

## U.S. AFFAIRS

a Soviet agent. If the Russians had recruited him as a spy, the reasoning ran, they would have advised him to stay in the Marine Corps, where he had some access to military secrets. If they had hired him as a killer, they wouldn't have sent him to Texas with no money and a Russian wife.

But the question remained—did Oswald, when he got to Moscow on a tourist visa in October 1959, volunteer any information that helped the Russians shoot down Gary Powers's U-2 plane over Sverdlovsk six months later? The possibility seemed farfetched, but the commission, in its hearings, brought out two provocative facts. (1) Oswald, in 1957-58, served as a radar operator at two bases from which U-2 planes operated—Atsugi, Japan, and Cubi Point, near Manila, and (2) when he first visited the U.S. Embassy in Moscow he intimated he knew "something of special interest" that he planned to tell the Russians.

One paper among the 1,555 numbered documents in the Warren commission files was obviously addressed to that question. Commission Document No. 931, a memorandum from CIA director Richard Helms to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, was indexed "Lee Harvey Oswald's access to classified information about the U-2." But the memo itself was labeled "secret" and locked in the vault-like "Classified Records Area" of the National Archives, along with 389 other reports that the commission never made public.

**Scratched:** Last week, more than six years after the Warren commission was disbanded, the Helms-to-Hoover memo finally surfaced as the National Archives, after a year-long review with the CIA, FBI and other agencies, quietly scratched the "secret" and "confidential" labels from 85 commission documents. The newly declassified material, examined by NEWSWEEK's Charles Roberts, shed little light on the assassination but did provide an answer of sorts to the U-2 riddle.

In his memo to Hoover, dated May 13, 1964, Helms tartly dismissed a letter from the FBI director suggesting that Oswald may have compromised the CIA's spy plane. His rejection of Hoover's inquiry, however, was based almost entirely on his assertion that U-2s operated at Atsugi and Cubi Point from hangar areas that were inaccessible to Oswald. Conceding that "there were rumors and gossip" about the U-2s and that Oswald "could have heard such gossip," Helms maintained "there is no information to indicate, nor is there reason to believe" that Oswald obtained "factual knowledge" of the U-2 or its mission.

Obviously annoyed at his rival intelligence chief, Helms pointed out that his agency's U-2 "did not gain worldwide notoriety" until the ill-fated Powers mission. "Therefore," he wrote, "it is highly unlikely that the term 'U-2' would have meant anything to Oswald, even if he had heard it and had been able to identify the term with any aircraft at Cubi Point, Atsugi or anywhere else."



Oswald and wife in Russia: No secrets

Helms's contention that Oswald was "unlikely" to understand the implications of the U-2 is itself unlikely to satisfy critics of the Warren commission. Neither will new tidbits of information in the other declassified papers. One long-anticipated "secret" CIA report on "Soviet Use of Assassination and Kidnaping" is little more than a rehash of known murders and abductions by the Russian security police in the 1950s, with a conclusion by one ex-KGB agent that it was "highly unlikely" Moscow would order the liquidation of a U.S. President.

**Grisly Reminders:** Along with transcripts of four of the commission's eleven meetings, some 300 documents remain classified—kept in a room behind a combination lock that only three archivists are permitted to open. One, a CIA report, bears the intriguing title "Soviet Brainwashing Techniques." Another is a report on the FBI's interrogation of Yuri Nosenko, a KGB agent who defected to the U.S. ten weeks after the assassination. Also on the green metal shelves are such grisly reminders of Dallas as President Kennedy's bullet-pierced jacket, Oswald's rifle, the autopsy pictures, the bullet that fell from John Connally's stretcher and even the movie camera with which dress manufacturer Abraham Zapruder filmed the assassination.

Barring a court order—three suits are now pending against the government under the Freedom of Information Act—the archives will not conduct another "declassification review" until 1975. Officials who have seen the still-sequestered documents scoff at the idea they would incriminate anyone other than Oswald. "But as long as there is one piece of paper still locked up," one archivist observed, "there will be somebody insisting that it holds the key to the assassination."

## INVESTIGATIONS:

## Oswald and the U-2

Among the countless questions left unanswered in 1964 when the Warren commission wound up its ten-month investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy was one that piqued scholars and assassination buffs alike: did Lee Harvey Oswald, when he defected to the Soviet Union, deliver any secrets about America's U-2 spy plane?

In its massive Report and Hearings, comprising nearly 10.7 million words, the commission dismissed, on good evidence, the notion that Oswald was ever