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In October 1996 Lee celebrated
his 19th birthday and was shipped
back to the U.S., his tour of
seas duty completed. He was re-
assigned to the Third Marine Air
Wing at the El Toro Marine base
near Barks Air, Calif.

His plans apparently were
fixed by this time. He began to
study Russian by himself. He tried
to enter a military language school
by taking a test in Russian, but he
failed the qualifying test. So he
continued to study on his own.

Former Lt. John E. Donovan,
now a physics instructor at
Harvard, Va., was Oswald's com-
manding officer at El Toro. He
read most of the time. Donovan
said, "Historians, newspapers, books
on government and a Russian
newspaper he used to get. He
spent a lot of time studying the
Russian language. There were no
pocketbooks or comics for him."

Donovan recalled Oswald as an
officer-beater and a troublemaker.

"He would ask officers to explain
some obscure situation in foreign
affairs," he said, "just to show
how much superior knowledge he
seemed to have in revio against any
kind of authority." Oswald played
on the squadron football team for
a short time. He played end. Don-
ovan said, until he was cut and
shut off the squad "because he kept
talking back in the huddles."
The quarterback was a captain.

In the summer of 1959 Oswald
applied for a hardship release
from the Marines. His mother, work-
ing in a Fort Worth department store,
was injured when a box of glass
jars fell and struck her on the
head. She was forced to remain
in bed for six months, and the
medical bills rapidly exhausted
her slim savings. "I didn't want to
tell Lee and worry him, but finally,
I wrote," she said. She bands that
of her apartment allowed her to
bring in a rollaway bed for Lee.

Shortly before his release, Os-
wald applied for admission to
Albert Schweitzer College at
Churwalden, Switzerland, a pri-
vate school with a program in
world problems, philosophy, and
sociology and languages. He was
accepted for the spring term of
1960, but he never attended. He
returned to his aging moth-
ner's apartment. "Of all my, sor-
row," she said later, "I don't think
I will ever forget the shame I felt
when my boy entered that small
place with a sick mother." In the
morning, he said, "Mother, my
mind is made up. I want to get
on a ship and travel. I'll see a lot
and it's good work."

Lee spent only three nights at
his mother's house. He had saved
$1,600 from his Marine Corps pay
and he was anxious to get where
he was going.

Two and a half weeks later
Mrs. Oswald got a letter from Lee
gpostedmark New Orleans: "Well,
I have booked passage on a ship to
Europe," it began. I wound of had to sooner or later and I think
it's best I go now."

She learned what he really had
in mind when a newspaper report-
er called in late October 1959
and said that her son had defected
to Russia. "I told them my son was
crazy," she said. "But I learned it
was true. I couldn't understand it."
Lee was only a few days past
his 26th birthday.

Lee told Soviet officers at first
that he was in Russia as a tourist.
After two and a half weeks in
Moscow, on Oct. 27, he appeared
at the U.S. embassy, slapped his
passport on a desk and said, "I've
made up my mind, I'm through."

He said he had applied for Soviet
citizenship. The next day, Nov. 1,
he was interviewed by Aline Mus-

by United Press International cor-
respondent at the Hotel Metro-
pole. "I will never return to the
United States for any reason," he
declared.

The interview gave him an op-
portunity, for the first time in his
life, to feel important. His opinion
was sought. His picture was tak-

den. He responded by being as an-
ticlimax as he had ever been in his
life. He struck Miss Mobay as a "per-
son very determined but un-
certain of himself, naive and emo-
tionally unbalanced."

"I am a Marxist," Lee told her.
"I became interested at about the
age of 15. I've seen poor negggers,
being a southern boy, and that
was a slogan. People hate because
they're told to hate, like school
kids. It's the fashion to hate peo-
ple in the United States."

Oswald was also interviewed by
Priestella Johnson, now a Soviet
expert of the Russian Research
Center at Harvard, who was in
Moscow at that time. He was the
most interesting defector I ever
saw," she said. "He talked in terms of capitalists and ex-
plorers; and he said something
about how he was sure if he lived
in the U.S. he wouldn't get a job
that he'd be one of the exploited.

'I didn't perceive what the es-

calent things—that his opinion
would be unhappy anywhere. I
had this awful feeling that I could
talk him out of it. I knew nothing
about Russia. He was like a babe
in the woods, like a lost child. He

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Commission Exhibit No. 287