



The Oswald family in Moscow, 1962

that there must be some malignant fate which makes me foul." The diaries show a late flowering of something like benevolence in the amusing final notes he kept between 1960 and 1965: "I must have given my hat many hundreds of times to the old porter at the Ritz (London). The other day when I came to leave after luncheon he was not on duty, so I went behind his counter and collected my belongings. In my hat he had put a label with the one word 'Florid'." Can anyone not like the man who wrote this?

—WALTER CLEMONS

## Dallas Housewife

MARINA AND LEE. By Priscilla Johnson McMillan. 527 pages. Harper & Row. \$15.

He was an obviously unstable young American who had emigrated to the Soviet Union out of muddled Marxist conviction and settled in Minsk. She was a drifter, a pretty but eccentric girl who other Russians tended to think was a prostitute. After a whirlwind courtship, they married and then, for no particular reason, battled the sensitive, cold-war bureaucracies of both superpowers so that, in 1962, they could sail to Hoboken and set up housekeeping in Texas. That scenario has all the makings of a fine political romance. But the ending is truly stranger than fiction. Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated the President of the United States, was shot himself and left his widow, Marina, in the middle of a very big mess.

He also left her with a macabre story to tell, in her halting English, to ravenous reporters and police, to the Warren Commission and, for seven months in 1964, to a highly intelligent American-born Soviet specialist. Priscilla McMillan tantalizingly waited thirteen years to publish the results of that extraordinarily intimate interview. Her fluent, minutely detailed account of the Oswalds' life together

does not add much hard information to the extensive literature on the Kennedy assassination. But it does throw light on many dark corners of Oswald's personal life during the months that preceded the rifle shots in Dallas.

McMillan rightly pays homage to Marina's "remarkable memory." Every kiss, every unattained orgasm and premature ejaculation in the Oswalds' fumbling sex life seems to have remained graven in Marina's mind. Now the world will know that she taunted him with a former boyfriend who resembled JFK, that he beat her savagely, that he tried to keep her from learning English and that they lived on the brink of separation.

Perhaps it is not especially notable that Oswald was a violent and ineffectual lover. Anyone who has read Jean Stafford's chilling account of Oswald's addled mother ("A Mother in History") will not have to be persuaded that he could have formed another abnormal relationship with a woman. It will, nevertheless, make even hardened readers shudder when they confront Marina's verbatim account of the time she disarmed Lee and imprisoned him in the bathroom of their scruffy house to keep him from going after Richard Nixon. As Marina tells it, Oswald was a seriously disordered personality and she a troubled, abused wife, the innocent victim of a husband so deranged that he was incapable of acting in conspiracy with another person.

"Hunter": Still, like everything else in the tangle of stories, Marina's account only fuels further speculation about what really happened. For instance, there is the photo that Marina took of Lee costumed in black and holding a rifle in the spring before the assassination. On the back of one print there are two handwritten inscriptions: an ambiguous numerical date and, in Russian, the words, "Hunter for the Fascists—ha-ha-ha!!" Marina says she does not remember writing those words, but McMillan thinks she did. And if she did write them, does the date—"5/IV/63"—stand for April 5 or May 4, 1963, by which time Marina knew that her husband had fired unsuccessfully at right-wing Gen. Edwin A. Walker? McMillan opts, without cogent explanation, for May.

Even more problematic are the lingering questions about Marina's own possible complicity in the assassination. Was she a Russian agent? Certainly the failing of her otherwise remarkable memory on the subject of her

photo of Oswald does not help her case. If, however, McMillan does not get to the bottom of the Oswald affair, she does go to its heart. Marina, for her part, wisely shies away from the ordinary Russian word for truth—*pravda*—and chooses instead *istina*, which means "truth" in the mystical sense of religious faith.

—RAYMOND SOKOLOV

## The Loner

THE TRAIL OF THE FOX. By David Irving. 496 pages. Dutton. \$15.

Erwin Rommel was the most legendary military commander since Robert E. Lee, a stocky, humorless Swabian with the daring of a highwayman, an engineer's eye for detail and an insatiable hunger for fame and glory. Although it was his desert adventure against the British in North Africa that made him a popular idol and gave him his nickname, Rommel had fought his earlier campaigns no less spectacularly—in Italy as a young lieutenant in 1917, and as a panzer commander in the French invasion in 1940. He became Hitler's favorite but his name was spoken with respect in Parliament, where Churchill fixed blame for the African debacle quite simply on the "great general" opposing him.

English historian David Irving, whose controversial "Hitler's War" was published earlier this year, has gone after this glamour-encrusted figure with the zeal of an investigative reporter, tracking down dusty letters and records on two continents and interviewing virtually every principal who survived. The result is



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Rommel with Hitler: The Führer's favorite