statement on the application provided him an excuse for traveling to Finland.

quest for a dependency discharge.
On September 4, 1959, Oswald applied at the H&H, in preparation for his departure from the port. Citing the pri-
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Oswald was discharged in
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