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Henry J. Taylor

Oswald in the USSR



WASHINGTON — Lee Harvey Oswald left heavy tracks in the Passport Office of the State Department here. The file is inches high. And he left even heavier tracks at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

U.S. passport No. 173342 was routinely issued to him here on Sept. 10, 1959. He was still in the Marine Corps when he had applied for it before a Santa Ana, Calif., Superior Court clerk on Sept. 4, five days before his discharge. Only 16 days later he sailed from New Orleans for Russia.

ON OCT. 31, Oswald appeared at our Moscow Embassy. He placed his passport on the receptionist's desk. He told her he was there to "dissolve my American citizenship."

She immediately summoned Second Secretary Richard E. Snyder, the consul. He invited Oswald into his office. Foreign Service officer John A. McVickar, Snyder's assistant, was present.

Oswald coolly announced to Snyder and McVickar that he knew the provisions of our law on loss of citizenship and did not want to hear them review the law.

Oswald pulled from his pocket a statement he had prepared and gave it to them. It read:

"I, Lee Harvey Oswald, do hereby request that my present citizenship in the United States of America be revoked. I have entered the Soviet Union for the express purpose of applying for citizenship

through the means of naturalization . . . I affirm that my allegiance is to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."

Oswald stated to Snyder that he had voluntarily told Soviet officials he would make known to them all information concerning the Marine Corps and his specialty in it, namely radar operations, that he possessed.

Snyder urged Oswald to postpone his renouncement decision for at least a few days and immediately cabled Washington full details, with copies to the FBI and CIA here.

Oswald never returned to the embassy. Instead, Snyder received a handwritten letter from him dated Nov. 3, confirming his defection decision.

THE NEXT thing our embassy knew about Oswald, until he suddenly reappeared there without warning on July 8, 1961 — a year and eight months later — was an undated letter from Minsk, post-marked Feb. 5, 1961.

In it Oswald asked the embassy to return his passport to him and was sufficiently well advised by somebody in the Soviet Union to blandly announce that he was legally entitled to have it renewed.

Oswald was right. And the higher the State Department file built up between here and Moscow the righter he turned out to be.

He and his Russian wife boarded the S.S. Maasdam at Rotterdam on June 4, as nice as you please. The rest is history.