

Was He Responsible for Oswald's Act?

The de Mohrenschildt-JFK Enigma

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When George de Mohrenschildt disappeared in Brussels last March 7, he could have been tabbed either as just another fruitcake or as someone out to make a buck on his acquaintance with Lee and Marina Oswald.

Or, just possibly, he could have been the man responsible for Oswald's behavior when President John F. Kennedy was shot to death in 1963 as he reportedly 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 a Palm Beach, Fla., morgue, 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 on Tuesday seeking to interview him when the ostensible suicide occurred.

- He is once again of considerable interest to the FBI. A major portion of Book 9 of the Warren Commission Report concerns de Mohrenschildt.

The reason de Mohrenschildt may have committed suicide in his daughter's house is not known. Nor is it known why he was negotiating with Dutch publishers to sell his book when he disappeared in the Belgian capital shortly after meeting a Soviet diplomat.

He has been described as an opportunist and a man with a history of mental illness who was subject to wild changes of mood.

But both the House investigative panel and the FBI seek to find out what role, if any, de Mohrenschildt played in the Kennedy assassination.

DE MOHRENSCHILDT, as part of the Dallas Russian-speaking community, was close to Oswald and his Russian-born wife, Marina. The FBI says it checked him out after the presidential assassination. He was a witness before the Warren Commission, and what he said then can be found in 118 pages of that bulky 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 claiming that it is the story of how he was responsible for Oswald's assassination of Kennedy.

Some details of the last months of de Mohrenschildt's life were provided to The Washington Star in an interview with Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans.

Oltmans had cultivated de Mohrenschildt as a news source and as a friend for the past 10 years. He told the House Assassinations Committee earlier this month about de Mohren-

schildt's decision to tell his version of the Kennedy murder.

Oltmans version prompted the panel to send investigator Gaetan Fonzi to Palm Beach last Monday to question de Mohrenschildt. According to Oltmans:

Oltmans had known de Mohrenschildt for a decade. 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 fell into the habit of visiting George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt in Dallas two or three times a year.

IN JANUARY 1976 de Mohrenschildt wrote Oltmans that he was preparing a book and sent several pages to the Dutch reporter. 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 CIA 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 lawyer, Pat S. Russell, and was told de Mohrenschildt was in a mental hospital suffering from a persecution complex and undergoing shock treatments.

According to Oltmans, Russell has the manuscript in his office files.

Oltmans went back to Dallas on Feb. 23, 1977, and had lunch with de Mohrenschildt, who was 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 incriminate 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 quickly called his Dutch television superior 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. Oltmans said they drove to Houston, left de Mohrenschildt's car there with a man named David Russell and eventually arrived in Amsterdam on March 3. There they began a round of talks with Dutch television and publishing executives, meanwhile checking with attorney Russell in Dallas to be sure 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 at the newstand of the Hotel Metropole and de Mohrenschildt said he would go for a walk before lunch. "He never returned from that walk," said Oltmans.

On March 7, de Mohrenschildt's disappearance was reported to the U.S. Embassy in the Hague. Oltmans said the official receiving the report was Jacob Gillespie, a press officer at the embassy. There is no record that the missing report was relayed to the State Department in Washington.

Oltmans said he wasn't worried. He got a call from a man in Brussels who identified himself as "Genta" and said de Mohrenschildt had departed for the United States. But Olt-



mans said de Mohrenschildt left behind all his belongings except his briefcase. Oltmans said he put de Mohrenschildt's possessions in an Amsterdam bank and sent the receipt to attorney Russell in Dallas.

Yesterday in Palm Beach, Fla., a police official said authorities were holding "certain personal papers" belonging to de Mohrenschildt, United Press International reported. The official declined to say whether those papers were related to the Kennedy assassination.

In early March, Oltmans told his story to the House panel's deputy counsel Robert Tanenbaum and three other investigators in Washington. Oltmans' view of de Mohrenschildt's role in the assassination is that de Mohrenschildt didn't figure in the slaying but "that together they cooked it up."

De Mohrenschildt, according to Oltmans, could have been kidnaped, or have had another "crazy attack" or have gone to the Soviet Union. None of those things happened, but Oltmans did have a clue to the way de Mohrenschildt died even before the man shot himself.

Oltmans said "He told me in Europe: 'Look, I'll be discharged at

Bishop College in June. I'm 65. My wife ran away. (They reportedly are now divorced.) I'm at the end of the line. And one day he came into my room and said, 'Let's face it. I only made up the story (about Oswald) because everybody makes a million dollars off the Kennedy assassination, and I haven't made anything. So now it's my turn. So now you and I know that.'

THE FBI SAYS IT does not know what to make of de Mohrenschildt's strange journey or of his apparent suicide. The Warren Commission concluded that he did not have any connection with Kennedy's death

even though he knew the Oswalds well and probably helped them with financial and family problems.

House investigator Fonzi went to the house where de Mohrenschildt was staying at noon Tuesday and was told to return that evening because the man was not home. In the afternoon, de Mohrenschildt apparently put a shotgun in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

No note was found. If there is an answer to George de Mohrenschildt's troubled life, it may lie in the book he has written and that lawyer Russell purportedly has filed away in Dallas: "I'm a Patsy, I'm a Patsy."