

## **Tokyo legend? Lee Harvey Oswald and Japan**

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**W**hat do we know about Lee Harvey Oswald's stay in Japan? Surprisingly, the answer is 'very little'.

From autumn 1957 to late 1958, Lee Harvey Oswald worked at an American military base in Atsugi, Japan, as a member of a military air traffic control unit for Marine Corps planes. Oswald served in MACS-1 (Marine Air Control Squadron) of Marine Air Group 11 as part of the First Marine Aircraft Wing. With other members of his MACS-1 unit, he briefly deployed to the Philippines and Taiwan, redeployed back to America in November 1958 and served in a MACS unit at El Toro, California, until his discharge from the military.

Oswald arrived in Japan on 12 September 1957. On 27 October he injured himself in the accidental discharge of a .22 gun and was hospitalized for a bullet wound to his elbow until 15 November. Five days after his discharge, his unit deployed to the Philippines and stayed for some time thanks to a potential international crisis in Indonesia. Oswald's MACS-1 unit established a base at Cubi Point in Subic Bay. It then sailed back from the Philippines on 7 March 1958 and arrived at Atsugi some 11 days later. On 11 April, Oswald was officially court-martialled for the accidental discharge of a gun but the sentence was suspended as long as he kept out of trouble for six months.

Two months later, on 20 June 1958, Oswald was arrested for cursing at an officer at the Bluebird Café in Yamoto, Japan; on 27 June, he was sentenced to serve time in the brig until his release on 13 August. One month later, on 14 September, the Warren Commission stated that Oswald and

his unit sailed into the South China Sea during a major crisis between Taiwan and Communist China. On 30 September, his unit set up base at P'ing-tung in North Taiwan. The unit then returned to Atsugi on 5 October. Oswald next spent some days being treated for a venereal disease at the Atsugi Station Hospital. He finally left Japan on 2 November and arrived back at San Francisco 13 days later.<sup>1</sup> Oswald then was based at Atsugi for his tour of duty except for one MACS-1 assignment to the Philippines from 20 November 1957 to 7 March 1958 and another, much briefer, tour of Taiwan from 14 September 1959 till his return to Atsugi on 5 October 1959.

Some critics of the 'official story' of Oswald's time in Japan claim that he managed to penetrate the CIA-Air Force U-2 program run out of a highly restricted area in the huge Atsugi base on behalf of the Soviet Union's intelligence services; that as an air-traffic controller, Oswald tracked U-2 flights out of Atsugi and learned just how high the U-2 flew. With this information, the Soviets were able to shoot down Francis Gary Powers' U-2 flight on 1 May 1960. The claim has even entered otherwise sober studies of the U-2 affair such as historian Michael Beschloss's well-regarded book *Mayday*, where he makes a passing reference to Oswald's possible role in betraying U-2 secrets.<sup>2</sup>

A deeper understanding of Oswald's role in Japan, however, has been long distorted by the 1978 publication of Edward Jay Epstein's book *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald*<sup>3</sup> in which Epstein tries to prove that Oswald fell victim to an elaborate Soviet intelligence 'honey trap' while in Japan that led him to spy for the KGB. Shortly after *Legend* appeared in print, however, investigators for the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) interviewed some of Epstein's purported sources. The interviews (many now available on the Mary Ferrell Foundation website) show that Epstein concocted a bogus recreation of Oswald's time in

1 For Oswald's itinerary in Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan, see the *Warren Commission Report* section entitled 'Marines', pp. 683-684.

2 Michael Beschloss, *Mayday: Eisenhower, Khrushchev, and the U-2 Affair* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988) p. 236.

3 Edward Jay Epstein, *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald* (New York: Reader's Digest Press/McGraw-Hill, 1978).

Japan.<sup>4</sup>

Part one of this study will focus on *Legend*. I also hope to show just how little we know about Oswald's activities in Asia in general and Japan in particular. The Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), for example, could not even agree on an issue as basic as whether Oswald did or did not spend any time in Taiwan. Nor do we know, for instance, if there was any U.S. government investigation into Oswald's activities in Japan following his 1959 defection to Russia.

In part two, I will argue that Oswald's story must be seen at a minimum in the context of an even more striking espionage affair, the defection to Moscow in the summer of 1960 of Bernon Mitchell and William Martin, former National Security Agency (NSA) officials, both of whom had earlier served in different posts in Japan in the mid-1950s and at Atsugi in particular. As I will document, the American security establishment went to great lengths to examine Mitchell and Martin's past to determine whether the men were first recruited into Soviet intelligence in the early to mid-1950s.

## **Part one**

### **Queen Bee**

*Legend* was published in the spring of 1978 and extensive excerpts appeared in the March 1978 *Reader's Digest*. *Legend* argues that Oswald most likely had been compromised by a Soviet 'honey trap' after he became romantically involved with a Japanese hostess at a posh Tokyo night-club called the Queen Bee. A fellow MACS-1 Marine named Zack Stout was a crucial source for Epstein. From *Legend*:

'Zack Stout knew of only one possible piece in the puzzle of Oswald's absences [when Oswald visited Tokyo]. He seemed to have fallen in love, perhaps for the first time in his life, with a Japanese girl. When Stout asked where she worked, Oswald told him that she was a hostess at the Queen Bee in Tokyo.....one of the three most

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<sup>4</sup> See The Mary Ferrell Foundation web page at <[http://www.maryferrell.org/pages/Main\\_Page.html](http://www.maryferrell.org/pages/Main_Page.html)>.

expensive night-clubs in Tokyo. It catered to an elite clientele – field grade officers, pilots (including U-2 pilots) and a few junior officers with private incomes – not impoverished Marine privates. To take a hostess out of a night-club, customers required paying not only the girl, but the night-club as well for the bar business it lost during her absence. The man also had to pay for the accommodations for the evening. For an evening at the Queen Bee, a date could cost anywhere from \$60 to \$100.

Yet Oswald, who was earning less than \$85 a month take home pay, went out with this woman from the Queen Bee with surprising regularity, even bringing her back to the base area several times. “He was really crazy about her,” offered Stout, who met the woman with Oswald on several occasions in local bars around the base. Other Marines, less friendly to Oswald, and who saw him with the woman, were astonished that someone of her “class” would go out with Oswald at all..... (According to one source, Navy intelligence was also interested in the possibility that hostesses from the Queen Bee were being used at the time to gather intelligence and that Oswald was receiving money from someone at the Queen Bee.)’ (Epstein pp. 71-72)

On 1 June 1978, a few months after *Legend’s* publication, HSCA investigator Jack Moriarty interviewed Stout, who directly contradicted Epstein. Stout first explained that liberty from the base

‘.....was chiefly “Cinderella” form (required to return by midnight) which effectively limited such free time to Yamoto, near the east camp of Atsugi, or Sagmi Oaksta, near main side. Weekend liberties permitted a wider scope, which included Tokyo some 4-5 hours by train. So the normal pastimes were those bars in Yamoto. It was less expensive in terms of time (Yamoto was a 20-minute bus ride) and money (Tokyo was the location of the affluent bars and other places of entertainment).’

The discussion then turned to the Queen Bee(s).

'Asked about the location of the Queen Bee, he [Stout] asked me "which one"? He advised "Queen Bee" and many such names were popular in nearly all the liberty towns. Those people just seemed to like the title "Queen" and used it in many enterprises in many areas.

Most of the MACS-1 [Marine Air Control Squadron] men frequented The Queen Bee in Yamato. He's seen Lee Harvey Oswald in there as well as most of MAC[S]-1. He sometimes went with Lee Harvey Oswald and sometimes just saw him in there. He would usually be with the same girl. He never actually met her, but that's not usually the case, anyway. He advised that in order to really understand the environment, I must realize it's nothing like society is here in the States. The girls work in bars and when you visited a place for the first time, you got paired off with a bar girl. All subsequent trips provided you with the same girl. The joke around the barracks during those days was that when a Marine – any Marine – visited a particular bar several times, he was in love.

So, yes, he saw LHO (like the rest of MACS-1) in the Queen Bee with the same girl, but it was an entirely different connection than the same situation would have been in the States. In the first place, that was [the] rule, not exception and secondly, *why would LHO or anyone else, spend four to five hours for a more expensive train ride to go to the Tokyo Queen Bee, which would cost him a month's pay in one trip.*

As far as LHO's money was concerned, he was under the impression he had less, not more, than the rest. Eighty some dollars a month was the norm, but LHO had an allotment sent to his mother ("at least that's what he said") which caused a deduction. Nor did his lifestyle indicate anything different....As far as women went, Yamato girls were the cheapest and he didn't see LHO with them anywhere else. And this was only a later development.....In any event, the consensus

was LHO was anything but affluent.

Again, he pointed out the implied inaccuracies of Legend. It states that LHO had a regular girlfriend in the Queen Bee suggesting he had a serious romance going and also had plenty of money due to the high prices in the [Tokyo] Queen Bee.' [*Emphases added.*]

Stout believed that Oswald staged an 'accidental' shooting of himself in the arm to avoid going to the Philippines because he wanted to stay in Japan with his local girlfriend:

'Stout assumed, as did the rest, LHO was attempting to forego the maneuvers in the Philippines, which was timed to coincide with local unrest. It seems the first "accidental" version didn't hold up. He was also privy to the "Buck Sergeant" problem LHO was concerned with. Again local mores permit "your regular girl" to have other "regular boy friends" as long as the individual schedules don't conflict. It seems this buck sergeant (no name) was paying her rent and that bucks have all night liberty. She, like the rest, was utilizing some of her free time before midnight with LHO and whoever. Stout says they used to refer to the more resourceful ones as "business women".'

Stout's recollection about Oswald's dislike of a local unit sergeant might help explain the incident that took place after Oswald returned to Atsugi from the Philippines and led in his being court-martialled for the second time.

On 20 June 1958, Oswald was in the Blue Bird Café in Yamato, near the Atsugi base. He spilled a drink on a fellow Marine, a technical sergeant named Miguel Rodriguez.<sup>5</sup> Oswald, who later testified he was drunk at the time, tried to engage Rodriguez in some kind of confrontation. Oswald said Rodriguez had assigned him to mess duty back at Atsugi instead of his radar operator post and Oswald took it personally.

Daniel Powers, one of Oswald's Marine comrades,

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<sup>5</sup> A technical sergeant is a sergeant just above staff sergeant but below master sergeant. Rodriguez was below the rank of master sergeant and hence a 'buck sergeant'.

discussed mess duty in the Marines. On 30 November 1963, FBI SA John Schaller interviewed Powers. Powers told Schaller that when he and Oswald were stationed in the Philippines for a few months in 1958, 'OSWALD was on mess duty'. Warren Commission lawyer Albert Jenner, in his 1 May 1964 questioning of Powers, said that he assumed Oswald was not on mess duty in the Philippines 'all the time'. Powers replied, 'No; you're assigned - privates and privates first class are assigned this duty periodically. I think you're assigned one week of the year.'

If Rodriguez did assign Oswald mess duty even though Oswald had served mess duty in the Philippines earlier that year, Oswald may have been right to be angry with him. Why would Rodriguez want to humiliate Oswald? If we follow Zack Stout, one possible answer is that Rodriguez moved in on Oswald's prostitute (the 'Buck Sergeant' problem) and in the military caste system, Oswald was simply supposed not to object. In any case, after Rodriguez refused to fight even after Oswald called him a coward, the MPs intervened and arrested Oswald. On 27 June 1958, Oswald was court-martialled for the incident. Although the Court believed he was drunk at the time, it convicted him of using abusive words to a superior.

Oswald's conviction was a disaster. Recall that on 11 April 1958 after his return from the Philippines, Oswald was first court-martialled for the accidental shooting incident and given 20 days hard labor in the brig. The court then suspended the sentence as long as Oswald stayed out of trouble for six months. Following his 27 June conviction, however, Oswald now had to serve 48 days hard labor in the brig with a new sentence of 28 days tacked on to the earlier sentence.

The larger point is that Epstein used Zack Stout to say something very different from what Stout told the HSCA. Citing Stout as his 'source', Epstein apparently invented a fantasy about Oswald partying on a private's salary with one of the most expensive bar girls in all Tokyo. All this to suggest the KGB must have paid for Oswald's high living as part of a Soviet plot to steal U-2 secrets.

As we shall see later, Stout thought the idea that that Oswald had any ability to steal U-2 secrets was totally absurd. The CIA thought similarly. In a 14 April 1964 letter to J. Edgar Hoover, then CIA Deputy Director of Plans, Richard Helms, stated that it was virtually impossible for Oswald to spy on the CIA's operations at Atsugi known as the Joint Technical Advisory Group (JTAG):

'JTAG air activities were conducted from a classified hanger area at one end of the flight line. OSWALD *did not have access* to this area. Prior to the time in question, JTAG had been publicized by Radio Peking as being a headquarters for American intelligence activity. For this reason, and because JTAG was obviously not a part of the Naval Air Station complement, there were rumors and gossip regarding the unit and its activities. This condition was regarded as normal under such circumstances. Being there at that time, OSWALD could have heard such gossip; however, there is no information to indicate, nor is there reason to believe, that he obtained factual knowledge regarding JTAG and its mission.'

Helms concluded his memo to Hoover (which he also sent to the Warren Commission):

'There is no evidence or indication that OSWALD had any association with, or access to, the JTAG operation or its program in Japan. This applies also to information regarding the U-2 or its mission. Even if OSWALD had seen a U-2 aircraft at Atsugi or elsewhere, this fact would not have been considered unusual nor have constituted a breach of security. Limited public exposure of the craft itself – *but not of its nomenclature or mission* – was accepted as a necessary risk. It is most unlikely that OSWALD had the necessary prerequisites to differentiate between the U-2 and other aircraft engaged in classified missions which were similarly visible at Atsugi at the same time.'

## **Iwakuni**

*Legend* included another sensational 'revelation'. For it Epstein turned to Owen Dejanovich, whom he described as 'a tall, lanky native of Chicago who went on to play professional football'. Dejanovich first met Oswald when they spent May and June 1957 at radar school in Keesler Air Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, as part of the same group that included Daniel Powers. Once in Japan, Oswald and Powers were assigned to Atsugi; Dejanovich went to the Marine Corps Station at Iwakuni.

*Legend* stated that when Oswald reportedly returned from a stint in Taiwan in October 1958, he 'was assigned to a Marine squadron in Iwakuni, an air base some 480 miles southwest of Tokyo' for temporary duty. At Iwakuni, Oswald hooked up with his old Biloxi fellow trainee Owen Dejanovich. In Epstein's telling, Oswald arrived at Iwakuni's Marine-run Tactical Air Control Center for the northern Pacific area. In the case of a Communist Chinese, North Korean, or Soviet attack, it was the center's job to co-ordinate air defenses. Epstein continues:

'On this temporary duty, Oswald again was assigned to the translucent plotting board. Owen Dejanovich..... immediately recognized Oswald in the center as someone he had gone to radar school with at Keesler Air Base and tried to renew the acquaintanceship. He quickly found that Oswald had grown extremely bitter since he had last known him.

"He kept referring to the Marines at the center as 'You Americans,' as if he were some sort of foreigner simply observing what we were doing," says Dejanovich. His tone was definitely accusatory. He spoke in slogans about "American imperialism" and "exploitation," which made Dejanovich think at the time that Oswald – whom he called Bugs – was merely being perverse for the sake of shocking the other Marines at the center.

In the evenings, Dejanovich would occasionally see Oswald speaking to an attractive Eurasian woman. "She was much too good-looking for Bugs," he recalls

thinking, and he wondered why such an attractive “round eye”, obviously not a common bar girl, would waste her time with a Marine private.

Another Marine in the unit, Dan Powers, had got the impression from Oswald that this Eurasian woman was half-Russian and was teaching Oswald the Russian language. Other Marines speculated that Oswald had simply set up a “ranch”, or living arrangement with the Eurasian at Iwakuni. But whenever Dejanovich would see Oswald with this girl at the Orion bar in Iwakuni, he would just shake his head at what he considered Oswald’s perverse nature. “Who but Oswald would come to Japan and find a round-eyed Russian girlfriend?” he would ask himself.’ (Epstein pp. 82-83).

In a 20 November 2003 *Frontline* program on the JFK assassination that prominently featured Edward Jay Epstein, Dejanovich popped up with an even more telling revelation:

‘There was a small business section [at Iwakuni] across one bridge that was called “Skivvy Bridge”. We were allowed, as Americans, to go into that sector of the residential portion of Iwakuni. The other sector was considered to be communist, Japanese communists, and we were – it was an off-limits area that we were not allowed to go in, as Americans. The first time I saw Oswald with the round-eye – she was a beautiful White Russian – he was walking with her. They were going across the bridge into the section that was off limits to us.’

Dejanovich noticed Oswald walking with the beautiful woman across a bridge into a forbidden area; the MPs apparently did not.

This was stunning. Clearly it demanded a new look at Dejanovich’s earliest testimony to the FBI to learn more about the exotic beauty. From FBI SA (Special Agent) Daniel Pelton’s 5 December 1963 interview with Dejanovich:

‘He [Dejanovich] advised that in August 1957, he and OSWALD were part of a 120 man overseas draft and

OSWALD went to a Marine Base at Atsugi, Japan, while DEJANOVICH went to a base at Iwakuni, Japan. *The next time he saw OSWALD was in December 1958 when they came back to the United States together in a 100-man draft.*' (Emphasis added.)

Dejanovich did not see Oswald at Iwakuni because Oswald was never at Iwakuni.

In his 2008 book *The Missing Chapter: Lee Harvey Oswald in the Far East*, former Marine Corps investigator Jack Swike notes that there are no records to suggest that Oswald was ever in Iwakuni. Swike, however, cites the testimony of Dejanovich and another Marine named Sherman Cooley that they both saw Oswald at Iwakuni. Cooley is also interviewed in *Legend* but he only recalls Oswald's time in boot camp in California.<sup>6</sup>

Did Cooley's later statement really confirm Dejanovich's claims? A JFK researcher named Bill Weston interviewed Sherman Cooley for an article entitled 'Pfisterer Dental Laboratory' that appeared in *The Fourth Decade* (5/3, March 1998).<sup>7</sup> Cooley recalled that he first met Oswald at Marine Corps boot camp in San Diego, California, in October 1956 and went with him in March 1957 to Jacksonville, Florida, where they were in the same class at the Air Frame and Power School. Two months later, in May 1959, both men were assigned to Kessler Air Base, in Biloxi. Weston then writes:

'They were transferred to Japan but Cooley did not see Oswald there, for they had been assigned to two widely separated bases. The next time he saw him [Oswald] was in the Philippines towards the end of November 1957. In fact, the picture of Oswald sitting among a group of Marines waiting to board an LST was taken by Cooley himself. At the end of December, Cooley was sent back to Japan with a portion of the unit [back to Iwakuni], while Oswald stayed with the rest of the unit at Corregidor. *They did not see one another again until the*

<sup>6</sup> Epstein pp. 62-63.

<sup>7</sup> See <<http://jfk.hood.edu/Collection/Weisberg%20Subject%20Index%20Files/L%20Disk/Livingstone%20Harrison%20Edward%205-93/Item%2025.pdf>>

*beginning of January 1959, when they were assigned to a radar unit in El Toro, California. Oswald had mess duty and Cooley used to see him every morning serving coffee to the men.'* (Weston p. 21) (Emphasis added.)

Obviously if Cooley had not seen Oswald after the Philippines until they were reunited at El Toro, he could not have met him at Iwakuni after Cooley was reassigned there.

Why is there no Oswald paper trail? Why did Dejanovich never mention any of this to the FBI in 1963? Or to the newspapers? The 28 November 1963 issue of *The Arizona Republic*, for example, carried an interview with Dejanovich that read in part:

'Dejanovich's final 10 months with the Marine Corps were served at El Toro, Calif., where Oswald was stationed. "I personally knew him in Biloxi, Miss., where we attended a radar specialist school," Dejanovich said.....Dejanovich said Oswald studied the Russian language while stationed at the El Toro Marine Base. "We used to encourage him to say something in Russian, but it was strictly for laughs," Dejanovich said. "I guess you never know who you are talking to."

Again, no mention of Iwakuni, Oswald, and the mysterious woman.

*Legend*, however, cannot let Iwakuni alone. Along with Dejanovich, Epstein cites another Marine, Daniel Powers, who supposedly confirmed Dejanovich's story to Epstein just as Cooley supposedly later confirmed Dejanovich's story to Swike. Recall that in *Legend* Epstein cites Dan Powers being at Iwakuni when Oswald was supposedly there in early October 1958 and that Powers 'had got the impression from Oswald' that the Eurasian girl 'was half-Russian' and was teaching Oswald the Russian language.

In Epstein's telling, while stationed at Iwakuni, Dejanovich spots his old Keesler Air Base fellow trainee Oswald with the 'round-eyes' Eurasian temptress in the Orion bar, as well as walking across a bridge at Iwakuni into a restricted area filled with Japanese Communists. Oswald then

told Powers (or 'implied to him') that the mystery woman was half-Russian and that she was teaching 'Bugs' Russian. The news must have filtered back to Dejanovich since he could then claim that the 'round eyes' really was a 'White Russian'.

Oswald and Powers were in the same unit, the unit at Atsugi, not Iwakuni. Again, we begin with Powers interview with FBI SA John Schaller on 30 November 1963. From the interview:

'After their arrival at Atsugi, POWERS played football while the rest of the squadron, including OSWALD, went to the Philippines on maneuvers [on 20 November 1958].

In January 1958, POWERS rejoined the squadron, which included OSWALD, at Cubi Point in the Philippines....POWERS recalled that OSWALD and the squad were then put aboard a Philippine LST en route to Corregidor where they remained for two or three months during which time OSWALD was on mess duty.

He recalled that OSWALD, POWERS and the group in March 1958 [7 March] returned to the LST to Cubi Point in the Philippines. POWERS remained at Cubi Point while OSWALD continued on to Japan. In May, 1958, POWERS left by plane from Cubi Point to Atsugi where he rejoined the squad and again saw OSWALD. It was at Atsugi that Oswald shot himself in the leg<sup>8</sup>.....He informed that the last time he saw OSWALD was in May, 1958, when OSWALD was returned to the United States.'

(It was Powers, not Oswald, who left Japan sometime in late May or early June 1958. Oswald only shipped back to the States in November 1958. This discrepancy most likely was an error by SA Schaller in taking down Power's statement.)

There is no mention of any time Powers and Oswald spent together in 'Iwakuni' or any mention of a mysterious Russian woman. Powers did say that Oswald had a girlfriend but she was an Atsugi-based Japanese prostitute:

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<sup>8</sup> Oswald shot himself in the elbow (not the leg) during the 27 October 1957 incident.

'He believes OSWALD had a Japanese girlfriend while at Atsugi, possibly a Japanese prostitute. He stated that he recalls that liberty was given to the group from 5:00 PM to 6:00 AM each night and that the group was also given liberty two out of every three weekends. He stated that he cannot recall that OSWALD spent his time in the barracks while on duty but he is of the opinion that OSWALD took all the liberty he could get.

He stated that he also vaguely recalls that while at Atsugi in Japan, OSWALD was studying RUSSIAN and he vaguely recalled that OSWALD carried with him a dark blue or a black book, which POWERS believed to be a Russian language book.....POWERS concluded by informing that OSWALD was a "loner". He stated that OSWALD never expressed sympathy toward the Communist Party, Communist principles, or Marxist doctrine.'

Powers' testimony did not end with the FBI. On 1 May 1964, the Warren Commission's Albert Jenner further questioned him. Powers said he first met Oswald sometime in early May 1957 when they transferred from Florida for training in Mississippi. Later on, Jenner asked him about Oswald, Atsugi, and women. Once again, Powers fails to mention any exotic 'White Russian' woman.

Mr. JENNER: Okay. What did Oswald do for entertainment on leave?

Mr. POWERS: This seems to me now that he made a statement, and this was after he went out and procured or secured a female companionship and set up housekeeping, or whatever you might want to call it in Japan, and this was common practice.....

Mr. JENNER: Did he set up housekeeping, set up some Japanese girl; is that what you mean?

Mr. POWERS: Yes. This is – this was the normal procedure over there, the practice with a lot of individuals, and I think that he was one of the ones that did – went for this type of thing. I'm not sure whether

he did, but I can attribute this statement to him that he did.

Mr. JENNER: In other words, you have a recollection of him having said that somewhere?

Mr. POWERS: Yes, he said that, and again looking back, he was finally attaining a male status or image in his own eyes, and this is why he wanted to stay in that particular country.'

Powers' testimony supports Zack Stout's statement that Oswald had a 'girlfriend' from one of the Atsugi off-base bars/whorehouses. Apparently, once a soldier was 'assigned' to a woman by the bar/whorehouse, for a certain price he could rent her for the weekend in an off base flat.

Powers *did* visit Iwakuni, however, as this jumble from his Warren Commission testimony suggests. Powers discussed a group of Marines who came to Japan and with whom he tried to stay in touch. From his testimony:

Mr. POWERS: Getting back to your original question....But Oswald and myself, but I think that Bandoni went on the east coast, but Brereton went to Iwakuni, which is another Air Force – rather Marine base, and Camarata went down to a helicopter base somewhere in Japan, down in the harbor somewhere. I used to call him on the phone once in a while and talk to him.

And Brereton, I think – no, by gosh, maybe Bandoni was down at – no, that was Mike Caine. We were flying between the Philippines, and if he would stop in at Iwakuni, I would stop in and see Mike.'

In other words, if Powers was on a plane that made a scheduled stopover at the Iwakuni base, he would use the time to reconnect with his friend.

The questioning continued:

Mr. JENNER: Where?

Mr. POWERS: Iwakuni, this is a base in the lower part of Japan.

Mr. JENNER: I-o-w-c---

Mr. POWERS: I-o-w-a-k-o-n-n-i, I think. Iwakuni – i.e., possibly. I think it's –I. I don't know. I'm lost, where was I. It seems to me that Brereton was over there, too, at Iwakuni, but I don't recall if I possibly saw him over there once or twice; it was either on a football trip or when I was flying down to the Philippines after wrestling season.

Far from being assigned to Iwakuni (whose name he could not spell), Powers told the Warren Commission he may have visited it 'during a football trip' that would have taken place in the late fall of 1958 when Oswald and his unit was already in the Philippines. Powers flew down from Japan to the Philippines or sometime in mid-January 1958 after he finished up with his wrestling team schedule so he may have stopped off at Iwakuni on that flight. In short, Powers either visited Iwakuni once or twice, he couldn't be sure.

As is evident from his testimony, at no time does Powers say he was ever assigned to Iwakuni in a military capacity, that he met Oswald at Iwakuni or that Oswald was in the company of an exotic half-Russian Eurasian woman who was teaching him Russian.

Powers further demonstrates that he could not have seen Oswald even during his stopover as Oswald and his unit had deployed to the Philippines well before Powers did. Oswald then returned with his unit to Atsugi well before Powers did:

Mr. JENNER: And you were headquartered at the naval air station at Atsugi?

Mr. POWERS: Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER: Oswald – what did he serve as? I mean was he a radar operator?

Mr. POWERS: I assume he was a radar operator. *From here, I lost almost total contact with the individual other than just seeing him.* I played football during the fall and during this period of time we would play, we played in the bowl games, and the squadron went down to the

Philippines and I stayed in Japan. (Emphasis added.)

Mr. JENNER: You didn't go to the Philippines?

Mr. POWERS: I did at a later date, but when the rest of the squadron went down to the Philippines, they went down, oh, I don't know, probably sometime in November, and I stayed down [in Japan] and played football, and then after that, I was wrestling – I wrestled for a while, and then out of the blue came orders to go to the Philippines, and from that time, I think this was sometime in the middle of January --.

Nor did Powers return with Oswald's unit when they sailed back to Japan from the Philippines on 7 March 1958. Instead, he stayed on in the Archipelago because Powers said he had been assigned special guard duty at a U-2 hanger there.

Mr. JENNER: Do you recall anything in this connection with respect to guard duty relating to some kind of a special airplane?

Mr. POWERS: Yes, we – this happened again, I think, after the rest of the squadron left to go back to the Japanese mainland, and some of us were assigned temporary duty in Cubi Point there. I believe there were two of us, or three of us from the squadron.

Mr. JENNER: Who were they?

Mr. POWERS: Murphy, I believe, was one of them and Private – Private First Class Murphy, and I don't recall the other individuals, who the other individuals were, but anyway, we were assigned there, and at this particular time, they were closely guarding a hanger. And as it developed, this was, not knowing what it was, it was a U-2 aircraft, but this was after the rest of the squadron left, which Oswald was included in, for the mainland.

Mr. JENNER: Oswald was included in a group that had returned to the mainland?

Mr. POWERS: Yes, sir.

Asked when he returned from the Philippines to Atsugi,

Powers replied 'late April or early May of 1958'. Nor did Powers fly back to Japan. When Jenner asked him if he had ever been to Formosa, Powers replied:

'Yes, we – this was on our way home. Now, this wasn't – he [Oswald] was still in Japan, and on our way home, we went to Formosa and no one got off the ship; we just picked up some civilians, I believe there.

Mr. JENNER: But Oswald was not there with you?

Mr. POWERS: No. And then we just went on across --

Powers told the Warren Commission he returned to America on 4 July 1958 and so he must have been on route back 'most of June'. This is important because Epstein alleges that Oswald came to Iwakuni sometime in October 1958 after he returned to Japan not from the Philippines but much later from a second assignment in Formosa (Taiwan).

Oswald's unit left for Formosa on 14 September 1958 and Oswald was back at Atsugi by 5 October with the rest of his unit. Given that Powers left Japan permanently either in late May or in early June for America, it is impossible that he could have met Oswald in Iwakuni in early October 1958, the time Epstein claims Oswald received assignment to 'temporary duty' at Iwakuni and informed Powers about his exotic Eurasian girlfriend.

Jenner then asked Powers a series of questions about Oswald:

Mr. JENNER: But you have no impression of Oswald in that particular connection?

Mr. POWERS: No, nothing. My actual association with him in Japan was limited to other than just seeing him in the barracks and saying 'Hi Ozzie'.

Jenner continued a bit later: 'Did he ever express any sympathy toward the Communist Party?'

Mr. POWERS: None that I recall.

Mr. JENNER: Toward Communist principles?

Mr. POWERS: None that I recall.

Mr. JENNER: Or Marxist doctrine?

Mr. POWERS: None that I recall; no, sir.

Jenner finally asked him, 'You don't think you had enough contact with him in Japan because he was not a member of your platoon?' Powers replied, 'That's correct.'

This then is Daniel Powers, the individual whose testimony Epstein invokes in *Legend* to confirm Dejanovich's story about the mysterious Eurasian woman with Oswald in Iwakuni!<sup>9</sup>

### **John Donovan's tale**

Epstein's strangest military witness was former Marine First Lieutenant John Donovan, whom Epstein thanks in *Legend* for serving as 'a technical advisor on Oswald's Marine Corps activities'. On 5 May 1964, Donovan extensively testified to the Warren Commission about Oswald, whom he said he first met in El Toro, California, after Oswald returned from Japan.<sup>10</sup>

On 7 April 1978, HSCA investigator Robert Genzman interviewed Donovan, who was then living in Arlington, Virginia. Donovan first told Genzman that during his initial testimony before the Warren Commission, he had 'forgotten' that he had known Oswald both in the Philippines as well as in El Toro. From the interview:

'When he testified before the Warren Commission, Donovan stated he had contact with Oswald only in California; but he has since refreshed his recollection and he now recalls that he first knew Oswald when they were both stationed in the Philippines. Donovan recalls that before he testified before the Commission he was advised by his superiors only to answer the questions asked and not to go off on tangents.'

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<sup>9</sup> More recently, Daniel Powers spoke to the author Peter Savodnik for Savodnik's book *The Interloper: Lee Harvey Oswald Inside the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2013). Again, Powers makes no mention of a mysterious Eurasian woman at Iwakuni, even though Savodnik interviewed him about his knowledge of Oswald.

<sup>10</sup> For Donovan's testimony, see Warren Commission Hearings vol. 8, pp. 289-304.

New revelations flowed from Donovan's now-liberated memory, including the claim that Oswald had a gay fling in Taiwan:

'According to Donovan, Oswald was very interested in the U-2 airplane while he was stationed in the Philippines. In Formosa, Oswald took photographs of troop deployments, fighter aircraft, ammunition bunkers, and F-86 aircraft with radar attached. *In addition, Oswald allegedly had a liaison with an effeminate boy in Formosa.*' (Emphasis added.)

Putting the Taiwan tale aside for now, even Epstein had doubts about Donovan's 'refreshed recollections' about the Philippines, where Donovan now claimed to have first met Oswald. From *Legend*:

'The officer who recalls Oswald's interest in the U-2 is John Donovan, a former lieutenant in the Marine Corps. *Donovan remembers clearly that Oswald called his attention to radar images of the U-2 and that this incident took place at Cubi Point.* However, other officers and enlisted men from Oswald's unit remember that their unit did not set up radar operations at Cubi Point at that time. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that a number of different Marine squadrons were temporarily camped in the same vicinity, and Oswald may have come into contact with Donovan while their individual units were together at Cubi Point. (Emphasis added.)

Donovan was also Oswald's officer at the Marine Air Station at El Toro, California, in 1959 where he worked constantly with Oswald in the radar bubble. It is conceivable that after nearly twenty years, Donovan is recalling an incident that took place there. In any case, since there are no other witnesses, it cannot be resolved where, and if, this incident took place.' (Epstein p. 280)

Epstein omits the fact that Donovan says he only remembered his supposedly knowing Oswald in the Philippines years after

he testified in detail to the Warren Commission and that no U-2 ever flew out of El Toro.

In his book *Oswald and the CIA*, author John Newman (who interviewed Donovan on 19 July 1994) is even less critical of Donovan than Epstein. From *Oswald and the CIA*:

'[Oswald's unit] set up their radar bubble at Cubi Point Air Base, next to a special hanger. Inside it, the CIA often stored a U-2 reconnaissance plane. "I saw it take off and land," recalls Oswald's commander John Donovan, "and I saw it hand pushed into the hanger." On this assignment, Oswald's unit had an additional mission with a direct connection to the U-2: sentry duty to guard the U-2 hanger.'

That task, which Oswald, like the rest of the enlisted men, performed, did not curtail his interest in the U-2 when he was at his favorite place – drawing traces of aircraft trails with his grease pencil on the plotting board inside the radar bubble. Oswald's unit had not been operational very long before Donovan noticed something interesting.

'One time we were watching the radar there at Cubi Point and Oswald said, "Look at this thing." He had a trail in grease mark and he said, "This thing just took off from Clark and it's moving over China!" And I said, "You can't be right," and he agreed. A week later he saw it again, so several of us began looking hard and we saw it. Oswald was right and we saw it so regularly that we started clocking them. I even called the duty officer about them and he said, "Look, fella, there's no planes flying over China." We knew better. We saw them all the time, mostly flying out of Cubi Point, but sometimes they flew out of Clark.'<sup>11</sup>

U-2 flights out of Clark AFB in the Philippines *did* begin in late March 1958. In his book *Eyes in the Sky: Eisenhower, the CIA and Cold War Aerial Espionage*, retired CIA analyst Dino Brugioni, a founder of the CIA's National Photographic

<sup>11</sup> John Newman, *Oswald and the CIA* (New York, Carroll & Graf, 1995) p. 32.

Interpretation Center, writes: 'On 28 March 1958, Agency U-2s were deployed to Clark AFB in the Philippines and began to overfly the entire Indonesian Archipelago. Thirty U-2 missions would be flown, the last on June 7, 1958.'<sup>12</sup> Oswald's unit, however, sailed back to Japan from the Philippines on 7 March 1958, weeks *before* the first U-2 flights out of Clark.<sup>13</sup> How then could Oswald have been 'obsessed' about U-2 plane flights in the Philippines when the plane was not even there?

In *The Missing Chapter*, Jack Swike states:

'Several researchers and authors have stated that Oswald became interested in U-2 Spy Planes going over China when his unit was in Corregidor, but my research has confirmed that such theories are absolutely false, with the misinformation being spread in part by a Marine officer [almost certainly a reference to John Donovan] who was not in Oswald's unit [in Japan] and who had no connection whatsoever to U-2 operations. Furthermore, there were no U-2 Spy Planes in Subic Bay at the time, nor did Marines guard any hangers that contained U-2s. What's more, the search radar could only reach a height of 40,000 feet at a maximum distance of 40 miles out. The U-2 flew at 70,000 feet and China was approximately 1,000 miles away, beyond the range of scope radar.'

Donovan next 'remembered' that he worked closely with Oswald not just in the Philippines but in Taiwan as well. Donovan further claims that while the unit was stationed in Taiwan, Oswald 'spent many hours drawing traces of the U-2's

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<sup>12</sup> Dino Brugioni, *Eyes in the Sky: Eisenhower, the CIA and Cold War Aerial Espionage* (Naval Institute Press, 2010) p. 281.

<sup>13</sup> Brugioni's testimony further suggests that Dan Powers may have told the truth when he said that he and two other men had been specially selected to guard a hanger, which may have housed a U-2 because he did not go back to Japan with the MACS-1 unit on 7 March 1958. (Powers only went to the Philippines in mid-January 1958 while the regular MACS-1 unit with Oswald first arrived there in mid-November 1957.) In his Warren Commission testimony, Powers said he was assigned to guard a U-2 plane in the Philippines but his assignment took place after Oswald and the rest of his MACS unit had returned to Japan.

tracks' over the People's Republic of China. Again from *Oswald and the CIA*:

'Oswald's unit later deployed (September 14 through October 6) to Ping Tong on the north side of Taiwan, and *Donovan was his commander there too*. Donovan recalls: "In Formosa [Taiwan] we were near the U-2 as well. There, Oswald spent many hours drawing traces of the U-2's tracks over the People's Republic of China."<sup>14</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Returning to his 7 April 1978 HSCA interview, Donovan next confused the high-priced Tokyo Queen Bee hostess who never existed with the beautiful Eurasian 'White Russian' at Iwakuni who also never existed. In the alembic of Donovan's mind, the Tokyo Queen Bee B-girl now became fluent in Russian:

'In Japan, Oswald, who was paid only \$87 per month, frequented the Queen Bee Bar, a night-club and brothel where an evening cost \$50. Oswald was seen in the company of a stunning Eurasian bar girl who was multilingual. According to two sources, she spoke Russian.'

'Two sources' indeed.

Donovan next discussed Oswald's activities in El Toro. Donovan had testified extensively (and as far as I can tell accurately) about his time in El Toro to the Warren Commission. Now well over a decade later he gave HSCA investigator Genzman new revelations.

'The following suspicious incidents in California. Oswald possessed a sea bag full of photographs and he paid someone two dollars to take the sea bag to the bus station in order to send it to New York. Oswald was seen talking to a wealthy Japanese man, possibly named Hattori, who allegedly travelled to the Soviet Union along the same route Oswald later took. Oswald was seen receiving a package from a suspicious-looking civilian at the base gate. A fellow Marine crewman fixed a date between Oswald and a relative, Rosalyn Quinn,

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<sup>14</sup> Newman (see note 11) p. 33

who spoke Russian and who was allegedly staying at the Hotel Metropole in Moscow when Oswald stayed there.'

As we shall see, one of Epstein's friends, another early JFK assassination investigator named Jones Harris, also interviewed Donovan about the mysterious Japanese visitor to El Toro and even he decided Donovan's claims were wrong.

### **U-2 spy?**

Epstein presents the U-2 spy plane as the holy grail of Soviet intelligence operations in Japan. In *Legend* he tries to sell the idea that Oswald took U-2 secrets to Russia and that his information may have led to the shoot-down of an American U-2 piloted by Francis Gary Powers on 1 May 1960. Over the decades, the claim that Oswald somehow uncovered U-2 secrets at Atsugi has taken on almost urban legend status.<sup>15</sup> But what did Oswald's fellow Marines think about the idea of Oswald stealing U-2 secrets?

Zack Stout, who worked the MACS-1 station at Atsugi with Oswald, said he did not believe Oswald could have acquired any detailed secret knowledge of the U-2. In his 1 June 1978 HSCA interview, Stout recalled:

'LHO was run-of-the-mill radar man, which wasn't bad.... Conversely, there was little, if any, knowledge or interest in the "experimental plane." All the operators were aware it flew "high and far – beyond our scopes," but it never registered with the radar crews anyway, so

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<sup>15</sup> 'Left' critics of the Warren Commission argue that the CIA gave Oswald information on the U-2 so that he could pass it to the Soviets who used the knowledge to shoot down Powers' plane and thus ruin a planned Paris summit meeting between Eisenhower and Khrushchev in Paris in May 1960. In effect, the CIA pulled off a back door sabotage of détente. Of course, Oswald defected to Russia in October 1959.

'Right' critics of the Warren Commission like Epstein argue that Oswald gave the Russians key U-2 secrets because Oswald was a Soviet agent. Hence, the 'Left' accuses the Warren Commission of covering up Oswald's CIA ties while the 'Right' denounces the Warren Commission for failing to expose Oswald's KGB pedigree. To make their respective cases, both sides have to have Oswald give the Russians significant information about the U-2.

no one paid any attention to it.'

Stout explained that all military aircraft did check in and out with them except that one. They didn't even know how many there were. All he recalls was they only used one at a time. Security was tight. You couldn't get near the plane. No cameras allowed in that area. They didn't know any of the pilots. Someone may have said it was an 'experimental' or 'weather' plane, he didn't pay that much attention to it at the time. The only recollection he has was it differs in two respects from the conventional aircraft in that the wings were so relatively long, there seemed to be an extra set of wheels under them and it needed much less runway to take off.

Stout added that the basic 'legend' [a reference to Epstein's book?] portrayed the U-2 as using 'Racecar' as its call and checking in and out with them, neither of which is remotely true. Stout said there's no way he wouldn't have been aware of this and he never heard of either situation.'

Stout's memory corresponds with Jack Swike's investigation. A former Marine intelligence officer at Atsugi, Swike – who left the base shortly before Oswald arrived – spent some 27 years investigating Oswald's actions in Japan. Like Stout, he concluded that Oswald had zero access to U-2 secrets at Atsugi. In his 2008 book *The Missing Chapter: Lee Harvey Oswald in the Far East*, Swike discussed U-2 security at Atsugi with a fellow former Marine officer named Capt. J. E. Dolan, who worked with the CIA on the U-2. In a 23 June 2006 letter to Swike, Dolan recalled, 'There were two separate clearances for the U-2 – one for operations which had a separate channel, and one for the product which had its channel. I was the CIA alternate control officer for each.' Dolan told Swike that the Soviets operated their own SIGINT intelligence gathering trawlers in the Sea of Japan that regularly monitored U-2 flights. The Soviets could calculate both the speed and height of the planes and could determine just how high the U-2 could fly.

The real Soviet problem with the U-2 was simple; their

anti-aircraft missiles still could not quite reach the phenomenal height at which the U-2 flew.

The CIA/Air Force unit at Atsugi in charge of the U-2 was dubbed Detachment C and had separate weather and communications officers and operational staff. Swike states Detachment C operated separately as a sub-unit of the CIA's Atsugi-based Joint Technical Advisory Group (JTAG). In his 14 May 1964 letter to the FBI, then CIA Deputy Director of Plans Richard Helms described JTAG's operations at Atsugi Station. Helms stated that the JTAG unit:

'....occupied an area within the Station, consisting of 20 to 25 individual residences, two dormitories, an office area, a power plant, several Butler-type warehouses, and a club building used for recreation and a bachelor officers' mess. The JTAG area was not closed, but it was located about 400 yards from the main Station area and there was no occasion for the regularly assigned Station personnel to visit the JTAG area. The club was open only to JTAG personnel and their guests. Two of the living quarters were occupied by the Navy commanding officer and his deputy because the quarters at JTAG were of better quality than the housing accommodations provided at the Station.'

The MACS-1 radar unit where Oswald worked had absolutely nothing to do with the U-2 program. Nor would Oswald and his co-workers have heard communication as the U-2 maintained radio silence after it left base. In addition, the MACS-1 radar at the time went no higher than 40,000 feet. When a U-2 launched, it would quickly disappear off their screens.

## **Taiwan**

**E**ven if Oswald did not steal highly guarded U-2 secrets to pay for his high-class Tokyo geisha girl, as *Legend* wants the reader to believe, that does not mean that Oswald's stay in the Far East was completely devoid of mystery. Oswald's story becomes even more curious when we examine reports of the time he allegedly spent in Taiwan. The word 'allegedly' stems

from one of the most bizarre aspects of Oswald's story: the Warren Commission believed that Oswald had been in Taiwan; the HSCA, however, claimed he never left Japan.

Reports about Oswald's activities in Taiwan rest on the Warren Commission's belief that Oswald had indeed spent time there. Summarizing its research, the Warren Commission wrote:

'On September 14, Oswald sailed with his unit for the South China Sea area. The unit was at Ping Tung, North Taiwan, on September 30 and returned to Atsugi on October 5. He was transferred out of MACS-1 and put on general duty in anticipation of his return to the United States. He spent several days thereafter in the Atsugi Station hospital.'<sup>16</sup>

The HSCA, however, concluded that Oswald never went to Taiwan and remained at NAS (Naval Air Station) Atsugi as part of the MAG-11 (Marine Aircraft Group) rear echelon unit. From page 220 of the HSCA report:

'It has been stated that Oswald claimed to have served in Taiwan. The committee's review of his military records, including unit diaries that were not previously studied by the Warren Commission, indicated, however, that he had not spent substantial time, if any, in Taiwan. These records show that, except for a 3-1/2 month period of service in the Philippines, Oswald served in Japan from September 12, 1957, until November 2, 1958. Although Department of Defense records do indicate that MAG (Marine Air Group) 11, Oswald's unit, was deployed to Taiwan on September 16, 1958, and remained in that area until April 1959, an examination of the MAG 11 unit diaries indicated that Oswald was assigned at that time to a rear echelon unit. The term rear echelon does not, on its face, preclude service with the main unit in Taiwan, but the Department of Defense has specifically stated that "Oswald did not sail from Yokosuka, Japan, on September 16, 1958. He remained aboard NAS Atsugi

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<sup>16</sup> See p. 684 at < <http://www.archives.gov/research/jfk/warren-commission-report/appendix-13.html>>.

as part of the MAG-11 rear echelon." [29] Oswald's records also reflect that on October 6, 1958, he was transferred within MAG 11 to a Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron subunit in Atsugi, Japan. He reportedly spent the next week in the Atsugi Station Hospital. On November 2, 1958, Oswald left Japan for duty in the United States.'

*Accordingly, based upon a direct examination of Oswald's unit diaries, as well as his own military records, it does not appear that he had spent any time in Taiwan. This finding is contrary to that of the Warren Commission that Oswald arrived with his unit in Taiwan on September 30, 1958, and remained there somewhat less than a week, but the Commission's analysis apparently was made without access to the unit diaries of MAG 11. [30] (Emphasis added.)*

The HSCA report included these footnotes:

Footnote [29] 'This is contrary to statements attributed to Lieutenant Charles R. Rhodes by Edward Epstein in his book, [*Legend*] *The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald*. Rhodes maintains, according to Epstein, that Oswald did make the trip with the main unit but was sent back to Japan on October 6, 1958.'

Footnote [30] 'Similarly, a message sent on November 4, 1959, from the Chief of Naval Operations concerning Oswald, which states that he had "served with Marine Air Control Squadrons in Japan and Taiwan," may have been issued without checking unit diaries which indicated that Oswald had not been so deployed.'

The HSCA did say that Oswald's MACS-1 unit left Japan on 14 September 1958 for a week-long voyage to Taiwan on board the USS *Skagit*. The unit set up base at P'ing-tung in North Taiwan during a period of acute geopolitical tension. On 23 August 1958, PRC military units began shelling the Kinmen (Quemoy) island claimed by Taiwan and triggered the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. In the shelling, an estimated 2,500 Taiwanese soldiers died along with 500 Communist troops. Yet

the HSCA concluded during the crisis Oswald remained at Atsugi, where he received medical treatment for a case of urethritis reportedly due to gonorrhoea, although the HSCA hedges its bet by saying he did not spend 'any substantial time, if any' on Taiwan.

Enter *Legend*, a book based on the Warren Commission belief that Oswald spent some time in Taiwan. *Legend's* colorful description of what happened in Taiwan, however, is almost exclusively based on the testimony of a Marine Lieutenant named Charles R. Rhodes, the very individual that the HSCA critiques in its footnote 29, cited above.

Before turning to Rhodes' story as recounted in *Legend*, a few words about his earlier relationship to Oswald. Although apparently never interviewed by the Warren Commission or the HSCA, Rhodes knew Oswald at Atsugi. Documentation for this emerges out of Oswald's second court martial for his confrontation with Sergeant Rodriguez, the incident that occurred on 20 June 1958. Oswald's second trial included statements from Rodriguez, a Marine named Milam who was sitting with Rodriguez in the Blue Bird Café at the time of the confrontation, and Lt. Charles R. Rhodes, who was Rodriguez's superior officer.

In *Legend*, Epstein mentions Rhodes' role in this incident this way:

'Lieutenant Charles Rhodes witnessed the incident: "I walked in right after it happened – before the MPs got there – and there were three or four guys standing around ready to let Oswald have it.....Rodriguez was about to let him have it, but some of his friends convinced him it wasn't worth getting into a fight over." Rhodes says that he later told Rodriguez that he believed a sound thrashing would have been just what Oswald needed. Rhodes recalls that Oswald had been complaining to him that Rodriguez had been picking on him. Rhodes, who knew Rodriguez and remembers him as a well-respected sergeant who treated the men evenhandedly, went to Rodriguez to discuss the matter. Rodriguez told him that Oswald was wrong – that he

was not being picked on and that Rodriguez was beginning to get tired of his constant carping about it. Rhodes then told Oswald that he was being unreasonable – that he was imagining things if he thought he was being singled out for undesirable assignments.

Rodriguez, who today does not claim to understand the incident, recalls a meeting of NCOs shortly before his trouble with Oswald at which they were told there was going to be a crackdown on Marines who persisted in getting into fights in town bars. The NCOs were told that the best place to start was among themselves. Rodriguez believes that he possibly would have been demoted if he had got into a fight with Oswald at the Bluebird.' (Epstein p. 284)

Rhodes stated that he went to Taiwan and served in the same unit with Oswald. He next told Epstein a remarkable story that somehow both the Warren Commission and the HSCA missed. Rhodes recalled that on the evening of 4 October 1958, Oswald was assigned to guard duty at P'ing-tung, where there was a military airport. Around midnight, Rhodes heard shots coming from the area Oswald guarded. Drawing his .45, Rhodes ran over and found Oswald slumped against a tree, shaking, crying, and holding his M-1 rifle across his lap. Oswald claimed that he had seen unknown men in the woods. After he challenged them, he began shooting. Rhodes said that he put his arm around Oswald and walked him back to the tent while Oswald told him he could not bear guard duty. Rhodes then informed his commanding officer about the incident. Oswald flew to Japan two days later on a military plane for medical treatment. Oswald apparently had suffered some kind of nervous breakdown. (Epstein pp. 81-2)

Everyone who believes that Oswald went to Taiwan also agrees that Oswald returned to Atsugi on 5 October and entered treatment for either gonorrhoea or some related disease. (Swike says that there was a form of non-venereal urethritis at Atsugi because the Japanese in charge of the laundry often did not wash clothing at a temperature above

160 degrees.)

The Warren Commission states that Oswald returned to Japan and received medical treatment for a venereal disease. Did he sail back to Atsugi (presumably with his unit) as the Warren Commission believed? Did Oswald fly back on a military plane as *Legend* states? Would the military really fly Oswald out of a crisis zone (one that presumably had medical facilities able to treat venereal diseases) simply to treat a case of gonorrhoea?

Assuming that Oswald was in Taiwan, what pushed him to his alleged mental meltdown? For Epstein, the answer is obvious: Oswald cracked under the pressure of being a Communist spy. As recounted in *Legend*, Rhodes told Epstein that the MACS-1 unit on Taiwan discovered that IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) codes had been seriously compromised. Communist Chinese pilots, when challenged, answered using code words that identified them as friendly and were allowed through without any further challenge. Rhodes recalled to Epstein, 'We really caught hell about that.'

In *Legend*, the trigger for Oswald's supposed collapse is clear: he cracked because he feared exposure as a Communist spy who had provided the Chinese with the unit's IFF codes. In 1994 John Donovan upped the ante with his claim about an Oswald who 'spent many hours' while in Taiwan tracing out U-2 flights to China when not romancing a Taiwanese boy.

### **Twisted trail**

**W**ere there other witnesses besides Rhodes who placed Oswald in Taiwan? The spotlight now turns to a Marine Second Lieutenant named William K. Trail who said that either Oswald went to Taiwan or that he did not go to Taiwan. His contradictory testimony begins on 5 December 1963 when FBI SAs Kinzer and Waldrup interviewed him. Trail states that Oswald went to Taiwan. From the interview:

'He [Trail] served in the United States Marine Corps from September 1956 until November 1959, as a second lieutenant and later as a first lieutenant. During late

August or early September 1958, while assigned to the Atsugi Naval Air Station in Japan. With the First Marine Air Wing, Marine Air Group 11, Marine Air Control Squadron 1, his group was transferred to Taiwan. At that time, he first became aware of the fact that LEE HARVEY OSWALD was assigned to this same Marine Air Wing. At the time their group was moving to Taiwan, he recalled that OSWALD and another Marine were being held prisoner at Atsugi and had to be picked up by a "chaser" with a gun. He was unable to recall any other circumstances surrounding this event other than he seemed to recall that OSWALD was marched from the Marine jail without shoes which seemed odd to him at the time.

During the ensuing months on Taiwan, from September [1958] to January or February 1959, he, TRAIL, saw little of OSWALD [Trail seems unaware that Oswald returned to Japan in early October sailed back to America in early November 1958 – KC] but heard rumors of his being different than the other men in his group. In this regard, he explained that OSWALD did not seem to get along well with the other men and gave the impression that he felt he was smarter than the others and enjoyed showing off his purported superior intelligence.

In January or February 1959 Trail returned to the United States and was thereafter assigned to the Marine Corps Naval Facilities at Santa Ana, California. He recalled seeing OSWALD again at this Marine Base during early or mid-1959, at which time OSWALD spoke to him and seemed to be more sociable than he had been while they were in the same group in Japan and Taiwan.

*Mr. TRAIL concluded by saying that he had very little contact with OSWALD at any time during his military career and his recollection[s] of OSWALD and his activities were very limited. He did recall reading in the paper during the fall of 1959 that OSWALD had defected to*

Russia but heard nothing further of him or about him until November 1963.....(Emphasis added.)

One day before the FBI interviewed Trail, Secret Service SA Charles E. Taylor spoke with John Donovan. In 1959 Trail and Donovan shared quarters at El Toro. In his 5 December 1963 interview with the Secret Service, Donovan recalled, 'William K. Trail had just returned from a tour of duty with the Air Control squadron in Japan and they were discussing personnel who had been transferred from Japan to Squadron 9 in California.' Donovan continued:

'Lt. Trail mentioned that Lee Harvey Oswald served under his direction as a radar operator in Japan and was remembered as a very unusual person, argumentative, difficult to get along with, showing a dislike for any authority whatsoever, and an individual who would spend great periods of time alone. Trail furnished information to Donovan that Oswald served under his command for a period of slightly less than two years and Trail recalled that he placed Oswald on report for drunk and disorderly conduct and the use of argumentative and insulting language in conversations with a company sergeant. [Almost certainly a reference to the Blue Bird Café incident.] In addition, Trail recalled Oswald was court-martialled for not reporting the ownership of a pistol.'

Yet just one day earlier, Trail told the FBI that his 'recollection[s] of OSWALD and his activities were very limited.'

Years later, Jack Swike spoke to Trail about Atsugi in general and Oswald in particular. In a 17 July 1981 letter to Swike, Trail said about Oswald:

'I do recall that the night before MACS-1 was to embark for Taiwan (during September 1958), I was the duty-officer and I recall that a couple of men were brought from the brig (Oswald was one of them) and spent the night in the duty shack with a brig guard in attendance. I do not recall any further details about Oswald during this time (I flew to Taiwan about a week or two after

MACS-1 sailed) and my next recollection of him was in MACS-9 in California. I have no recollection of any significant events in California.'

Even though Swike reprints Trail's letter where Trail writes, 'I flew to Taiwan about a week or two after MACS-1 sailed', Swike – who believes Oswald never went to Taiwan – writes 'Trail flew out of Atsugi [to Taiwan] the next day.' It was the USS *Skagit* bound for Taiwan, however, that left Atsugi the next day. Yet if Trail had no memory of Oswald until California, it seems logical (as Swike assumed) that Oswald never went to Taiwan.

Is Trail a reliable witness?

Let us examine Trail's memory of Oswald wearing no shoes. Although there is some debate about just how much time Oswald spent incarcerated, the conventional belief is that Oswald spent 48 days in the brig from 27 June to 13 August 1958. Since the MACS-1 unit sailed for Taiwan on 14 September 1958, Oswald clearly was *not* in the brig at the time Trail claims he was. In any case, there is no evidence to suggest that Oswald spent any time in the brig after 13 August, or a month before his unit shipped out to Taiwan. Yet if, as Trail says, he did not sail to Taiwan with the unit but flew out of Atsugi to Taiwan a week later, clearly he was not on the boat. Trail seems not even to know why Oswald was brought to the duty shack in the first place. In short, Trail seems not very reliable.

Let us, however, assume that Oswald did deploy to Taiwan and that Trail caught up with him and his unit a week later at P'ing-tung. If the shooting incident that Rhodes described in such detail really happened, how could Trail not be aware of it? Rhodes and Trail were Marine lieutenants, they both knew Oswald, and they both were stationed at P'ing-tung at the height of the Second Taiwan Strait crisis.

### **Iwakuni: take two**

Even if we assume Oswald was in Taiwan and the Warren Commission got it right, *Legend's* chronology remains bizarre

since Epstein next asserts it was sometime in October 1958 that Oswald arrived in Iwakuni!

Epstein states that after returning to Japan on 5 October, Oswald 'complained of having injured himself doing "heavy lifting" in Formosa, but the only unambiguous symptoms the doctors were able to find were urethral discharges which had persisted from the gonorrhoea.' We now have three supposed reasons Oswald returned to Japan. They are 1) venereal disease; 2) some kind of mental breakdown most likely induced by the psychological pressure of being a Soviet spy; and 3) Oswald's supposed claim he had been injured due to 'heavy lifting'.

In any case, Epstein continues:

'With his unit still overseas [in Taiwan], Oswald was reassigned to the Marine squadron at Iwakuni, an air base some 430 miles southwest of Tokyo, which manned the Tactical Air Control Center for the northern Pacific area.' (Epstein p. 82)

In other words, Oswald – who had risked a nervous breakdown to betray America in Taiwan – now managed to ensconce himself in yet another key American military center. Just as he had fed top-secret 'IFF codes' to the Communist Chinese in Taiwan, now he could work similar magic in Iwakuni and dismantle America's air defense against a Communist attack. Yet the evidence from medical records is overwhelming that Oswald spent most of October receiving treatment for urethral discharges at Atsugi. He was then assigned 'general duty in anticipation of his return' to the States before finally shipping out in early November. While the Warren Commission assumed Oswald had been in Taiwan and the HSCA believed he never left Atsugi, *both* the Warren Commission and the HSCA agreed that he never went to Iwakuni to buy a bowl of rice, much less to work in an air defense center.

Based solely on Owen Dejanovich's statement, Jack Swike tried to figure out when Oswald could have spent time in Iwakuni. Swike argues that Oswald could have only gone to Iwakuni *before* and not after his April 1958 court martial. 'Therefore,' Swike opines, 'if Oswald went to Iwakuni, it was

before the deployment to Taiwan.' Swike says this 'seems likely' because some of the MACS-1 people who went to the Philippines were later assigned to the First Marine Air Wing at Iwakuni where they remained until the end of April 1958.<sup>17</sup> Since Oswald's first court martial for the gun discharge incident took place at Atsugi in late April, Swike believes the only time Oswald could have been at Iwakuni was before his court martial proceedings, even though there are no records to support such a view. Swike clearly is trying to find some timetable where Oswald might have conceivably been at Iwakuni that does not violate common sense.

Epstein, alas, has Oswald flown back from Taiwan to Japan in early October and then sent to Iwakuni. According to *Legend*, sometime between early October and his shipping out of Japan on 2 November 1958, Oswald was assigned 'temporary duty' at Iwakuni. While there, Oswald regularly drinks in the Orion bar in the company of a beautiful Eurasian woman who teaches him Russian. He goes with this woman on visits to military-restricted Communist sections of Iwakuni without being stopped by MPs. Oswald even informs Daniel Powers that the exotic woman is in part White Russian. He speaks to Powers in October 1958 although (according to his testimony before the Warren Commission) Powers left Japan earlier that summer.

## **EL Toro spy?**

**Oswald's mysterious connections to exotic Orientals does not**

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<sup>17</sup> I believe Swike is basing his view on Cooley. Cooley – who was with Oswald in the Philippines – reported that he and some other members of the unit returned to Japan [Iwakuni] while other unit members went back to Atsugi. Recall that in the Weston article in *The Fourth Decade*, Cooley says part of his unit went to Iwakuni from the Philippines. Cooley says that this group returned to Japan in late December while the full unit only left the Philippines in early March for Atsugi. The duty at Iwakuni, however, was temporary and Cooley eventually returned to his full unit Atsugi, if I am following the chronology correctly.

Epstein, however, accepts the Warren Commission narrative that has Oswald and his unit leaving the Philippines in early March. Hence, the one window that Epstein has to stick Oswald in Iwakuni has to be in early October 1958 after Oswald's return from Taiwan.

end when he returns to a Marine air control unit at El Toro, California.<sup>18</sup> We begin by recalling John Donovan's claim to the HSCA about his suspicions of Oswald's activities in El Toro, suspicions he never mentioned to the FBI or the Warren Commission years earlier.

In his HSCA interview, Donovan reported:

'The following suspicious incidents in California. Oswald possessed a sea bag full of photographs and he paid someone two dollars to take the sea bag to the bus station in order to send it to New York. Oswald was seen talking to a wealthy Japanese man, possibly named Hattori, who allegedly travelled to the Soviet Union along the same route Oswald later took. Oswald was seen receiving a package from a suspicious-looking civilian at the base gate. A fellow Marine crewman fixed a date between Oswald and a relative, Rosalyn Quinn, who spoke Russian and who was allegedly staying at the Hotel Metropole in Moscow when Oswald stayed there.'

What are we to make of Donovan's reference to a mysterious Japanese man 'possibly named Hattori'? In his book *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, Dick Russell notes the existence of a notorious post-war Japanese spy operation funded by far right American Army intelligence officers and known as the Hattori Organization. Russell claims that this Hattori (Tokushiro Hattori) 'may have been related' to the 'wealthy Hattori family' that reputedly owned a group of Tokyo night-clubs including the Queen Bee.<sup>19</sup> Russell reports that the CIA's James Angleton told one of his media contacts, Joseph Trento, that the Tokyo Queen Bee was one of the KGB's most intensive

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<sup>18</sup> Oswald is often cited as serving at the main Marine facility at Santa Ana, California, but he actually was assigned to a subsidiary Marine unit at El Toro known as the LTA (Lighter than Air) Facility, a few miles away from the main base at Santa Ana. It was called LTA because it formerly was used for housing dirigibles.

<sup>19</sup> The blizzard of confusion about Oswald's role in Japan promoted by a former Army Intelligence agent named Richard Case Nagell, an *Alice in Wonderland* figure, dominates a good deal of the Japan section of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. See Dick Russell, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1992).

recruiting grounds and that, according to Angleton, various CIA officers and U-2 pilots 'began relationships' with girls in that bar. Yet as we have seen, Oswald never went to the highly upscale Tokyo Queen Bee club. [For more on Angleton see the postscript below.]

In any case, if Tokushiro Hattori was in fact 'related' to the 'wealthy Hattori family' and they in turn ran upscale bars that served as recruitment centers for the KGB, are we supposed to believe that the U.S. Army Intelligence-backed Hattori Organization itself was under KGB control? Again, the story sounds absurd. What remains clear is *Legend's* need to plant Oswald in the Tokyo Queen Bee at all cost given Angleton's claim.

Dick Russell also reports:

'When author Edward Jay Epstein was researching his 1978 book about Oswald, Jones Harris, then one of his research assistants set about obtaining the names and addresses of the men who had served overseas with the young Marine.

Harris was able to interview, among others, Marine lieutenant John Donovan, once stationed with Oswald in Japan and later at the El Toro Marine Base in California. While at El Toro, Donovan recalled that Oswald had received a visit in 1959 from a member of the Hattori clan. Donovan recognized the visitor as the brother of a Hattori girl he himself had known in Tokyo. The young man, according to Donovan, was Noboru Hattori, son of the president of the Hattori Watch Company in Tokyo. Harris added that Noboru Hattori was located and admitted having visited the El Toro base en route to Chicago, but maintained that his trip was in 1962 (not 1959) and denied ever having met Oswald.' <sup>20</sup>

Jones Harris was yet another early Warren Commission critic like Epstein. In his preface to *Legend*, Epstein writes: 'I also benefited enormously from the insights and experiences of Jones Harris, especially as they pertain to Oswald's service in

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<sup>20</sup> See <<https://www.mail-archive.com/ctrl@listserv.aol.com/msg26370.html>>

Japan.' In that same preface, Epstein says, 'I would also like to thank John Donovan, one of the officers under whom Oswald served in the Marines. He served as a technical advisor on Oswald's Marine Corps activities.' In short, one Epstein researcher interviewed another Epstein researcher.

Donovan told Harris that he just happened to recognize Noburu Hattori because he was the brother of a woman he had known in Tokyo, an extraordinary coincidence. Donovan surely would have asked Oswald just how he knew the brother of a woman Donovan knew and why he had decided to visit Oswald of all people. Yet there is no indication that Donovan bothered to question Oswald about his remarkable visitor, an event that Donovan failed to mention to the FBI and the Warren Commission. Harris then told Dick Russell that Noburu Hattori claimed he visited the El Toro base in 1962 for some inexplicable reason. How could Donovan then remember an incident that never happened in the first place? Nor could he have misplaced the dates 1959 and 1962 and simply misremembered Hattori visiting El Toro in 1962. By 1962, Donovan was living in Washington; Oswald, of course, left El Toro in 1959. Mercifully, Epstein left this Donovan tale out of *Legend*.

As for Rosalyn Quinn, she was an airline flight attendant and the aunt of a Marine at El Toro who introduced her to Oswald. They went on one or two dates where they practised their Russian. There is no evidence that Quinn was in the Hotel Metropole in Moscow when Oswald stayed there in October 1959. Thankfully, Epstein omitted this story as well.

Yet Epstein cannot resist the idea that Oswald had taken suspicious photos as Donovan referenced in his 1978 statement. From *Legend*:

'As Oswald's tour of duty neared completion, [his fellow Marine Nelson] Delgado noticed a stack of "spotter" photographs showing front and profile views of a fighter plane among Oswald's papers. He realized that they had probably been used as a visual aid in training classes, and wondered why Oswald had them in his possession. Oswald stuffed the photographs into a duffle bag with some other possessions and asked Delgado if he would

bring the bag to the bus station in Los Angeles, put it in a locker, and bring him back the key. According to Delgado's recollection, Oswald gave him two dollars for doing this.' (Epstein p. 89)

It is a curious story. First, when did all this supposedly happen? Delgado was on extended leave when Oswald left the Marines. He already had a falling-out with Oswald over Oswald's continuing praise of Castro. Before he went on leave, Delgado put in a request to switch huts just so he could get away from Oswald. Epstein looked at Delgado's testimony before the Warren Commission and he reports that Delgado never mentioned this alleged incident. Epstein includes this endnote about Delgado:

'Another Marine, James Botelho, also vaguely remembers Oswald having these spotter photographs. Delgado did not mention these photographs to the Warren Commission, and his memory, eighteen years after the event, is vague. In my first interview with him in Germany, he remembered the photographs to me, but indicated that he had shipped them to an address in Brooklyn. In subsequent interviews, however, he recalled that he had merely left the photographs in a locker. In any case, there is no record of these photographs or what happened to them.' (Epstein pp. 286-87)

When Donovan spoke to the HSCA, he went with the first Delgado story about shipping the mysterious sea bag stuffed with photos to a Brooklyn address. Yet in Delgado's second story, we are down to 'front and profile views' of one plane used for instructions that supposedly wind up in a locker in the Los Angeles bus station. These pictures, of course, were not of secret U-2 spy planes since no U-2 planes flew out of El Toro.

The image of Oswald snapping suspicious photos, however, preys on Epstein's mind. In *Legend*, Epstein claimed that Oswald wandered around Atsugi 'taking pictures of the various objects that apparently interested him - such as radar

height-finding antennas.' Yet in a world where Minox cameras are easily purchased, Oswald owned a cheap American-made box camera with its primitive lookdown viewfinder. Oswald did take pictures in Japan and some of them were taken at Atsugi. Oswald therefore must have been photographing 'radar height-finding antennas' that 'apparently interested him'.

### **Yaeko Okui: *Legend's false femme fatale***

Determined to uncover nefarious Japanese contacts with Oswald, Epstein turned a one-time chance meeting Oswald had in Dallas with a Japanese woman named Yaeko Okui into a potentially sinister espionage encounter.

On 28 December 1962, Lee and Marina Oswald, along with George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt, attended to a Russian-style Christmas party in Dallas. At the party, Oswald met Yaeko Okui, a Japanese woman then living in Dallas. Born in Japan on 19 January 1933, Yaeko Okui spent three-and-a-half years at Waseda University in Tokyo studying economics and business administration and seven years studying flower arrangements at the Sogetau School of Professional Flower Arrangement in Tokyo, where she received a teacher's certificate. She further became a highly skilled player of the koto, a thirteen-string instrument often used in Japanese symphony orchestras.

In the spring of 1959, Okui met the president of Ozawa & Company which served as the Japanese agent for a Dallas-based corporation called Schwabach Perutz, which was involved in the cotton exchange and eager to do business in Japan. After Okui, a fluent English speaker, expressed a desire to see America, Ozawa arranged for her to work for Gerardo Weinstein, president of Schwabach Perutz. She arrived in Dallas in the summer of 1959 and worked as a governess at Weinstein's Dallas home.

After a period in New York, Okui returned to Dallas in August 1962 as the southwest representative of Nippon Service, the U.S. representative for the famed Takashimaya Department Store. She worked in public relations and maintained regular contact with firms doing business in Japan.

She frequently lectured before women's clubs on flower arrangements and Japanese ways of origami paper folding.

With her musical background, Okui became friends with Latvian-born, Russian-speaking, Lev Aronson, a cellist and music teacher, whom she met at a Dallas chamber music concert. Okui attended the White Russian-style Christmas party with Aronson. Here is how *Legend* describes what happened at the party:

[Oswald] turned instead to a young and exquisitely beautiful Japanese girl named Yaeko Okui. Yaeko had come to Dallas that year to do public relations work for Nippon Services, Inc., a chain of Japanese departments stores.

She was also a certified teacher in ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement, and an accompanied musician. Another musician, Lev Aronson, had brought her to the party, but Oswald showed little interest in talking to him. For almost three hours, Yaeko sat with Oswald at the far end of the living room and talked. *She seemed able to speak Russian and English with equal ease.* (Epstein p. 201) (Emphasis added.)

Alas, there is absolutely no evidence that Okui spoke any Russian. Okui's testimony appears in the Warren Commission as CE 1862 (the FBI summary) and CE 1866 (Okui's 5 May 1964 FBI interview). From that FBI interview:

Miss Okui recalled that, upon arrival at this party, she was introduced to a large number of people in attendance, none of whom she can recall now, but she does recall being introduced to an individual, who she now knows was LEE HARVEY OSWALD, and his wife, MARINA, who were also in attendance at the party. Miss OKUI stated she recalls further having a conversation with MARINA OSWALD, through Mr. ARONSON as *interpreter* and she received a good deal of attention from the guests at the party, inasmuch as she was the only Oriental in attendance. Miss OKUI recalled she discussed with MARINA OSWALD the fact that she,

MARINA, had recently arrived in the United States and had little or no opportunity to see the country and get acquainted with the people.' (Emphasis added.)

The only way Marina Oswald and Yaeko Okui could have any conversation at all, as Okui states, was by having Lev Aronson interpret as Okui did not speak Russian and Marina barely any English, much less Japanese. Nor do witnesses such as George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt mention Okui speaking Russian. Yet *Legend* states that Oswald and Okui sat alone in a corner for almost three hours conversing in English and Russian.

Nor did they sit entirely alone if Okui's interview with the FBI is to be believed:

'Miss Okui further stated she does recall having a discussion with MARINA's husband, whom she now knows to be LEE HARVEY OSWALD, concerning Ikebana, or flower arrangement, and OSWALD, to the best of her recollection, queried her about how she liked the United States in relation to Japan, insofar as the customs of the people were concerned. She stated OSWALD did not, at any time, broach the subject of politics and, if he had, she would have been inadequate in that regard, as she takes little interest in that subject.

Miss Okui stated that, if there was some consternation by any of the guests at her discussion with OSWALD, she was not aware of it and, in fact, feels certain Mr. ARONSON was at her side at all times that evening. Miss OKUI stated further that was the first and last time she had ever met or talked to either LEE HARVEY OSWALD or his wife, MARINA OSWALD, and, in fact, did not, at any time, know his name until OSWALD received notoriety as a result of the assassination of President KENNEDY. Miss Okui also stated that, to the best of her recollection, Mr. ARONSON did not, at least not to her, express any displeasure over her discussion with LEE HARVEY OSWALD, and she stated she feels certain he would have mentioned it had that been true.'

Yet *Legend* cannot resist turning Yaeko Okui into a suspected spy:

‘Marina, even when she was singing Russian songs with the rest of the guests, watched her husband and Yaeko with some concern. A number of her friends, including Jean de Mohrenschildt, simply assumed that she was jealous over the attention that Oswald was paying to this Japanese girl. Marina’s real concern, however, as she later explained to her biographer, Priscilla Johnson McMillan, was that Yaeko might be an American intelligence agent. At one point she took her husband aside and warned him that Yaeko “may be a spy. Don’t be too frank with her”.

George de Mohrenschildt subsequently testified that he was also impressed with the “extraordinary interest which developed between....Yaeko and Oswald....” He knew that Oswald had served in Japan in the Marine Corps before he defected to the Soviet Union. He also knew that Oswald had made some “contacts with Communists in Japan” and that these “contacts” had induced him to go to the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> At least this is what Oswald confided to him. Now, as he watched them talk across the room, he wondered whether she might be trying to find out about this earlier period in Oswald’s life. In any case, he didn’t trust her.

Yaeko herself never fully divulged the contents of this long conversation with Oswald. She told her friend Lev Aronson, who was showing some signs of impatience over Oswald, that they had talked about “nothing at all”. She would later say when questioned by the FBI in 1964 that she and Oswald discussed

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<sup>21</sup> This is classic Epstein. The Japanese Communists ‘had induced him to go to the Soviet Union.’ In fact, de Mohrenschildt told the Warren Commission that Oswald had met some Japanese Communists ‘and they – that got him interested to go and see what goes on in the Soviet Union.....[Oswald] said, “I have met some Communists in Japan and they got me excited and interested, and that was one of my inducements in going to Soviet Russia to see what goes on there.”’

“flower arrangements”.

At about midnight, De Mohrenschildt suggested to Oswald that they leave. He had arranged a baby sitter for Oswald’s daughter, and she had said that she could not work past midnight. Oswald wrote down a number that Yaeko gave him, as Marina observed, then he followed De Mohrenschildt to the door.’ (Epstein pp. 201-02)

George De Mohrenschildt discussed Yaeko Okui during his 23 April 1964 Warren Commission testimony:

‘Mr. De MOHRENSCHILD. ....What really impressed me that particular night was an extraordinary interest which developed between this Japanese girl, Yaeko – I don’t remember her last name – but I already had given that impression of mine at the American Embassy so they could check on that. She was a Japanese girl, very good looking, who worked, I think, at Neiman-Marcus in Dallas, and was brought into Dallas from Japan by some people in the cotton business to take care of their babies.’

What De Mohrenschildt means about contacting the American Embassy about Yaeko Okui (whom the de Mohrenschildts seem to have met socially in Dallas even before she moved to New York) is anyone’s guess. The de Mohrenschildts, as we shall see, were highly suspicious of all Japanese people based on Jeanne’s experiences in the Far East.

George de Mohrenschildt’s testimony continues:

‘Now, this girl is a much superior girl as to be just a baby caretaker. She eventually left that couple that is all hearsay, you see, and became sort of a girl friend of a Russian musician who lives in Dallas by the name of Lev Aronson. And I do not recall whether he was at the party or not. [In fact, Aronson brought Okui to the party.] But Yaeko was, and they developed an immediate interest in each other – Oswald and Yaeko. They just went on sight and started talking and talking and talking. I thought that was understandable because

Oswald had been in Japan, you see. But the interest was so overwhelming that Marina objected, and became very jealous. She told us, either that night or later, that Oswald got her telephone number, she noticed that Oswald got this girl's telephone number. And once or twice later on she told us that she has the impression that Oswald is carrying on something with this girl.....'

In her 22 April 1964 Warren Commission testimony, Jeanne de Mohrenschildt discussed Okui at some length:

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. There were quite a lot of people from this Russian colony and among them there was a little Japanese girl. Do you know about Yaeko?

Mr. JENNER. Y-a-e-k-o?

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. That is right.

Mr. JENNER. Did you know Yaeko before?

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. Yes; we knew Yaeko before.

Mr. JENNER. What was her last name?

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. I don't remember her last name because we always called her Yaeko.

Mr. JENNER. Where was she working?

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. I don't know whether she was working at the time or not, but she was imported by some American family. She came with the family. She is supposed to be from a very fine Japanese family. She was wealthy. It was strange she worked almost as a servant in some family. I know she had only one day off, because I remember when we wanted to invite her it was only one day, Thursday, that we could invite her. Then she did some work with Neiman Marcus.

Mr. JENNER. Neiman Marcus?

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. Then she was a musician. She played the Japanese special long, long instrument [the kato], and she was playing with the Dallas Symphony, and she was also playing at exhibits, Neiman Marcus gives exhibits, you know, oriental exhibits, whatever it

was, that fall, and she was participating in it. That is what we know about Yaeko. But then we heard that she was in New York. To tell you frankly I never trusted Yaeko. I thought there was something fishy, maybe because I was brought up with Japanese, you know, and I knew what treachery it is, you know. I just somehow – she was very pleasant, but was very strange to me the way she was floating around, you know, and everything. There is another strange thing happened, too, with that Yaeko.

Mr. JENNER. Involving the Oswalds?

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Tell us.

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. That was very funny because they practically spent all evening together at that party, and Marina was furious, of course, about it. And the party that brought Yaeko to the party [Aronson] was furious about it, too, and I don't blame him for it. And from what I understand, Marina told me that Oswald saw Yaeko after, which was very unusual, because I don't think Oswald wanted to see anyone, let's put it that way. He would rather just sit by himself and – locked, in a house, not to see anyone. And, in fact, Marina was jealous of it, from Yaeko. She was the only person we know that Oswald really liked.....

Mr. JENNER. How, otherwise, did Oswald act at this Christmas party. He paid a great deal of attention, apparently, to --

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. Yes; they talk, talk, talk, talk, talk.

Mr. JENNER. To the Japanese girl?

Mrs. De MOHRENSCHILDT. Yes; what did they talk about, I don't have slightest idea. But everybody remarked and we were laughing about it. We were teasing Marina how he had a little Japanese girl now, you now. That was just as fun, of course, you know. But evidently they not

only talked because she [Marina] said he saw her later and he liked her. That is what she told me. He really liked Yaeko.

This then is the meeting that Epstein implies had some exotic espionage overture as Oswald and Okui conversed in both English and Russian 'with equal ease'. Recall that *Legend* has already given us a beautiful high-class Japanese bar girl operating out of a luxurious KGB-run club in Tokyo, and a mysterious 'Eurasian' or half-White Russian beauty that tutored Oswald in Russian in Iwakuni. Epstein now gives us the exotic Miss Okui. Yet as is clear from the testimony of the de Mohrenschildts, at no point do they (or any other witness) mention that Okui spoke any Russian at all, much less fluent Russian. Once again, Epstein has concocted his very own legend.

### **The puzzle of *Legend***

*Legend* relentlessly promoted the thesis that the KGB had some sinister connection to Oswald that began in Japan. Although *Legend's* attempt to show such a link was woefully inept, it does not therefore mean that the KGB had not contacted Oswald. The most telling evidence for a possible KGB link to Oswald comes not from imaginary encounters at the Tokyo Queen Bee but from Oswald's reported encounters with members of the Japanese Communist Party, as reported by George de Morenschildt, as well as his attempt to learn Russian while still in Japan. If the Soviets saw Oswald as a potential infiltrator into the Marines, his actions in El Toro suggest this was almost certainly not the case. If the KGB had some hook into Oswald, the last thing the Soviets would have wanted would have been for Oswald to openly receive Communist publications and make provocative political remarks favoring Castro.

The more exaggerated claims *Legend* makes for Oswald as a Soviet superspy, the more absurd the book becomes. Let us, however, suspend disbelief and accept *Legend's* premise that Oswald managed to steal U-2 secrets (or any vital military secrets) while in the Far East and pass them onto his KGB

handler. Oswald's very public defection to then USSR – not to mention the fact that he told the U.S. Embassy that he intended to give the Soviets military secrets – would have insured that the U.S. would have had to make an assessment of any potential damage Oswald may have inflicted and implement immediate counter-measures. Therefore the more valuable the information Oswald possessed, the more the Soviets would have opposed any public defection. Oswald would have been a far more effective KGB asset if, after leaving the military, he worked in some minor job in America. After a successful Soviet downing of a U-2, he could have gone to the USSR and received a hero's welcome. Yet none of this happened.

Yet another espionage scenario would have Oswald prepared by U.S. intelligence agencies while he was in Japan as a future 'false defector' sent into the Soviet Union either to feed the Soviets deceptive information or to carry out some yet unknown task behind the Iron Curtain. As we know now, the Soviets never trusted Oswald; the MVD (the Soviet version of the FBI) kept him under continual surveillance, both in Moscow and Minsk. If Oswald were a 'controlled defector', perhaps he did secretly go to either Iwakuni or Tokyo (or Miami Beach for that matter) and was there introduced to a Russian tutor as part of a planned defection. Since *Legend* is such a hopeless muddle, it is impossible to trust it as a serious examination of Oswald's actions in Japan either as a KGB recruit or as a controlled defector.

*Legend* could make its claims in large part because there supposedly does not exist any American counter-intelligence investigation of Oswald following his defection. Epstein, unfortunately, only references this critical issue in two endnotes that appear one after the other:

'The official record of this investigation [of Oswald following his defection] remains missing or at least unavailable. The FBI inquired about it shortly after the assassination but apparently never received it or, in any event, never turned it over to the Warren Commission. In the course of my research, the Marine Corps, which

was otherwise extremely co-operative, searched its files but found no trace of the investigation. The Office of Naval Intelligence and the Naval Investigative Services replied to my Freedom of Information request by stating that the report of the investigation was not in their files. The CIA has also denied to me that it conducted such an investigation. Finally, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, which was responsible for base security at Atsugi, also denied partaking in any such investigation.'

In his next endnote on the same page, Epstein writes:

'The practice of doing net damage reports also persisted immediately after Oswald defected. An Army sergeant defected in July 1960, and an Army private defected in August 1960. Army counterintelligence suspected both had had prior dealings with the KGB while serving in the Army, and both were under military investigation at the time of their defection. The two defectors from the National Security Agency [Mitchell and Martin] in June 1960 were also suspected of having had prior KGB connections. Indeed, in all military cases where defectors had access to classified information – except for the Oswald case – there was some indication of a pre-defection relation with the KGB, though since Soviet records are never available, such contact is never positively established.' (Epstein p. 293)

If there had been an extensive investigation of Oswald's activities in Japan, why has it never been made public? How can there be no record that American intelligence ever questioned Oswald following his return to America? The CIA's Domestic Division regularly interviewed business executives, tourists, academics, and other Americans who had spent time in Russia. Yet no one thought to question Lee Harvey Oswald? For all its flaws, *Legend* finally does raise a vital question directly related to Oswald's stay in Japan – and then buries it in two endnotes.

## Part two

### The Mitchell/Martin affair

Given *Legend's* distortions of Oswald's experiences in Japan, it is almost impossible to offer any serious overview of Oswald's stay in the Far East. Yet Oswald's October 1959 defection – if genuine – would almost certainly have raised a host of intelligence red flags. To understand why, we must look at the most famous defector case of this period, the Mitchell-Martin affair. Not long after Oswald defected to Russia, a remarkable spy saga shook America's espionage establishment when two civilian employees of the military's ultra-secret National Security Agency (NSA) showed up in Moscow. The scandal and its similarities to the Oswald saga once again suggest how unlikely it is that the American government had no interest in investigating Oswald's past.

In mid-October 1959, Lee Harvey Oswald crossed the border from Finland to Russia. Then on 6 September 1960, two former National Security Agency (NSA) employees named Bernon Mitchell and William Martin held a press conference in Moscow. The two mathematician/cryptographers formally announced their defection.<sup>22</sup> As it so happened, the two men had earlier worked at the U.S. military base at Atsugi, Japan.

At their Moscow press conference, Mitchell and Martin denounced the U.S. government's policy of sending military aircraft over the Soviet Union's borders to gather electronic information on Soviet defenses. They said that while working for the NSA, they learned about ELINT (electronic intelligence) missions where planes deliberately crossed the Soviet border. The planes gathered information to develop new radar-jamming devices that could be deployed from American bases close to the Russian border. Such devices, they argued, would only be used if the United States were planning a possible nuclear first strike attack. As they explained in their press

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<sup>22</sup> On the defection, see Wayne Barker and Rodney Coffman, *The Anatomy of Two Traitors: The Defections of Bernon F. Mitchell and William H. Martin* (Laguna Hills, CA: Aegean Park Press, 1981). Unfortunately this short book is amateurish in the extreme.

conference:

'It should be clear even to a layman that information about radar defenses has no bearing whatsoever on the problem of ascertaining whether or not the Soviet Union is preparing for a surprise attack. This information can be utilized only for the purpose of determining the defense potential of the Soviet Union.'<sup>23</sup>

Another terrifying prospect was that the USSR would misread an American incursion into Soviet airspace as part of planned U.S. first strike: 'A single incident or misinterpretation concerning the purpose of planes involved in these flights could be the cause of war,' they warned. The two men then cited a statement by Thomas Powers, the Commander of the U.S. Strategic Air Command (SAC). During a discussion of the military budget, Powers told the House Committee on Appropriations about

'...the tremendous advantages that accrue to the man who starts a war. You always must have a capability to strike first, because obviously if these people thought we never could start a war, why then they could just take this world away from us piece by piece, because they would know that as long as they do not strike us, we could never do anything about it.'

At their press conference, Mitchell and Martin reported that on 2 September 1958 a MIG-17 aircraft shot down an American C-130 plane out of Turkey crammed with NSA spy gear. The plane crash-landed in Soviet Armenia, killing all 17 crew members. Eleven of the dead were members of the Air Force Security Service, the Air Force wing of the NSA.

In a prelude to President Eisenhower's fateful decision to lie about the true nature of the U-2 after Gary Power's U-2 was shot down over the Soviet Union on 1 May 1960, the U.S. government claimed the C-130 was on a scientific information gathering flight that accidentally wandered off course when the Soviets shot it down without provocation. Minnesota

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<sup>23</sup> For the full text of the Moscow press conference, see <[https://www.nsa.gov/about/cryptologic\\_heritage/60th/interactive\\_timeline/Content/1960s/media/19600701\\_MitchellandMartin.pdf](https://www.nsa.gov/about/cryptologic_heritage/60th/interactive_timeline/Content/1960s/media/19600701_MitchellandMartin.pdf)>

Democratic Senator Hubert Humphrey publicly denounced the Soviet Union for what he claimed was an unprovoked attack. Knowing better, Mitchell and Martin arranged a meeting with Congressman Wayne Hays, an Ohio Democrat, to tell him that the government lied to Congress. They said that during their meeting with Hays:

'Our conversation was interrupted when the Congressman received a telephone call from the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, Mr. William Macomber, who requested him to refrain from further public discussion of the C-130 incident. Again, it is clear that if this plane had been engaged solely in gathering scientific information, the State Department would have had no reason to be concerned.'

### **Prelude to defection: Kamiseya station**

**M**itchell and Martin first met in the Navy and both served from 1951 to 1954. After enlisting, the Navy assigned them to the Naval Security Group (the naval wing of the NSA) as 'communication technicians'. They recalled that they had 'served.....at several United States naval radio intercept stations during this period.' The key station, however, was the Naval Support Station in Kamiseya, Japan, where they were stationed from 1952 to 1954. Kamiseya Station was a detachment from the U.S. Naval Facility at Atsugi, Japan. (The station was located just three miles north of the main base at Atsugi.)

Mitchell and Martin described Kamiseya Station this way:

'The United States Government has recently admitted carrying out intelligence flights around and over the borders of Communist nations only during the last four years. However, we would like to state that these flights were also being conducted in the period 1952-54, when we were serving at a United States naval radio intercept station at Kamiseya, Japan, near Yokohama.

In advance of a reconnaissance flight of a United

States military plane along the Chinese or Soviet Far Eastern borders, a top-secret message would be sent to Kamiseya and other communications intelligence stations, informing them as to the flight time and course of the plane.

At the designated flight time, monitors at these stations would tune in on the frequencies used by radar reporting stations of the target country, i.e., the Soviet Union or Communist China. At the same time, radio direction finders would tune in on these frequencies to seek out the locations of the radar reporting stations.

Information gathered in this manner would then be forwarded to the National Security Agency. There, analysts study the communications and code systems used by the radar stations. NSA is then able to estimate the degree of alertness, accuracy and efficiency of the radar defenses of the target nation, and it is also able to collect information about the organization of command within the target nation's internal defense system.'

Although the two men became good friends, they went their separate ways after the service. While Mitchell returned to America, Martin – enamoured of Japanese culture – stayed on as a civilian employee of the U.S. Army until mid-1955. They then began advanced academic studies in mathematics back in America. Martin also took up Russian. Independently recruited into the NSA in 1957, they quickly resumed their friendship. For their part, NSA recruiters looked very favorably on both men. Besides being gifted mathematicians, they already had served as enlisted men in a top NSA listening post at Kamiseya Station, where they held high security clearances.

After joining the NSA, Mitchell and Martin learned of a kind of incursion into Soviet air defenses unlike the flights they monitored in Japan that saw fighter jets cross the borders of both Russia and China. The high-risk ELINT missions, instead, flew 'in the immediate proximity of radar installations of the Soviet Union and other countries to obtain data about the physical nature of radiations from radar transmitters.'

In December 1959, Mitchell and Martin visited Fidel Castro's Havana by way of Mexico City. While in Mexico City, Mitchell reportedly contacted the Soviet Embassy and requested political asylum. Although the Soviets tried to persuade him to return to Washington as a 'mole' inside the NSA, Mitchell insisted he wanted to defect.

Less than a year later, on 25 June 1960, Mitchell and Martin flew from Washington to Mexico City, then to Havana, and from there to the USSR where they were granted asylum on 11 August 1960. Less than a month later, they held their Moscow press conference and made their defection public.

Mitchell and Martin defected to the Soviet Union less than a year after Oswald. All of them worked in communications at Atsugi: Oswald in a relatively low security Marine MACS air control unit, Mitchell and Martin in the NSA's top-secret Naval Security Group at Kamiseya Station. Given the Atsugi link, might not the government at least try to determine if all three men had been compromised by a larger Soviet intelligence operation in Japan?

### **Investigating Mitchell-Martin**

The Mitchell-Martin defection was a tremendous shock to the NSA, which launched an internal investigation that involved speaking to some 450 witnesses. The FBI, the CIA, and military intelligence all worked the case. The inquiry included a microscopic look of both men's earlier experiences in Japan. To illustrate the lengths the CIA went to investigate a possible Japan-KGB connection, on 23 December 1960, a top CIA official named William K. Harvey submitted a report on Mitchell-Martin to the FBI. By then the government knew that Martin was a hardcore sexual masochist. One of women he turned to fulfil his needs was a prominent Baltimore stripper named 'Lady Zorro' (Shelia Bowater) whom the FBI interrogated.<sup>24</sup>

Harvey, however, was more interested in another woman friend of Martin's named Ardelle Gasda (or Kasda),

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<sup>24</sup> Movie director John Waters has written a portrait of Lady Zorro in his 2011 book *Role Models* although he had no idea of her connection to the Mitchell-Martin affair.

who met Martin at the Lord Baltimore Hotel on 28 February and 1 March 1959. Martin told Gasda his sexual preferences included being burnt on his arms with lit cigarettes. When Gasda reportedly protested that such conduct was 'an Oriental practice', and American girls 'were not of that type', Martin told her that he once had a Japanese girlfriend but that his new girlfriend was an American showgirl who had worked in night-clubs like the Latin Quarter and the Copacabana. This showgirl was the 'donor' of 'the chain-linked manacles' that Martin showed to Gasda.

Gasda assumed that Martin had referred to two famous New York night-clubs when he mentioned the Copacabana and the Latin Quarter. Harvey, however, wanted the FBI to re-interview Gasda because he said that there were two night-clubs in Tokyo also called the Latin Quarter and the Copacabana. Harvey believed both clubs might have Soviet connections via the murky world of organized crime.

An ex-OSS man named Al Shattuck ran the Tokyo Latin Quarter. Shattuck, in turn, fronted for another American investor in the club named Ted Lewin, whom Harvey described as 'the kingpin of vice and crime in the Orient'. Lewin and Shattuck imported American showgirls to work at their clubs in Japan. On 1 July 1960, Shattuck voluntarily left Japan to avoid deportation over a jewel theft. Allegations in the Japanese press (the English-language *Asahi Evening News* in particular) suggested Shattuck may have been involved in a supposed Soviet spy ring thought linked to a Greek businessman in Japan named 'George Peris' (George Peristeropoulos). Whether the jewel thief story had been planted in the press to force Shattuck out of Tokyo remains an open question.

As for Shattuck's partner Ted Lewin, he was born Theodore Lieweraenowski. A former boxer, the mob sent Lewin to the Far East where he served as the syndicate's Asian Meyer Lansky. Captured by the Japanese after the invasion of the Philippines, Lewin ran gambling operations even in jail. He later became part of a Murder Incorporated-style outfit set up by top McArthur aide named General Charles Willoughby who ran Army Intelligence (G-2) during the U.S.

occupation of Japan. He worked closely with a far right Japanese criminal named Yoshio Kodama and the 'Canon Agency' or 'Z Unit' which employed yakuza criminals to attack leftists. Willoughby also maintained close ties to the far right Hattori Organization, which was involved in planning for the military rearmament of Japan as well as spying on the Japanese Communist Party.<sup>25</sup>

By now a top syndicate figure who travelled the globe, Lewin often operated out of Manila where he was on very close terms with Philippine President Carlos Garcia, A kingpin of crime, he proved very active in the Caribbean as well. In 1958, for example, he worked with a top Washington public relations man and lobbyist named I. (Isaac) Irving Davidson to broker a weapons shipment to Israel that also involved Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic.

On 9 September 1961, yet another club with suspected Soviet connections, whose Japanese name translates as 'Tomorrow Is Too Late', also came into play. William Martin apparently had met a Japanese hostess at that club named Noriko Matsutakaya. A CIA source now suggested:

'....that MARTIN's introduction to the fine art of masochistic torture by an unidentified Japanese female, as reported by Mrs. Ardelle GASDA to FBI agents, may have been effected at or through his patronage of the "Tomorrow Is Too Late" Club to which he may well have been taken or introduced by his friend PERIS. This possibility, however, is subject to further investigation.'

What is so revealing for our purpose in the Mitchell/Martin defection is the depth of the CIA's investigation. The CIA even tried to identify the Japanese woman who may have first initiated Martin into sadomasochism in the mid-1950s. Yet no U.S. intelligence agency investigated Oswald's defection just months earlier? Oswald's defection, after all, would be analogous to a Russian military technician who had spent two

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<sup>25</sup> For an overview of early American intelligence operations in post-war Japan, see Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 'Democracy's Porous Borders: Espionage, Smuggling and the Making of Japan's Transwar Regime' in *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 41/12 at <[http://japanfocus.org/-Tessa-Morris\\_Suzuki/4201/article.html](http://japanfocus.org/-Tessa-Morris_Suzuki/4201/article.html)>.

years at one of those radar bases ELINT flights tried to monitor walking into an American Embassy and offering to tell the CIA everything he knew about Russian radar and communication systems. Would not the KGB then try to investigate just why one of their radar operators suddenly chose to defect as well as the secrets he might have betrayed?

To ask the question is to answer it.

### **Conclusion: Popov's ghost?**

Finally, we must conclude with the Popov affair.

In his 1986 book *Mayday* on the U-2 affair, historian Michael Beschloss devotes a brief discussion to the notion that Lee Harvey Oswald may have given Russia information that led to the shoot down of Francis Gary Powers. Hedging his bets, Beschloss suggests that perhaps Oswald did have some information on the U-2 but he concludes by citing Richard Bissell, the CIA leader who oversaw the U-2 program, as saying 'I don't think Oswald could have told them much they didn't already know.' However, Beschloss does report something quite extraordinary when he writes:

'In early 1959, the CIA learned from Pyotr Popov, one of its prize moles in Soviet military intelligence, that the Russians had amassed much information about the U-2. "It brought me right out of my seat," Richard Helms recalled. "Bissell and I wondered where they could be getting their information from." Before Popov could tell them, he was captured while passing notes to an American on a Moscow bus and executed.' (p. 236)

In early 1959, Lee Harvey Oswald had just returned from Japan and was stationed at the Marine facility in El Toro. It was also in early 1959 that Oswald began to extravagantly praise Castro and promote himself as some kind of oddball leftist Russophile. At no time did Oswald do anything similar while he was in Japan. In short, Oswald's career as a radical eccentric really seems to have begun in California and not in Japan.

If Oswald were a controlled defector on some kind of intelligence mission, it may well be that planning for the mission only got underway in early 1959 in the wake of the Popov revelations. Oswald's time in Japan, then, may be largely irrelevant to his subsequent adventures in the Soviet Union even if we assume that some government intelligence agency conceived of sending Oswald on a controlled defector mission to the Soviets in the wake of the Popov revelations.

Finally, there is always the possibility that while stationed in Japan, Oswald met members of the pro-Moscow wing of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) as George de Mohrenschildt informed the Warren Commission. Oswald had been fascinated by communism via classic Cold War TV shows such as *I Led Three Lives*, which he regularly watched with his mother in New Orleans.

Recall that on 23 April 1964, Lee Harvey Oswald's Dallas companion George de Mohrenschildt testified before the Warren Commission and briefly mentioned what Oswald told him about his experience in Japan.

Mr. De MOHRENSCHILDT. A few words I remember now. He said that while he was in Japan he saw tremendous injustice. By that he meant, I think, the poverty of the Japanese working class or the proletariat, as he called them, and the rich people in Japan. He said it was more visible than anywhere else....And he also told me that he had some contacts with the Japanese Communists in Japan, and they – that got him interested to go and see what goes on in the Soviet Union.

Mr. JENNER. Just concentrate on this, please.....You said he had some contacts with the Communists in Japan Now, try and recall what he said or as near.....

Mr. De MOHRENSCHILDT. That is all I recall – that he said, 'I have met some Communists in Japan and they got me excited and interested, and that was one of my inducements in going to Soviet Russia, to see what goes on there.'

Oswald could very well have met members of the Japanese

Communist Party (JCP). Although bitterly divided between supporters of Moscow and Beijing, the JCP was extremely active in major Japanese cities and towns. As an American GI, Oswald was very visible and it would not be surprising if he at least had some conversations with Japanese Communists.<sup>26</sup> There were also strong left-wing student protests against the American military presence in Japan that in 1960 culminated in huge street protests against the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, demonstrations that forced President Dwight D. Eisenhower to cancel a planned visit to Japan and toppled Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi's government.

If George de Mohrenschildt's memory is correct (and Oswald wasn't lying to him), Oswald's interest in the Soviet Union and his ultimate decision to defect to Moscow may have begun with a seemingly chance encounter in Japan and there is no need to discover an elaborate KGB or CIA plot to explain his actions. Perhaps Oswald's strange story really began with a casual street corner encounter with a JCP member and had absolutely nothing to do with U-2s, KGB bar girls, 'controlled defectors', and the larger and seemingly endless Cold War machinations of both Moscow and Washington. Perhaps the truth, then, is just this simple, so simple in fact that we will never know it.

## **Postscript**

### **Angleton, Epstein, and the creation of *Legend***

Some background on how *Legend* came about is worth noting since *Reader's Digest*, a conservative publication known for its sympathetic coverage of the CIA, heavily bankrolled it. In 1974 *Reader's Digest* published John Barron's book *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents*, a book that caused the KGB considerable harm when Barron publicly identified numerous

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<sup>26</sup> By the time Oswald arrived in Japan, the new Soviet government under Khrushchev was actively pursuing a policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the West. Beijing, however, rejected any such overtures. It would make some sense that the pro-Moscow wing of the JCP might be willing to talk with Americans about changing the dynamics of the Cold War.

KGB agents operating in foreign nations.<sup>27</sup>

*Reader's Digest* next contracted Epstein to write what became *Legend* at a time when the CIA was under intense scrutiny for a series of illegal activities, most famously a CIA-Mafia plot to kill Fidel Castro. The political climate led to investigations by the Senate Church Committee and the creation of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA). The CIA was understandably sensitive about claims that the Agency had anything to do with Kennedy's assassination, claims that the CIA saw as deliberately fuelled in part by KGB disinformation operations against its chief intelligence rival.

Showing its intention to cooperate with the new *Reader's Digest* project, the CIA gave Epstein access to a controversial former KGB agent in the hope that Epstein would support the CIA's official view that the KGB had nothing at all to do with Kennedy's assassination. Yet if that was the CIA's intent, Epstein sorely disappointed the Agency. In a post-Watergate nation deeply cynical about government cover-ups, *Legend* offered its own version of a government deception; namely, the CIA's reliance on a false Soviet 'defector' who claimed the KGB never even bothered to interrogate Oswald after his defection.

In 1964, a second-tier KGB officer named Yuri Nosenko defected to the United States. Nosenko raised eyebrows when he claimed, among other things, that the KGB did not interview Oswald about any military secrets he might have brought with him to Russia. Nosenko said that he had worked for the KGB's Second Chief Directorate's (SCD) American section that tried to recruit U.S. Embassy personnel as well as

<sup>27</sup> John Barron, *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents* (New York: Readers Digest Press/distributed by E.P. Dutton, 1974). Barron's book was most likely in part retaliation for the KGB sponsorship of Julius Mader's book *Who's Who in the CIA* (East Berlin, 1968).

For the impact the Barron book had inside the KGB, see Oleg Nechiporenko, *Passport to Assassination: The Never-Before-Told Story of Lee Harvey Oswald by the KGB Colonel Who Knew Him* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1993). Nechiporenko writes, 'My personal opinion is that Barron's work can be called the most successful active measure taken by the CIA against our service in many years. As a result, the KGB suffered a significant loss of morale.' (p. 299)

tourists visiting the USSR. Nosenko further stated that he had access to KGB files on Oswald and that the KGB had no interest in Oswald.

After Epstein interviewed Nosenko for some six hours, he recalled:

'I found several of the assertions he made about the KGB's treatment of Oswald inconsistent with other evidence furnished the Warren Commission. Even though I was assured by his CIA handlers that he was utterly reliable on the subject, and had full access to KGB records, as he claimed, I was not completely satisfied. His insistence that the KGB had never contacted Oswald during his stay in the Soviet Union seemed implausible since Oswald had loudly advertised on his arrival there that he had some secret information of special interest to the Soviet Union.'<sup>28</sup>

It was just these doubts that led Epstein to James Jesus Angleton, the legendary, long-time head of CIA Counter-Intelligence who was forced to resign from the CIA in early 1975 by the Agency's new director William Colby. Angleton concluded that Nosenko was a Soviet 'double agent', a false defector sent by Moscow to confuse American intelligence about KGB operations in general and Lee Harvey Oswald in particular. Angleton and Epstein met for the first time in February 1976 and the two men remained in close contact until Angleton's death on 14 May 1987.

Nor was Angleton alone in his suspicions. Some high-ranking members of the CIA's Soviet Division voiced similar doubts. One of Nosenko's fiercest critics was a Soviet Division officer named Tennent 'Pete' Bagley, who had first helped to recruit Nosenko as a CIA asset a few years before Nosenko fled to the West. After Bagley retired from the CIA, Epstein interviewed him at the recommendation of former CIA Director Richard Helms. Bagley also submitted a long statement to the HSCA on 11 October 1978 and he testified before the HSCA on 16 November 1978 to refute the CIA party line that Nosenko

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<sup>28</sup> For Epstein's recollections, see his 2013 e-book entitled *James Jesus Angleton: Was He Right?* (EJE Publications).

was a reliable defector. In 2007, Yale published Bagley's book *Spy Wars: Moles, Mysteries, and Deadly Games* where Bagley recalls:

'As we questioned Nosenko about President Kennedy's assassination, it was becoming even more likely that his story was a message from the Kremlin to reassure the American government that the KGB had not commanded the deed. That message might well be true, but Nosenko was wildly exaggerating the KGB's indifference to Oswald. He was saying and repeating (with claimed but unlikely authority) that neither the KGB nor GRU had paid the slightest attention to this, their first Marine defector who moreover had been a radar operator at a U-2 spy plane base in Japan and was eager to help the Soviets in any way he could. This tale was so hard to believe that it might cause someone to jump to the conclusion that Nosenko was covering up a contrary truth – that the KGB did form some relationship with Oswald and that the Soviet Politburo really did order JFK's assassination.' (Bagley p. 178)

How could the KGB and GRU not be interested in what Oswald apparently was willing to volunteer about American radar and air control installations? At the very least, the Soviets would want to determine if Oswald was himself a 'controlled defector'.

Years later, the KGB's Colonel Nechiporenko admitted that the Soviets did in fact place Oswald in its highest suspect category as a possible American agent. Contrary to Nosenko's claims about Soviet disinterest in Oswald, they kept him under close surveillance and extensively bugged his Minsk apartment.<sup>29</sup> In the Nosenko chapter of his book *Passport to*

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<sup>29</sup> Colonel Nechiporenko, for example, writes, 'It may also seem utter nonsense or an attempt by the KGB to deceive the Central Committee of the Communist Party.....that the KGB has no interest in an individual who was watched closely for suspected espionage ties for more than two years and who was the subject of eight months of correspondence between various internal and foreign agencies.' (p. 111). On the Soviet extensive surveillance of Oswald in Minsk in particular, see Peter Savodnik, *Interloper: Lee Harvey Oswald inside the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

*Assassination*, Nechiporenko even obliquely admits that the KGB did question Oswald when he writes, 'Oswald was never interrogated by the KGB, only debriefed by KGB officers who appeared to him as employees of other organizations. There is a great difference.'<sup>30</sup> In brief then, there were many reasons to question aspects of Nosenko's testimony about Oswald's time in the Soviet Union. In reading *Legend* today, it is important to understand the broader battle inside the CIA.<sup>31</sup>

The debate over Nosenko's credibility, however, has no direct bearing on Epstein's belief that Oswald began working with the KGB in Japan. Yet if Epstein did find proof of an Oswald connection to the Soviets while in Japan, such a revelation would obviously further discredit Nosenko. Epstein's desire to debunk Nosenko and prove Angleton right may well explain why Epstein so feverishly tried to argue the case that

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<sup>30</sup> Nechiporenko (see note 27) p. 247.

<sup>31</sup> Angleton's reputation has come under relentless attack, most recently at a 29 March 2012 conference sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Center and the Georgetown University Center for Security Studies entitled *Moles, Defectors and Deceptions: James Angleton and His Influence on US Counterintelligence*. At the conference, which was heavily stacked against Angleton, Epstein was one of the few participants who spoke in favor of him.

In the 'small world' department, Angleton helped oversee the CIA liaison to the Warren Commission that included his close friend and former boss, Allen Dulles. Angleton's top aide Ray Rocca worked closely with the Warren Commission as well. Either Angleton or Rocca appears in *Legend* in a disguised way in an endnote when Epstein writes:

'In May 1975, the former CIA liaison with the Warren Commission prepared a memorandum for the Commission on CIA Activities within the United States headed by Nelson A. Rockefeller on his assessment of what areas involving possible foreign conspiracies in the assassination of President Kennedy the Warren Commission had failed to explore. He noted that "such evidence could exist in Moscow and/or in Havana, whose voluntary inputs to the Warren Commission were minimal in quantity and quality, designed to cover up any admissions of knowledge of, or connection with, Oswald....." Therefore, the belief that there was a Soviet and/or Cuban (KGB and/or DGI) connection with Oswald will persist and grow until there has been a full disclosure by these governments of all elements of Oswald's handling and stay in the Soviet Union and his contacts in Mexico City. The Warren Commission report should have left a wider "window" for this contingency.' (Epstein p. 286)

Oswald was spying for the Soviets while he was stationed in Japan.

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