

Mohrenschildt shared with Oswald an outcast's perspective on life. And the politics of both de Mohrenschildt and his wife was another common bond with Oswald. Not only were the de Mohrenschildts aggressive atheists,⁶⁴ but Igor Voshinin considered both of them leftists.⁶⁵ Delcan Ford, the husband of émigrée Katya Ford, said de Mohrenschildt had "a reputation for being a leftwing enthusiast . . ." ⁶⁶ In his own Warren Commission testimony, de Mohrenschildt admitted he was politically the furthest left of the Dallas Russians.⁶⁷ He said that Communism "is a system that can work and works, and possibly for a very poor man, and a very undeveloped nation it may be a solution. . . . I have seen through my life that communism in certain places has developed into a livable type of an economy, a way of life."⁶⁸

Oswald took to de Mohrenschildt as he had no other person. Marina said he quickly became Lee's best friend.⁶⁹ De Mohrenschildt was his mentor, almost a political and social guide whom Oswald respected. Oswald had never had anyone of such status pay attention to him. He relished the opportunity to talk to someone he viewed as his intellectual equal. And de Mohrenschildt cultivated Oswald by doing something few had ever done—he was attentive to him. "He [Oswald] was a fellow who needed attention," de Mohrenschildt later said. "If somebody expressed an interest in him, he blossomed, absolutely blossomed. If you asked him some questions about him, he was just out of this world. . . . I think that is his main characteristic. He wanted people to be interested in him, not in Marina."⁷⁰ While the rest of the émigrés fawned over Marina and shunned Oswald, de Mohrenschildt had time for both, especially Lee. He noticed Oswald was egocentric, and "that is probably the reason he was clinging to me. . . . He would call me. He would try to be next to me—because let's face it, I am a promoter and a salesman. So I know how to talk to people. . . . I am interested in them. And he appreciated that in me. The other people considered him, well, he is just some poor, miserable guy, and disregarded him."⁷¹

De Mohrenschildt, of course, also noted less admirable sides of Oswald's nature. "He was not particularly nice with her [Marina]," he noted. "He didn't kiss her. It wasn't a loving hus-

band. . . . He was just Oswald about political atheist and "idealist" wer."⁷² "One conversation you like to be a communist. And he said—he sort of lightful idea. To me, it took me seriously."⁷³ "educated hillbilly," [and] mixed-up."⁷⁴ "We could have been arrested. I missed the thought: it would be stupid enough."

De Mohrenschildt during his first months in Dallas he disliked the émigrés. Oswald wanted a change in October. Several of the weekends. Oswald explained he couldn't stay that Dallas would. Before the day had time to stay in her home later told Marina he instead he just failed and June moved to looking for work.**

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*Although de Mohrenschildt paid attention to Marina, instead he was asexual.

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the larger home of Katya and Delcan Ford. Three days later, Oswald began telephoning. Marina was initially hesitant to speak to him, but Katya Ford said Marina finally took the phone to tell him "not to call on her again, and not to bother, she was not going to return to him."¹⁰⁴ Marina confessed to the Fords how badly Lee mistreated her and told Katya that she originally "felt sorry for Oswald because everybody hated him, even in Russia."¹⁰⁵ There was talk of divorce. After a week with the Fords, Marina and June moved to the home of an émigré couple, Frank and Valentina Ray. That same day, Oswald called Mrs. Ray and asked if he could come to their house and visit Marina. She acquiesced. He arrived in the late afternoon, and Marina and Lee went into a guest bedroom and spoke for an hour. Oswald begged her to return. "He cried, and you know a woman's heart," Marina recalled. "He said he didn't care to live if I did not return." Marina relented. Before leaving the Rays', the Oswalds stayed for dinner. Lee engaged Frank Ray in a discussion on economics, and eventually gave Ray a lecture about the shortfalls of capitalism. "My husband just came in huffing, puffing, and said he never met anybody dumber in his life, doesn't understand simple economics or how anything works in this country," recalled Valentina Ray. "He considered him a complete idiot."¹⁰⁶

The reunion was not a happy one. Within days, they were fighting again. "It seems to me that it was at that time that Lee began to talk about his wanting to return to Russia," remembered Marina. "I did not want that and it is why we had quarrels."¹⁰⁷ Although he now liked his job, he did not get along with most of his co-workers, had completely alienated the local Russian community, and had concluded, according to Marina, that "it was very hard for him here [in the U.S.]."¹⁰⁸ He took his frustrations out on her. Mrs. Mahlon Tobias, a next-door neighbor of the Oswalds, remembered there was an "awful lot of trouble."¹⁰⁹ As the apartment complex's manager, Tobias's husband often listened to other tenants complaining they could hear thumping sounds "as if Mrs. Oswald was hitting the floor."¹¹⁰ Tobias had to replace a window after Oswald smashed it when shoving Marina around the rooms, and another time rushed to their apartment when a neighbor excitedly reported, "I think that he's really hurt her this

vent James Meredith from enrolling as the first black student at the University of Mississippi, Walker became a moving force for the political right.* The endemic conservatism of Texas, coupled with fears engendered by the cold war and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, in which Russia and the U.S. came close to nuclear confrontation, all boosted Walker's public standing. In 1962, he ran for governor of Texas, and while he lost in a six-man primary to John Connally, he received over 138,000 votes.¹⁰ Following the press coverage of Operation Midnight Ride, the papers and local radio and television had additional stories about the general, focusing on his radical anti-Castro stance.

De Mohrenschildt never hid his own distaste for the John Birch Society and people like Walker. "I don't like that movement personally," he said. "I dislike it very much. . . . I get sometimes into heated discussion and sometimes I say things which maybe you don't think."¹¹ De Mohrenschildt's attitude was so evident that Katya and Delcan Ford, as well as Marina, shared the feeling that he had said to Oswald in mid-February that anyone who "knocked off Walker" would be doing society a favor.¹²

A couple of weeks after his order for the revolver, and near the time of the de Mohrenschildt party, Marina noticed Lee spent several evenings in the kitchen, poring over maps of Dallas and a bus schedule. When she asked him what he was doing, he said he was trying to find the quickest route from his job at Jaggars to the typing course in which he had enrolled. That satisfied Marina, but it was a lie. The typing institute was only a few blocks from Jaggars, a walk of less than five minutes.

That same day, February 14, when Oswald read the news coverage about Walker's Operation Midnight Ride, he and Marina also celebrated their daughter June's first birthday. The next day, Marina told Oswald she was pregnant. While he was temporarily pleased with the news, it did not stop him from instituting a new punishment for her. "Anytime I did something which didn't please him, he would make me sit down at a table and write let-

*Walker's segregationist stance was another factor that must have infuriated Oswald. De Mohrenschildt described Oswald as a "ferocious . . . advocate of integration."

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