

# 'I am the commander,' he barked at Marina

## OSWALD CONTINUED

was not interested in Russia or the Russian people. As I talked to him, I realized he had a vein in him that was beyond reason, maybe, that was fanatic. I thought he was unstable. I thought he was the type of which martyrs and fanatics are made."

On Nov. 14, a month after he first turned up in Moscow, Soviet officials told him that he would not be granted citizenship. He would be permitted to stay in Russia, he was told, as a resident alien. Once again he had been rejected. Soon afterward he moved to Minsk, a city about 400 miles west of Moscow with a population of 500,000.

He got a job as a sheet-metal worker in a factory at a wage of about 80 rubles a month, the equivalent of \$98 in American money. Typically, he began collecting grievances. He lamented later that he had to work 12 to 14 hours a day, that there were no paid vacations, that the food was monotonous. He complained of the way several families were crowded into one room, of pressure the Communist party put on civilians, of the presence of electronic listening devices. He also objected to the political lectures he was subjected to during lunch hours, and the shortage of fresh vegetables and milk.

He joined a rifle club, according to what he told a man he knew later in Texas, and became an expert marksman. He was unhappy at being unable to own his own rifle. "The government wouldn't

let you own a rifle," he said. "Only shotguns. So I joined a rifle club."

Meanwhile the Marine Corps, having learned of Oswald's attempt to renounce his citizenship, decided to give Oswald, still in the inactive reserves, an undesirable discharge.

In March 1961 Oswald met Marina Nikolaevna Pruskova, a pretty 19-year-old hospital pharmacist from Leningrad. Lee was the first American she had ever met, and she had thought often of going to America. He was difficult and unpopular, she realized, but she was attracted to him. "Lee not like anyone," she once said in her broken English, "but he love me." She said at one point that she felt sorry for him because he had no friends. "Everybody hated him," she said, "even in Russia."

On April 30, six weeks after they met, they were married. Oswald, by this time, had already made moves to return to the U.S. In a 1962 letter to Senator John Tower of Texas, he said that he had tried to get an exit visa as early as July 20, 1960, about eight months before he met Marina.

In February 1961, Oswald had first informed the American embassy in Moscow of his desire to return home. It took 16 months to get all the necessary documents—exit permits for himself, his wife, and for his daughter, June Lee, who was born on Feb. 15, 1962. Oswald's U.S. passport, which he had thrown defiantly on a desk when he announced his defection, was renewed and amended to include his daughter.

Things finally fell into place for Oswald in May 1962. The State Department, deciding that Oswald still held American citizenship, granted him a loan of \$435.71. Such loans are routinely made to Americans stranded abroad without funds. On May 30 he wrote

his mother from Moscow: "We shall be leaving from Holland by ship for the U.S. on June 4th."

After Lee's arrival in the U.S. there was a family reunion at his brother Robert's house in Fort Worth, but it was a subdued one. "He didn't say much about living in Russia," said his mother. "He just introduced his wife and baby and said he wanted to find a job. He had an awful time getting work. People didn't like the idea of him having a Russian wife. They were awful to him and her."

Lee and the family stayed only briefly at Robert's house, then moved in with his mother, who had an apartment in Fort Worth. Mrs. Oswald said it took him a month to find a job. "I'd drive him downtown and say, 'How about that place?' He'd go in and come out and say, 'They don't need me.' He wasn't bitter. He knew he had made a mistake going to Russia and would have to pay for it." She said that at night Lee and his wife would play a Russian game, similar to ticktacktoe, at the kitchen table. At other times they read to each other in Russian.

In early July, with the help of the Texas Employment Commission, Oswald got a job at a welding shop in the industrial section of Fort Worth. He was a sheet-metal helper, a job similar to that he held in Minsk. He was paid \$50 a week, barely enough to sustain a family of three.

At the shop, owned by the Louv-R-Pac Company, Oswald was a sullen, unenthusiastic but competent worker. The shop foreman, Tom Vargas, said Oswald walked to and from work, and brought his lunch. "He'd take his sack lunch and sit in a corner by himself. He never talked to anyone."

Oswald didn't miss a day on the job until the end of September. Then he simply disappeared. "The last thing we heard was a letter



telling us where to send his paycheck," said Vargas.

The Oswalds had moved into a \$59-a-month duplex apartment on Mercedes Street, about a half-mile from where he worked. It was a small apartment, sparsely furnished, across the street from a big department-store warehouse. It had a small yard with a few trees, and its window shutters were painted green.

A neighbor, Mrs. Ernest Koerner, who lived behind the Oswalds, said that she and her husband often heard the young couple argu-

**DOUBLE IDENTITY.** Identification cards found on Oswald when captured included Marine Corps card (far right) giving his correct name and number. Other two cards, apparently forged by Oswald, give name he used to buy rifle that killed the President.



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