

Dead Witness Called Confident of Oswald



UPI Telephoto

GEORGE DE MOHRENSCHILDT
New Kennedy case facts

Palm Beach, Fla.

A Russian-born professor who apparently committed suicide when he learned his testimony was wanted concerning President Kennedy's assassination may once have been a CIA operative and a confidant of Lee Harvey Oswald, sources said yesterday.

The body of George de Mohrenschildt, 65, was found Tuesday afternoon in a second floor study of a Palm Beach waterfront mansion by his daughter, Alexandra, 33.

His death came shortly after de Mohrenschildt learned that the House Assassinations Committee wanted him to testify before the committee about his connections with Oswald, Kennedy's assassin.

The timing of de Mohrenschildt's death immediately became a factor in the House committee's bid for extending its investigation of Kennedy's and Dr. Martin Luther King's assassinations.

Representative Richardson Preyer (Dem-N.C.) said the committee had linked de Mohrenschildt to "new evidence" which indicated "de Mohrenschildt may have been closer to Lee Harvey Oswald than appeared on the surface."

De Mohrenschildt, who said he was born in "Czarist Russia," testified to the Warren Commission that he knew many members of the Russian community in Dallas, including Oswald and his Russian-born wife, Marina. He said he and his wife once sheltered Marina because Oswald was "beating her up."

De Mohrenschildt told the commission he did not believe Oswald killed Kennedy because Oswald always spoke well of the President. However, de Mohrenschildt said Oswald considered himself a Marxist and "hated wealth."

A source, who investigated the Kennedy assassination for three years, said that de Mohrenschildt, who held degrees in international commerce, petroleum geology and engineering, had been serving as an agent of the CIA in Haiti in 1963, the year that Kennedy was killed in Dallas.

De Mohrenschildt denied in lengthy testimony before the Warren Commission, which investigated Kennedy's death, that he had ever been an agent of any government.

The Palm Beach county sheriff's office withheld an official ruling on de Mohrenschildt's death until results of an autopsy and further investigation were made public. But Lieutenant Richard Sheets said there was "no reason to suspect anything other than suicide."

Sheets also said a tape recorder being used to record a television program in an adjacent room picked up the sounds of de Mohrenschildt firing the gun.

"We have the gunshot on tape," Sheets said, adding that there were no sounds of anyone else in the background.

De Mohrenschildt, who was employed as a French language teacher at Bishop College in Dallas at the time of his death, had arrived from Brussels about a week ago with his daughter to visit Mrs. Charles Hilton III.

Mrs. Hilton owns a three-story, wooden home on an estate alongside the intracoastal waterway, seven miles south of Palm Beach. The \$300,000 residence is described as an "historic mansion." Although Mrs. Hilton, the former Nancy Pierson Sands, is listed in the Palm Beach social registry, little is known here about her.

Sheriff Richard Wille said Gaeton J. Fonzi, an investigator for the House Assassinations Committee, had gone to the Hilton estate about noon Tuesday and left word he would return at 8:30 p.m. to see de Mohrenschildt.

The sheriff said no suicide note was found.