



TV NEWSMAN WILLEM OLTMANS



THE DE MOHRENSCHILDTS IN 1974

## CONGRESS

## Assassination: Now a Suicide Talks

*"Let's face it. I only made up the story [about Lee Harvey Oswald] because everybody makes a million dollars off the Kennedy assassination, and I haven't made anything. So now it's my time."*

—George de Mohrenschildt, quoted by Willem Oltmans

That grotesque confession should be sufficient to discredit the man who made it, a Russian-born teacher and friend of Lee Harvey Oswald's named George de Mohrenschildt. But nothing ever seems sufficient to still Kennedy assassination stories; time and events merely complicate them. Last week—only an hour after a congressional investigator asked to meet with him in Manalapan, Fla.—De Mohrenschildt apparently committed suicide by putting a 20-gauge shotgun in his mouth and pulling the trigger. Suddenly there was intense interest in what he might have told the investigator. Sure enough, within 48 hours, a world-traveling Dutch TV newsman, Willem Oltmans, showed up to reveal to a closed session of the House Select Committee on Assassinations—plus ABC, NBC and CBS—what De Mohrenschildt had been telling him during the several years of their acquaintance.

Oltmans' testimony—given under oath—was sensational stuff. De Mohrenschildt, said Oltmans, claimed he had been the middleman in a conspiracy of rich Texas oilmen, headed by the late H.L. Hunt, and anti-Castro Cubans to

kill Kennedy. Oswald was one gunman, but supposedly several Cubans were also assigned to shoot the President. One could even be identified. Oltmans provided the committee with a picture of a Cuban whom he said fired shots at Kennedy. But apart from the dramatic backdrop provided by De Mohrenschildt's suicide, the story was just another series of rumors that could not be corroborated.

At the time of the Kennedy assassination, De Mohrenschildt was an oil geologist employed by the U.S. State Department in Haiti. He had known Oswald for a year (they were members of a Russian-speaking group in Dallas), and he told the Warren Commission in 1964 that he knew nothing of Oswald's role in the Kennedy killing. But during a series of meetings with Oltmans beginning in 1966, De Mohrenschildt began to remember things differently. By 1975, during an interview with Oltmans on Dutch television, he insisted that Oswald was led by others. Oltmans told colleagues, "De Mohrenschildt knows a lot more than he is willing to say right now." Later De Mohrenschildt was to go so far as to say he felt "responsible" for Oswald's behavior.

In February of this year, De Mohrenschildt told Oltmans he was ready to disclose more but only outside the U.S.—he feared for his life in America. By now De Mohrenschildt seemed depressed. He had been hospitalized as a

psychiatric patient for two months at the end of last year, and he had twice attempted suicide. Said Patrick Russell, his Dallas attorney: "He began to have bizarre hallucinations and distortions. He believed people were following him."

According to Oltmans, De Mohrenschildt would vacillate between claiming his conspiracy tale was a hoax and asserting it was true. In addition to De Mohrenschildt's instability, doubts are thrown on his story by a review of Warren Commission testimony that shows De Mohrenschildt last saw Oswald six months before the assassination. "It is absolutely out of the question that De Mohrenschildt had anything to do with Kennedy's death," fumes Chicago Attorney Albert Jenner, who interviewed De Mohrenschildt for the Warren Commission. Adds Jenner of the House Assassination Committee's entire performance: "Utterly disgusting."

The committee members who heard Oltmans' testimony took a wait-and-see attitude. "I think he is telling the truth as he perceives it," said D.C. Delegate Walter Fauntroy. Oltmans himself cited an obviously disturbing aspect of his charges. Asked a tough question during a television interview, he replied, "Well, I'm quoting Mr. De Mohrenschildt, so that makes it very easy"—De Mohrenschildt being in no position to amend the record.

Oltmans' testimony was only the climax in a hectic week during which the House Select Committee on Assassinations barely escaped its own death by sacrificing its controversial counsel, Richard Sprague. The outspoken ex-district attorney from Philadelphia had angered too many Congressmen with his demands for a \$13 million budget and a staff of 175 for the two-year investigation (TIME, Jan. 10).

**Too Raw.** With Sprague out of the way, the House was willing to vote 230 to 181 to continue the investigations on a reduced annual budget of \$2.8 million. But Sprague's departure left the committee staff demoralized and committee members full of praise for their former counsel. Gushed Illinois Republican John Anderson: "He laid himself on the altar of sacrifice."

To date, no firm fruits of Sprague's early work have reached the public. Nevertheless, a rush of rumor, innuendo and unconfirmed leads has blared from the committee. The latest concerns a letter the FBI is investigating said to have been written by Oswald to a "Mr. Hunt" asking about "my position." It is dated 14 days before the Kennedy assassination. The committee's operation has outraged many Congressmen. Snarled Michigan's John Dingell: "They tell us they have persuasive evidence! What they have is a lot of crap!"

Even Richard Sprague hit a cautious note before resigning: "The only things that [the staff] can say of significance are things that are too raw and uncorroborated for us to be stating publicly."

needs access to Western technology and markets, and it badly needs a cap on the arms race in order to devote more of its economic potential to improving the standard of living of its own people. These needs are so acute that despite its threats and protestations, the Kremlin will live with the new outspoken U.S. policy once it becomes convinced that the Carter Administration is irrevocably committed to that policy—and cannot be intimidated into backing down.

4) SALT must ultimately entail arms reduction rather than just arms control, since the arsenals have already grown dangerously. While the Soviets find the idea of deep cuts hard to swallow, substantial reductions require at least as much of a sacrifice by the U.S., if not more. Thus there is nothing inherently unacceptable to Moscow about the main Carter package.

An obvious novice at dealing with the Russians, Carter has taken certain risks—some of them possibly unnecessary—in carrying out that policy. In light of cynical Soviet votes at the United Nations and other forums against alleged repression in other countries, the President has ample reason for attacking human rights violations in the Soviet Union. Still, it is one thing to state principles in a speech, and quite another to challenge Brezhnev directly by writing a letter to Andrei Sakharov. Carter should know if he plays tough, he must be prepared for the Russians to do the same. In the long run, there is also the danger that if all the rhetoric about human rights fails to change anything, disillusionment will set in.

Another continuing question concerns Carter's open diplomacy, his public offers and proposals on highly delicate issues. Are they, as many think, a bracing shock that will force movement on long-stalled problems? Or will they make it harder for Soviet leaders and others to compromise and thus lead to more deeply entrenched positions? The latter danger is a real one, but it is too soon to tell how serious. Some observers pointed out that even Gromyko paid oblique tribute to Vance's open and detailed presentation of the U.S. proposals—a departure from tradition in arms negotiations.

The President is not about to back down or away; indeed, it is he who seems to be testing Brezhnev, not vice versa. He told last week's press conference that he would consider "the development and deployment of additional weapons" if a SALT II agreement is not reached. If he gives the green light to the cruise missile, the M-X missile and the B-1 bomber, U.S. defense spending could increase by about \$2 billion annually. For their part, the Soviets would probably continue the rapid pace of arms buildup they have maintained for the past few years. This would not mean the two powers would be on the verge of war. But it would certainly lead to a grave increase in tensions and spell the end of détente.

MIKE PETERS—DAYTON DAILY NEWS



## Vance v. Kissinger: A Matter of Style

*When Henry Kissinger talked with reporters on a diplomatic shuttle, he was like a wise, witty potentate holding a levee for his courtiers. When Cyrus Vance unbends with newsmen on a mission abroad, it is more like a corporation lawyer at a court recess commenting discreetly on the intricacies of an antitrust case sub judice. TIME Correspondent Christopher Ogden, who has traveled with both Secretaries of State, last week cabled this commentary on their differing styles:*

Whenever he traveled, Henry Kissinger took the State Department with him. When he went to Latin America last year, he took along an expert on the Middle East just in case something happened in that area. Although the Middle East was expected to be one of the major topics of Vance's talks in Moscow, the new Secretary did not have a specialist along.

**Long Hours.** Virtually all the major State Department cable traffic went to the touring Kissinger, creating an enormous logistical burden for his staffs. Vance lets Deputy Secretary Warren Christopher run the department while he is away. As a result, he gets only about one-fifth of the messages demanded by Kissinger, who usually asked for several a day, each running about five to six pages. After two days of getting roughly the same number, Vance sent out an order restricting them to no more than a page and a half.

Like Kissinger, Vance has no problem making decisions, but he does not like to be flooded with them. "He is very methodical and prefers focusing on one issue at a time," says a State Department Soviet specialist. He works hard, putting in long hours, but is not as tireless as Kissinger was. Vance will take naps when he can. Kissinger would regularly give an aide a fistful of memos for action at 2 a.m. and ask that they be returned—with completed action—at 6 a.m. When Kissinger traveled, secre-

taries and aides scurried constantly, taking dictation, typing, reproducing material. Some aides who traveled with him to a city three or four times never got outside their hotel. With Vance, some of these assistants were startled at the amount of free time they had.

Vance appreciates good work and thanks assistants when they produce well. Kissinger was never satisfied with the best efforts of his aides. He would throw back speech drafts two or three times, calling them "junk" or worse. Kissinger was notorious for his tantrums. Vance is even-tempered.

On the road, Vance has so far been content to use Kissinger's back-up Boeing 707. It is less comfortable than the plane regularly used by his predecessor, which is now part of the Administration's fleet. Kissinger spent a good deal of time in the rear of the plane talking off the record to reporters, even as the jet rocketed down the runway. He would return two or three times during a trip to chat, quip, tell jokes and stories about foreign leaders or spin out grand stratagems while nibbling peanuts or candy. Vance is more reserved and is still feeling his way. He rarely comes back to chat, but he invites the press forward for regular news conferences.

According to some who have seen both men in action, Kissinger was far more expansive in talks with heads of government. As with reporters, he would tell stories, crack jokes—often at the expense of his aides—and spin out involved arguments to prove a point. Vance sits and listens. He is less lively, but also more straightforward.

Is Vance too nice for the job? Some think so. "He really may be too much of a gentleman," insists a Middle East expert in Washington. "He may not be able to survive the cutthroat atmosphere." But gentlemen can be tough, as well as patient; Vance may yet demonstrate that he has both these qualities, along with his undoubted intelligence.