

Ruby and Oswald: conspiracy or not?

Following is the seventh and final article
in a serialization of Kantor's book.

By Seth Kantor

Jack Ruby and Lee Harvey Oswald probably didn't know each other, yet both could have been used as separate parts of a conspiracy to commit murder in Dallas on the weekend of Nov. 22-24, 1963. Oswald on Friday. Ruby on Sunday. Two men manipulated by the same power.

After they were arrested and jailed, both men said they had been manipulated.

"I'm a patsy," said Oswald.

"I've been used for a purpose," said Ruby.

But how would they have been manipulated—and by whom?

As in any universe, there is a sun, with planets moving around it. And in the universe of the Kennedy assassination, the mob loomed as the sun. Call it by any name: The mob, Cosa Nostra, organized crime, or by the name its enemy, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, had hung on it, The Private Government.

Orbiting around it were components



WHO WAS JACK RUBY?

of the Teamsters, the CIA, the Dallas police force, the right-wing paramili-

tary and Cuban interests.

It would have been no problem for the mob to reach out through its CIA contacts and then, in turn, through their Cuban connections to find Oswald. Oswald never even needed to see the dark light of the sun to become involved.

"The peculiar overlapping of interests that existed among the anti-Castro exiles, organized crime and the Central Intelligence Agency amounted in the autumn of 1963 to a tripartite pact," wrote Robert Sam Anson in 1975. "Each had individual motives: the mob, greed and revenge; the exiles, a longing for their homeland; and the agency, a twisted kind of patriotism. Cuba fused those motives in a common cause. Each group helped the other.

"In their free-floating association, members drifted out of one group and into another and then back again. When it came to Cuba, the demarcation between organized crime, the exiles and intelligence was fuzzy, if not meaningless. An offense against one was an offense against all. The president's Cuban policy offended all of them."

IDENTIFIED WITH THEM were the conspirators of the extreme right—such as the Minutemen, who secured weapons in Dallas late in 1963 for the most violent of Cuban exile groups, Alpha 66.

"Perhaps the most feared mobster in the underworld is Florida's Mafia chieftain, Santo Trafficante," Jack Anderson and Les Whitten wrote in the syndicated column in March 1977. House Assassinations Committee investigators "approached his Miami hideaway, therefore, with some apprehension.

"He appeared at the screen door to accept their subpoena. 'Shove it under the door,' he said softly. They peered through the screen. The sinister Trafficante was pale and his hands were shaking.

"He may have had reason to shake. The House Assassinations Committee

had taken a sudden interest in the murder last July of mobster John Rosselli. Before he died, the flamboyant Rosselli hinted that he knew who had arranged President John F. Kennedy's assassination. Carefully hedging, he told an incredible story that implicated Trafficante."

Over the years, Rosselli had taken columnist Anderson into what the underworld said was his confidence. Rosselli told Anderson he had reason to speculate that Trafficante had become a double-agent, first assigned by the CIA to knock off Castro and then by agents to hit Kennedy.

The Trafficante organization "may have lined up Lee Harvey Oswald as the assassin or may have used him as a decoy while others ambushed Kennedy from closer range. Once Oswald was captured, the mob couldn't afford to let him reveal his connection with the underworld. So Rosselli speculated that Jack Ruby, a small-time hoodlum with ties to the Havana underworld, was ordered to eliminate Oswald," Anderson wrote in 1977.

Trafficante's lawyers refused to let their underworld client testify in a closed session with the congressional committee. They demanded an open hearing, in order that Trafficante could

be seen and heard taking the Fifth Amendment and refusing on other constitutional grounds to say anything.

In the public hearing March 16, Trafficante was asked about his connections with Jack Ruby and the CIA, and what foreknowledge he might have had about plans to assassinate President Kennedy. Trafficante answered nothing and left brusquely.

Before it winds up its business, the committee has to look at 10 central facts in the Jack Ruby case, unless the investigation is to fail as did the Warren Commission in its examination of the secretive, enigmatic role played by Ruby in the action surrounding President Kennedy's murder.

•Leading up to the assassination, Ruby was in debt and seeking money.

•On the afternoon of Kennedy's assassination, Dallas bank officer Bill Cox saw Ruby with several thousand dollars in hand at the bank, but Ruby moved none of it into or out of his account.

•Ruby's best sources of money were in organized crime and he met privately with crime syndicate paymaster Paul Rowland Jones just before suddenly signing a power of attorney entitling his tax lawyer to control much of Ruby's financial dealings in settling his government tax problems—only hours before President Kennedy reached

Texas.

●Organized crime had a known history of control inside the Dallas police department.

●When Ruby sprang at Lee Harvey Oswald, he came from behind a policeman—from behind plainclothes officer Blackie Harrison.

●Harrison had been in position at two different times that Sunday morning to let Ruby know by telephone precisely what the plans were for moving the prisoner Oswald.

●Ruby left his apartment, on the route which led to the silencing of Oswald, after Harrison was in position to make the second and final telephone call to the apartment.

●Harrison and his partner, detective L.D. Miller, became strangely reluctant witnesses. Miller acted more like a suspect than a policeman, refusing at first to become a sworn witness—when all he had done was to have coffee with Harrison on the morning of Oswald's murder.

●The evidence shows Ruby lied about his entry to the police station basement.

●Ruby then tried to conceal his private meeting with police officer Harry N. Olsen soon after Oswald was arraigned as a cop-killer.

Armed with subpoena powers, the House committee also must look deeper into Ruby's motivations for having shot Oswald than did the Warren Commission. For instance, there were five conceivable motivations:

■Ruby acted alone and was not mentally competent. That was attorney Melvin Bellis's defense for Ruby. Privately, the Warren Commission never bought that as being the truth.

■Ruby acted alone. But his actions were planned and murder was premeditated. The Warren Commission vaguely supported this concept, but did it in obscure footnotes and drew no such conclusion in its text.

■There were separate murder conspiracies, wherein Ruby was not involved in the Kennedy assassination but then became the operative to kill Oswald. The commission's Ruby probers. Leon Hubert and Burt Griffin,

began to check this out but became thwarted by commission policy. Hubert and Griffin looked at certain members of the Dallas police force in terms of working parts of the plot to kill Oswald, using Ruby as the hit man. But Hubert and Griffin didn't look deep enough or far enough.

■There was a single conspiracy in which Ruby and Oswald worked together. The Warren Commission ruled this out.

■There was a single conspiracy in which Ruby and Oswald did not know each other and Ruby was manipulated into killing Oswald. Amazingly the Warren Commission did not check this out.

The last point looms as one of the most significant possibilities, yet the Warren Commission ignored it even after Ruby told the commission, "I have been used for a purpose." Either the police, or the underworld, or a combination of both could have activated Ruby. It is an area congressional probers should examine now.

The third point is especially important, because of the role of a limited few members of the Dallas police department. The probers particularly ought to take a look at the composition of the Dallas police department's Juvenile Bureau.

Eleven days after the CIA said it had been unable, in seven months, to locate information on Ruby or his associates, the Warren Report was issued on Sept. 26, 1964, to the waiting nation.

In the end, the commission succeeded in delivering a dispassionate report so that America could put a great tragedy behind it and go forward.

This must have seemed practical but there are those who say a great deal was not laid to rest.

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