

New Times

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THE FEATURE FILM MAGAZINE

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later Jim*

Boardroom bandits: America's biggest crooks

On the trail of the
multiple Oswalds

Shacking up in
old age homes
"It's as nice
as it ever was"

The high priced
writers of our
low-brow films

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No quote I did not use

NewTimes
TOP OF THE NEWS

The man who never was

By Robert Sam Anson

No other subject haunts the American conscience like the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas 12 years ago. The renewed interest in the President's death is only confirmation of the doubts most Americans have felt since that sunny day in Dealey Plaza. We share those doubts. Within the last few months, we have published two major reports on the President's assassination, and a number of other, smaller items. No other story has received such attention in these pages. None deserves it more. The following article, excerpted from a major study of the assassination to be published this fall by Bantam Books, answers some questions, even as it poses some of the most perplexing of all.

Who was Lee Harvey Oswald?

The perpetrator of the crime of the century, said the Warren Commission; a deranged young man who, acting alone, shot and killed the President, and was himself killed two days later by an equally deranged strip-joint operator named Jack Ruby. Or was he?

They called him "Leon" the night they introduced him to Sylvia Odio, one of the leaders of Dallas' Cuban exile community. On the night of September 26, 1963, three men paid her a call: two Latins, "Angelo" and "Leopoldo," and a silent young American his companions called "Leon Oswald." Leopoldo did most of the talking. He said that he and his friends had just come from New Orleans and would shortly leave on another trip;

to where and why Leopoldo would not say, but he hinted that violence on behalf of the Cuban cause was its purpose. Would Mrs. Odio, a daughter of Cuba whose parents were even now in Castro's jails, give them some money? Mrs. Odio said she would not, that she disapproved

Were there several Oswalds? Recently declassified documents reveal that the multiple-Oswald theory was taken very seriously by the same men who publicly dismissed it as a joke: the members of the Warren Commission

of violence. With that, the men left.

The next day, Leopoldo called again. As Mrs. Odio subsequently recalled their conversation, Leopoldo said, "What do you think of the American?" Mrs. Odio replied: "I don't think anything." But Leopoldo kept pressing. "You know," he continued, "our idea is to introduce him to the underground in Cuba,

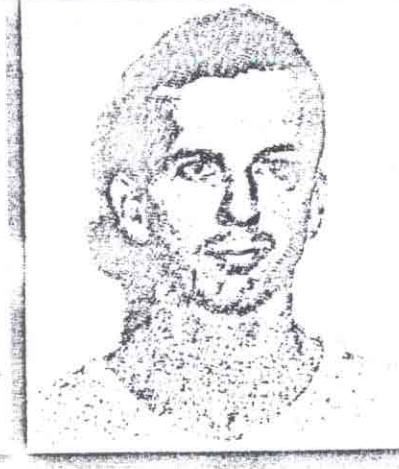
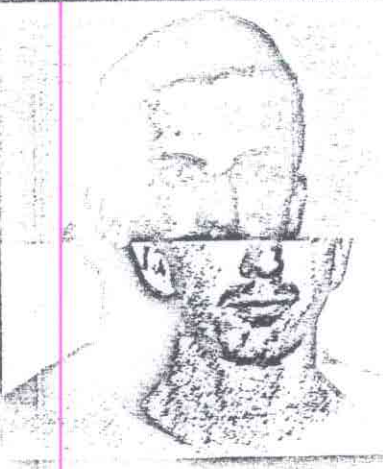
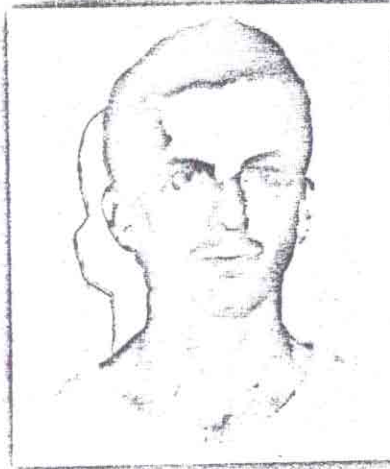
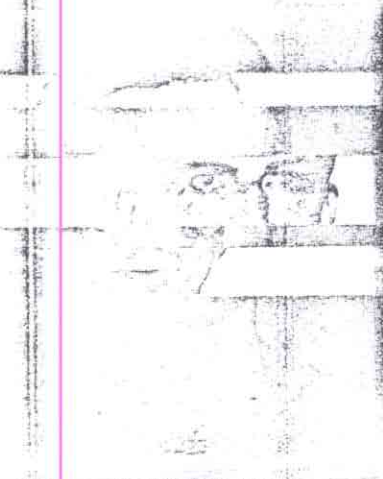
because he is great, he is kind of nuts." Leopoldo mentioned that Oswald had been in the Marine Corps and that he was an excellent shot. Leopoldo chided Mrs. Odio for her lack of courage, telling her that Cubans "didn't have any guts," that "Kennedy should have been assassinated after the Bay of Pigs" and that "Cubans should have done that." He concluded: "It is so easy to do it."

The next time Mrs. Odio saw "Oswald" was when Lee Harvey Oswald's picture was flashed on a television screen on November 22. At the sight of the man who had been in her home, she fainted.

There was only one problem with Mrs. Odio's recollection. On September 26, the night "Leon Oswald" had visited her in her home, the real Lee Harvey Oswald was on a bus heading for Mexico City, Mexico.

The report from Mrs. Odio was one of hundreds that flowed in to the police, the Secret Service and the FBI after the assassination from people who all claimed to have seen or known the troubled young loner who police said shot the President. Many of the calls were from ghouls looking for a ride on the coattails of history; others from people who couldn't be sure, only *thought* that the man they had seen was Oswald. Still others seemed unreliable sources. And then there was the small, final category: people such as Sylvia Odio, reliable witnesses who were sure of what they had seen, who couldn't be shaken from their stories. This handful the Warren Commission considered, and worried about.

COLLAGE BY STEVE PHILLIPS



to the very end of its investigation. When it came time to write the final report, they, too, were discarded.

Albert Bogard was one of these people. Bogard was a car salesman at a Lincoln Mercury dealership in downtown Dallas. On November 9, a customer walked into his showroom and introduced himself as Lee Oswald. The man was interested in buying a used car, he said, and Bogard gladly offered to show him one. They walked into the lot, selected a model and then, with "Oswald" at the wheel, took it for a test spin on the nearby Stemmons Freeway. Bogard could not forget that ride. His customer rocketed along at speeds up to 70 miles an hour. When they returned to the showroom, they talked price and financing. "Oswald" said he didn't have enough money for a down payment but would be coming into "a lot of money in the next two or three weeks." To the credit manager, Oswald said if financing could not be arranged, well, he might just "go back to Russia where they treat workers like men." Other workers in the car dealership corroborated Bogard's story, and Bogard himself passed a lie-detector test.

Again, there was a problem. On the day the man identifying himself as Oswald came into Albert Bogard's car dealership, the real Lee Harvey Oswald was at home in Irving, Texas, composing a letter to the Soviet Embassy in Washington. Even if he had been in Dallas, it is unlikely that he would have stopped in Bogard's dealership, or any other car showroom for that matter. Lee was always broke. More to the point, he didn't know how to drive.

The mysterious Oswald look-alike made several other appearances during the fateful weeks before the President's murder. A barber remembered that he had come in for a haircut, bringing a teenage Latin boy with him. The barber hadn't liked this particular customer: He was making leftist remarks. A gun dealer in Irving, Texas, a Dallas suburb where the Oswalds lived, recalled that he had come in to have two holes drilled in a high-powered rifle so that he could fit on a scope. After the assassination, the gun dealer found a ticket with the man's name on it. The ticket read: Oswald.

And then there was the man on the Dallas rifle range. He first showed up on November 9, arriving at the Sports Drome Range with a foreign-made, scope-mounted carbine. He came several times after that as well. A number of people at the range were sure. A man like

The author is indebted to Jones Harris and Peter Dale Scott, whose research contributed greatly to this article.

that was hard to forget. He fired rapidly, even though the range prohibited rapid fire. On occasion, he also fired at other people's targets. He was loud and obnoxious, though what people remembered best was that he was a crack shot. One of the men on the range talked to him briefly and noticed the kind of weapon he was carrying. It was a 6.5 millimeter Italian carbine, the same sort of rifle that was later found on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. After the assassination, the people at the range were certain of the man they had seen. It had been Lee Harvey Oswald. Only the real Lee Oswald could not have been at the range, or at the barber's or at the gun store. He was always somewhere else.

If someone were trying to set Oswald up, he was doing a good job. There was a trail of clues that even an amateur could follow, left by a man who seemed to go out of his way to call attention to himself. Someone who was erratic and quarrelsome; who had been to Russia;

... there is a possibility that an impostor is using Oswald's birth certificate," wrote Hoover in 1960

who would be getting a lot of money very shortly; who was a deadly marksman. The question was who the someone was.

In the years immediately following the assassination, various critics of the Warren Commission concluded that the man who was *not* Oswald was an impostor deliberately impersonating the real Lee Oswald in a crime he did not commit. The most notable proponent of the Oswald doppelganger theory was Richard Popkin, a philosophy professor who, in 1966, marshaled his arguments in a small but provocative book entitled *The Second Oswald*. Few people took Popkin seriously, and since then the "double Oswald" theory has been used by succeeding defenders of the Warren Commission as a prime example of the ludicrous lengths to which the commission's critics will go to prove their point. What the public could not know was that more than a few critics were worried about an Oswald impostor. Some of the most troubled were men who worked for the Warren Commission. Another was J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Odio story caused perhaps the

greatest concern. In late August 1964, as the commission was racing to complete its already long-overdue report, J. Lee Rankin, the commission's chief counsel, wrote Hoover, stressing the volatility of the Odio story. "It is a matter of some importance to the commission," Rankin warned, "that Mrs. Odio's allegations either be proved or disproved." Within a month, Hoover's men turned up a witness who claimed to have visited Mrs. Odio on the night in question with two other men, neither of whom was Oswald. The witness was Loran Eugene Hall. The men with him, he said, were Lawrence J. Howard and William Houston Seymour, who, according to Hall, bore a striking physical resemblance to Oswald. The FBI showed pictures of all three men to Mrs. Odio; she failed to identify any of them.

Nevertheless, the commission was anxious to accept Hall's story. Only Wesley Liebeler, a commission lawyer, was still unsettled. Mrs. Odio's account coincided with facts she could not possibly have known; when Liebeler brought the matter to Rankin's attention, the chief counsel reacted angrily. "At this stage," he said, "we are supposed to be closing doors, not opening them." The door on a possible conspiracy involving Oswald or an Oswald look-alike was thereupon slammed tightly.

More than ten years later, a "top secret" commission memorandum, which lent further weight to the Odio story, was declassified. The memo, written by two commission lawyers assigned to check out "speculations and rumors" and released only this year, indicated that Mrs. Odio was telling the truth. "Mrs. Odio has checked out thoroughly through her psychiatrist and friends," the lawyers wrote. "And, with one exception—a layman who speculates that she may have subconscious tendencies to overdramatize and exaggerate—the evidence is unanimously favorable." The next six lines of the memo are censored. It picks up: "Moreover, some of the details of Mrs. Odio's story, as it was first related to the FBI after the assassination—unfortunately, in a rather brief interview—check out with what we know about Oswald. For example, he was described as quiet and reticent, an impression Oswald usually gave; Leopoldo later told Mrs. Odio they had checked back on him in New Orleans, which is where in fact Oswald had come from; Leopoldo said he was told by New Orleans that 'Leon' was 'loco,' a term Carlos Briniquier [a Cuban exile leader who knew Oswald] may very well have used to describe him; and, most importantly, of course, the name 'Leon Oswald' is so close to 'Lee Oswald' as to raise the strongest suspicions."

did his wife was a nervous lady, not a signal

Loran Eugene Hall, the man who had come to the commission's rescue, was an odd person to be helping the United States do anything. For a time, Hall had fought alongside Fidel Castro as a mercenary soldier of fortune. During the Batista days, Hall and his friends had operated out of Havana's Hotel Capri, whose casino was operated by William McWillie, a gambler and organized crime figure, and, as it happened, the intimate friend of a Dallas strip-joint operator named Jack Ruby. Castro expelled Hall from the island in 1959 on grounds that he was running guns for opponents of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. Hall left Havana in the company of McWillie and their leader, Santo Trafficante, the organized crime boss of Tampa, Florida. In mid-October 1963, Hall was arrested by the Dallas police on a charge of possession of dangerous drugs. Hall was arrested while in the company of Seymour, the supposed Oswald look-alike (who, in fact, did not look like Oswald at all).

Hall eventually changed his story and told the FBI that he had never met Mrs. Odio. His change of heart, however, did not come until October 2, 1964, ten days after the submission of the final commission report to President Johnson, and too late to come to the Warren Commission's attention.

Nor did the members of the commission staff who were investigating the Oswald impostor possibility know that J. Edgar Hoover had considered the same thing two and a half years before the assassination. A memo from Hoover to the Department of State, reflecting the director's fears, had apparently been withheld from key Warren Commission staffers, including chief counsel Rankin. It was finally discovered in the National Archives this year. How the memo had disappeared in the first place was a puzzle. Former Warren Commission lawyer David Slawson, who should have seen the memo and didn't, was inclined to suspect the CIA. "It conceivably could have been something related to the CIA," he told the *New York Times*. "I can only speculate now, but a general CIA effort to take out anything that reflected on them may have covered this up." Richard A. Frank, a former State Department official who acted as the department's liaison man with the bureau, suspected that "when the Oswald file suddenly became the object of the most intensive search and review, Mr. Hoover and his friends in the security operation at State simply made it disappear."

However it was "lost," the now-uncovered Hoover memorandum makes for fascinating reading. It shows that the

impostor possibility had come to Hoover in a report filed in 1960 by one of his Dallas agents. The agent had interviewed Oswald's mother, who was then very much worried about the safety of her son, who had recently "defected" to the Soviet Union. During the interview, Mrs. Oswald mentioned that Lee had taken his birth certificate with him. To the ever-suspicious Hoover, that raised the possibility that the Russians, should they get their hands on Oswald's identification, would use it to create an identity for an agent, who might then be infiltrated back to the United States. Accordingly, on June 3, 1960, Hoover sent a memorandum to the office of security of the Department of State. "Since there is a possibility that an impostor is using Oswald's birth certificate," Hoover wrote, "any current information the Department of State may have concerning the subject will be appreciated."

When Mrs. Oswald put down the phone, she said she could not be certain that the man on the other end was her son

Hoover's memorandum set the wheels of the State Department in motion. Warnings went out to various offices to be on the lookout for an Oswald impostor. Ten months later, an official in the Passport Office recommended that precautions be taken lest Oswald's passport fall into the wrong hands.

A directive was flashed to the embassy in Moscow instructing consular officials to withhold Oswald's passport until they had personally confirmed his identity. The embassy was also ordered not to give Oswald his passport until after his travel plans back to the U.S. had been completed. The embassy complied with half the directions. Oswald was required to come in to the embassy to pick up his passport—a stipulation he stubbornly fought but to which, finally, he was forced to yield—but the passport was given to him weeks before his departure. What he did with it during that time the embassy could not know. At least part of the time, however, it was in the hands of the Soviets.

In itself, the embassy's failure to comply with the department's instructions seems insignificant. Oswald, or so the explanation went, was given his

passport to make it easier for him to secure an exit visa from the Soviet foreign ministry. All of which is true enough. Assuming that Oswald went to the Soviet Union in the first place. But did he?

Certainly, Oswald's passport made the journey. That is clear. At least *someone's* passport made the journey, for inside the commission, there were suspicions that Oswald's passport was a forgery. The same memorandum that backs up Mrs. Odio raises questions about the authenticity of Oswald's passport. The relevant section of the memo, however, is almost entirely censored. More than a dozen lines are blanked out, and then one sentence appears: "One other piece of evidence relating to the same point should be brought to the attention of the Commission." Whatever that evidence was, only the secret-keepers know, for approximately the next 18 lines are also blanked out. Finally, the memo picks up: "All of the latter could be lies or forgeries, however, including even the American passport, since it was in Oswald's possession for about two weeks before he came into the American embassy—two weeks when he was in the hands of the KGB."

In any case, a number of Americans also saw Oswald while he was in Moscow, and the Warren Commission published numerous photographs, including some taken in Minsk with Marina, showing a man whom they identified as Oswald. For Oswald not to have gone to the Soviet Union would have required deception on a grand scale. Such deception is precisely what the evidence indicates.

The witnesses who saw Oswald, for instance, were all people who had never seen him before, and would never see him again. Oswald seemed leery of witnesses who might provide independent verification. Of the American reporters who interviewed him, the two saw only a glimpse of him through a crack in the hotel room door. The journalist who spent the most time with him at close range was Priscilla Johnson, the Moscow correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance. Ms. Johnson came to see Oswald at the suggestion of the U.S. embassy. She filed no story on her five-hour-long interview, but did report back to the embassy. Later, Ms. Johnson, who is currently writing a book with Marina Oswald, Lee's widow, was identified by the State Department as one of three U.S. government "employees" who had had contact with Oswald in Moscow. In any case, Ms. Johnson's memories of her encounter are as interesting as her background.

She described the man she inter-

Since Marina fabricated the memo—was false when she came out.

viewed as "resembling a college boy with a southern drawl," clad in "flannel slacks and a tan cashmere sweater," an image that contrasts sharply with the Oswald people knew in Dallas and New Orleans, a sloppy, slovenly dresser, given to T-shirts and string ties. Twice during his stay in the Soviet Union, Oswald received telephone calls from home—one from his brother, Robert, the other from his mother, Marguerite. Oswald refused to even take the call from Robert, and, during his conversation with his mother, which lasted less than a minute, his responses consisted of grunts and "um-ums." When Mrs. Oswald put down the phone, she said she could not be certain that the man on the other end of the line was her son. For more than a year, Oswald was out of touch with his family. He never wrote them, and their letters to him were returned unopened. Only after Mrs. Oswald went to the State Department, demanding that the government check on her son's well-being, did a first letter from Lee suddenly arrive.

The letters themselves were suspicious, one in particular. In the letter dated October 1959, Lee writes his thanks for recently delivered Christmas presents, some American fashion magazines that Marina had requested. The problem is that he is referring to events that occur during the winter of 1960-61. In October 1959, he had not yet met Marina, much less married her.

In this letter, as in virtually all his correspondence and writing, Oswald's spelling, syntax and grammar are atrocious, so bad that some medical experts who have read his letters have concluded that Oswald was a victim of dyslexia, a learning disability that distorts the subject's perception of written words.

By contrast, several letters Oswald wrote in 1963 to the New York offices of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee are literate, well-punctuated and virtually error-free.

The differences are indeed striking, and not only to assassination buffs intent on proving the existence of a conspiracy. The Warren Commission itself noted the discrepancies (though made no mention of them anywhere in the report) and debated their meaning at a recently declassified executive session of January 27, 1964. The top secret transcript of that meeting includes the following exchange:

"RANKIN: . . . It is very difficult to understand how anyone could write the letters he did from Russia and then write the other letters that he wrote in regard to the Fair Play for Cuba.

"BOGGS: Right, the spelling has changed.

"RANKIN: It is a world of

difference. It is hardly believable that anyone could have acquired such information during that period of time.

"BOGGS: . . . That letter has caused me a great deal of trouble. It is a much more literate and polished communication than any of his other writings.

"RANKIN: That is right."

No less troublesome was the "historic diary" Oswald kept after his arrival in Moscow. It seems to be in Oswald's hand, but what is not at all certain is *when* and *where* he wrote it. In a top secret memo, declassified in 1975, two lawyers for the Warren Commission expressed serious doubts about the "diary's" authenticity. "Even assuming that it is an authentic document," the memo argues, "[Oswald's diary] is not a good guide to the details of what occurred. He must have filled in most of the Diary entries for this period at a later time, possibly much later, and he seems not to have worried whether he

"A high proportion of all the evidence on Oswald which relates to . . . his life in Russia," said the commission memo, "derives from sources that could have been fabricated or otherwise falsified"

was accurate or not on dates and even names." Indeed, the lawyers were suspicious of *all* the records of what purported to be Oswald's trip to the Soviet Union. They noted:

"A high proportion of all the evidence on Lee Harvey Oswald which relates to his travel to and life in Russia derives from sources that could have been fabricated or otherwise falsified. The main sources of such evidence are his own statements after he returned to the United States. The letters he wrote from Russia to members of his family, Marina's statements to friends after she came to America and her testimony to the Commission, and all sorts of writings and documents dating from the Russian period or shortly thereafter. All of these sources *could* have been put together by the KGB, or be the result of its careful 'coaching.'"

Or, conceivably, Oswald's diary and letters could just as well have been written from the comfort of some undisclosed location in the United States as in Minsk.

Oswald had to be somewhere else, because, from most of the photographs taken of him in the Soviet Union, he does not seem to have been in Minsk. The "Oswald" who was in Minsk, and whose pictures appear numerous times in the Warren Commission's volumes (see photo section), seems thicker of hair, fuller of face and broader of jaw and chin than does the Oswald who was born in New Orleans on October 18, 1939, and was shot to death in the basement of the Dallas jail on November 24, 1963. Some members of the Warren Commission staff were also troubled by the photographs. The possibility that they were fakes, according to Alfred Goldberg, author of the "Speculations and Rumors" section of the report, was briefly evaluated but discarded as "a private rumor." Most of the photographs are head shots, though there are several taken of "Oswald" full-length, including one widely reproduced photograph of "Oswald" standing alongside Marina on a bridge in Minsk. The picture is so familiar that not until recently has it been closely examined. When studied, the picture reveals an inexplicable and damning anomaly.

In the photograph, Lee is standing half a pace in front of Marina, putting him closer to the camera, and, thus, increasing his height ever so slightly. Marina is wearing low heels, almost certainly not more than an inch in height (at the time, taller heels were not sold in the Soviet Union). Side by side, Lee appears to be an inch or two taller than Marina. Thanks to Soviet records, we know that Marina's height is a fraction under 5'3". (Priscilla Johnson, who has seen her numerous times since the assassination, describes her as "a little bitty thing . . . five feet about.") Add the inch from the heels and Marina stands 5'4" tall. Lee, then, would appear to be 5'5" or 5'6" tall at most. Unfortunately, the passport issued to Lee Harvey Oswald lists his height as 5'11" tall, nearly half a foot taller than the man in the picture with Marina.

There are other problems. When Oswald enlisted in the Marine Corps on October 18, 1956, doctors listed his height as 5'8". On his discharge nearly three years later, doctors found he had grown three inches. Yet, during his autopsy on November 24, 1963, Oswald was measured at 5'9"—two inches less than the height listed by the Marines and on his passport. Men do grow. They are not known to shrink.

When the incredible shrinking Os-

wald arrived in the United States, he was met by a Travelers Aid representative named Spas Raikin, who saw him standing alongside Marina. "There was no significant difference between his [Oswald's] height and that of his wife," Raikin later recalled. "He was my height. I am certain of that." Spas Raikin stands 5'6", about the same size as the man photographed in Minsk, and three inches shorter than the Oswald who was killed in Dallas. The "Oswald" who walked into the Dallas car dealership was also short: "He was five feet nothing," recalled one of Bogard's co-workers.

Who were all these people?

On the face of it, there seem to have been several Oswalds: one who entered the Marine Corps, another who was discharged, a third who lived in the Soviet Union, a fourth who returned to Dallas to be murdered, a fifth who impersonated him at a car dealership. But, for convenience's (if not sanity's) sake, assume that there were three: an historical Oswald, the man who was born in New Orleans and died in Dallas; a "secret agent" Oswald who went to the Soviet Union, presumably on a mission for the United States; and an impostor who was used to frame the historical Oswald for the murder of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

This is not a happy solution; the mind recoils from anything that deviates from straight-line logic. We are comfortable with things that are simple, persons who are what they seem to be. Anything involving impostors and double agents and treachery seems torn from a script of *Mission Impossible*. It may well be. As it happens, it is also the way things work in the world of intelligence. Look-alikes are used. Identities are forged. Agents are planted. As Dwight Eisenhower, a man as plain as Kansas, said once of intelligence work, "These activities have their own rules and methods of concealment which seek to mislead and obscure."

Concealing and obscuring is what seems to have happened to the identity of Lee Harvey Oswald. Critics of the Warren Commission have long been suspicious of Oswald's background, especially the years he spent in the Soviet Union. That period of his life is pregnant with intelligence possibilities. Oswald, for example, managed to make the expensive journey, even though his bank account showed a total balance of \$203. He took a plane from London to Helsinki when no commercial flights were available. He informed the U.S. Embassy that he had offered to turn over radar secrets to the Russians—in short, admitting that he was willing to commit espionage—yet when he returned to the United States, he was not detained, or even questioned, by the

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FBI or CIA, which, at the time, were interviewing ordinary tourists returning from Yugoslavia. While the CIA was conducting mail "covers" on all letters between the United States and the Soviet Union—photographing more than 4 million pieces of mail per year—Oswald's CIA file contains no letters. When Oswald met his wife-to-be in Minsk, she was living with her uncle, a senior official in the MVD, the ministry that houses the feared Soviet secret police. On their return trip to the United States, Oswald managed to cross the Iron Curtain at Helmstedt, the most tense, security-conscious checkpoint in Berlin, without having his passport stamped. From there, he went to Amsterdam, where he lived in an "apartment" for two days before boarding a ship for the United States. All of these things, and many more, suggested that Oswald was an agent. Yet the CIA did nothing. The mystery, as Sherlock Holmes would have put it, is why the dog didn't bark.

Secretly, the Warren Commission worried about Oswald's background, too. Two commission lawyers put together a 111-page top-secret memorandum spelling out the worries and the evidence that pointed at Oswald's having been an agent. The lawyers and the commission finally concluded that Oswald had not been working for the Soviets. They did not consider the other, likelier possibility: that he—or whoever went to the Soviet Union using his name and passport—was an American agent.

It might have worked like this: A rootless young Marine, bright, with a keen interest in Russia and world affairs, and an even keener sense of what he presumes are his own abilities, is recruited for an intelligence assignment. His job is a simple but important one: to stay out of sight, to go underground, while a skilled agent borrows his identity for an assignment in the Soviet Union. He is, in many ways, an ideal candidate. For he has few friends to leave behind, a family he will not miss. The story of his defection will seem probable. He has already professed an admiration for Marxism, and has been in serious trouble with the Marines. It would be unusual, but not overly surprising, if one day he turned up in Moscow, peddling radar secrets.

The second Oswald, whoever he is, is a trained professional, a practitioner of the craft of intelligence. Someone who knows what to look for and can keep his mouth shut. Superficially, he resembles Oswald. He need not be identical to pass. All he requires is a birth certificate and a valid U.S. passport, a passport he will return to the United States government shortly after he reaches Moscow.

And so the plan begins. The "historical" Oswald goes into cold storage, while the "intelligence" Oswald boards a ship for Europe. He arrives in England and is put aboard a "black" flight for Helsinki. From there, it is a simple train ride across the border. The Russians, however, are suspicious. They fear a " sleeper agent" has been planted in their midst, and they pack him off to Minsk and out of harm's way. After two years, his mission either completed or aborted, the "intelligence" Oswald departs the Soviet Union. A stopover in Berlin, debriefing in Amsterdam, and then it is home to the States. He boards a plane in

Of Oswald's letters from Russia compared to his later writings, Rankin said: "It is a world of difference. It is hardly believable that anyone could have acquired such information during that period of time"

New York and, following instructions, gets off in Atlanta. Here the "historical" Oswald catches up with his identity. When the plane lands in Dallas, the "historical" Oswald deplanes to be met by family and friends. He talks about the Soviet Union, but is strangely vague about the details. When an unknowing FBI agent asks why he went to Russia, he can think of only one answer: "It is just something I did."

The catch, of course, is Marina. What sort of woman would marry a stranger, bear his children and keep silent when another man suddenly gets on a plane and takes his place? One answer is a woman with intelligence ties of her own, and here Marina's cloudy background and purposeful evasions seem strongly suggestive. But what kind of background? To guarantee her silence, it would seem that she, too, had to have some connection to American intelligence. But all the signs point in the opposite direction. And how likely is it that the KGB and the CIA would mount a joint operation?

Such is the dilemma. The story

seems fantastic, but no more so than some of the astonishing happenings of the last decade, events of such profusion that they have lost the capacity to shock, and have become instead macabre, accepted commonplaces. In the end, it comes down to a simple, bizarre choice: either Lee Harvey Oswald could increase and decrease his height and alter his appearance at will, or there was someone else using his identity.

Dallas, by contrast, is a far simpler matter. It would have been relatively easy to use an Oswald look-alike to implicate the real Oswald in the crime—especially if such deception had already been practiced once. One has to speculate, but, possibly, this is what might have happened:

Not the agency, but someone close to the agency, familiar with its workings and its weaknesses, discovers a young former Marine, who once served in an intelligence capacity and now works as a government informer. Again, a double is used, but this time without Oswald's knowledge. A trail of incriminating clues is left, pointing straight at a pro-Castro activist. When Oswald is arrested and charged with the President's murder, there is no convincing way that either the FBI or the CIA can explain that while he was once their man, he is no longer. After November 24, Oswald himself is in no position to talk. Confronted with such a conundrum, one fraught with peril for the security of the world, the United States government does what it has to do. It lets sleeping dogs lie.

By the fateful autumn of 1963, Oswald had become a shadow, a blur, now in focus, now out. He seems to have gone to Mexico in late September 1963 for the purpose of seeking a visa for travel to Cuba. Then, or later, no one was able to accurately track his movements, much less divine what motive lay behind them. Hotel records show that a man named Lee Harvey Oswald was staying in Mexico City. Coincidentally, the hotel where he lived during that time was a haunt for anti-Castro Cubans and their agency patrons. Oswald visited two places where he was sure to leave a record. One was the Soviet Embassy, then under constant CIA electronic and photographic surveillance.

As former agent Phillip Agee, who served in the agency's Mexico City station, later described it, the surveillance of the Russian Embassy was an elaborate operation. "The station," he wrote in his diary, "has two observation posts in front of the Soviet Embassy, which cover the entrances, plus a third observation post in back of the Embassy to provide coverage of the gardens. . . . From one of the