

Clare Boothe Luce Weave a Fascinating Tale

One day in the latter part of October, Clare Luce received a call from Sen. Richard Schweiker, R-Pa., chairman of the subcommittee investigating the Warren Commission Report. He wanted her to persuade some Cubans she had known — Cubans who had known Lee Harvey Oswald — to testify before his committee. Mrs. Luce's efforts to locate the Cubans led to a somewhat bloodcurdling warning. But let her tell the story from the beginning.

"The year is 1961, a year of great American trauma," she began her narration to recent dinner guests in her aqua-colored Watergate apartment. "I had a friend named Bill Pawley who was brought up in Cuba and who was Truman's ambassador to Peru and Brazil. I got to know Bill very well in India and China where he had built up a voluntary outfit called The Flying Tigers. Bill was also called in by the CIA to recruit Cubans for the Bay of Pigs operation. Afterwards he was a very unhappy man.

"One day he called me up and said, 'How would you like to get in on the Cuban Flying Tiger operation?' He had in mind a fleet of motorboats subsidized by Americans and manned by Cubans who had been in the Bay of Pigs operation — all these young kids who had been stranded after the Bay of Pigs.

"I said, 'Fine.' So I helped to finance a motorboat. The three lads who manned mine came up to see me several times. They would leave the coast of Florida and land in Cuba and come out with information. The information they came out with was remarkably accurate — that the Russians were building missile sites in Cuba. I was told that the information was eventually fed to Sen. Ken Keating and was passed on to the White House. You remember what an impression it made and how accurate it was.

"THEN CAME THE MISSILE showdown. Soon after the showdown I got a telephone call from Allen Dulles saying the Neutrality Act had been invoked and all Americans must cease and desist in any further efforts towards the liberation of Cuba. Of course, we desisted."

Two years later she and her husband Harry (Henry) Luce were sitting in their New York apartment listening to the televised reports of President Kennedy's assassination when around midnight she received a

Betty Beale

phone call from New Orleans. "It was the captain of my motorboat," said Clare, "A young man not more than 25, a young student lawyer. He said, 'Mrs. Luce, I want to tell you about Oswald.'

"He said that immediately after the 1961 missile showdown, FBI men had come to Miami and told the Cubans to break up all resistance groups and disperse. He and the other two members of his crew had moved to New Orleans where they started another "Free Cuba" group. They had been there a year and a half when who made contact with them but Oswald!

"The Cubans all thought he was a kook. Oswald bragged about having been in Russia and said he was an ex-Marine. He said he could shoot anybody and he would be happy to shoot Castro. He had no money, he was living with his wife in New Orleans and it looked like he was presenting himself as a hired gun. They didn't like the cut of his jib so they turned him off. But they followed him and found he was in a Fair Play for Cuba Communist cell to whose members he was giving the same line.

"And I remember this from the telephone conversation — Oswald was telling the cell that he could shoot anyone, including the secretary of the Navy. The Free Cubans continued to tail him and found that suddenly he had money, and he started going to Mexico City. He made several trips. They continued their penetration of the Cuban Communist cell. He said they made tape recordings of some of Oswald's meetings and they had taken photographs of him distributing handbills for the Fair Play unit. The next thing they knew President Kennedy was shot.

"THE YOUNG CUBAN WHO called me," continued former Ambassador Luce, "said that there was a Cuban Communist assassination team working somewhere — in Dallas, New Orleans or wherever — I don't remember, and that Oswald was their hired gun. Oswald, he said, had tried to report the Communist plans to the FBI some time before the assassination. But because he was out for the dough they didn't believe him.

continued

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE 5-3-92 BY 9803

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PER CIA LETTER
1-31-89

I suppose that the FBI must hear from a thousand such 'crackpots' a week.

"In any event, on the telephone my young friend told me that they had these tape recordings of Oswald and photographs and what should they do? I said, 'Go to the FBI and tell them everything you know.' That having been said I put the whole thing out of my mind. Comes the Warren Commission and says Oswald alone was responsible and I forgot the whole matter.

"Then, in 1967, a fellow named Jim Garrison, district attorney in New Orleans, hit the headlines charging that the assassination was a conspiracy. At that moment I was reminded of the information I had received and I began to wonder whether or not the Warren Commission had got all the facts. I couldn't remember the names of the Cubans but I finally located one crewman who was living in Miami again and I asked him what happened after he went to the FBI.

"He said, 'We turned over copies of everything. We were then told to keep our traps shut and that we would be deported if we said anything publicly.' He said one of the crew was deported to Guatemala, and one was murdered — stabbed in front of a store.

"THEIR INFORMATION, HE SAID, never appeared in the Warren Commission report. He said, 'I am married now, I live in Miami and I don't want to get involved in it ever again.'"

When Sen. Schweiker made his request of Clare Luce less than three weeks ago, she telephoned another Cuban friend to see if he could locate and persuade the young man to testify behind closed doors. Replied the older Cuban, if the testimony was behind 13 closed doors it would still become public.

"Americans think they are playing games," he told her. "They don't know they are involved in a life or death business. No, I won't tell you where he can be found. The people working for a free Cuba would lose their lives. A lot of them have already. They are not interested in making political headlines for politicians. You think the Bay of Pigs, the nuclear missiles, the assassination of the president was the end of the story? I tell you it is just the beginning. What you Americans don't understand is, there are trained Communist terrorists, assassination, kidnapping, bombing and sabotage teams all over the country and the world."



— Wide World Photos

Clare Boothe Luce

... "A year of great American trauma."

The very day after that conversation, observed Clare gravely, bombs went off at the State Department here, at the U.S.-U.N. mission and four banks in New York and at three places in Chicago. And close to the same hour she was recounting the whole fascinating story to her guests, a Cuban, anti-Communist leader was exploded into bits in his car in Miami.