

What Johnny Knew:

L'Affaire Rosselli and the Cover-up of the JFK Assassination

by Jim Hostman

I

Hank Greenspun, publisher of the Las Vegas Sun, claims to have been the first journalist to gain direct knowledge of the CIA's attempts to use the Mafia to kill Fidel Castro. These assassination plots were officially disclosed in 1975 by Sen. Frank Church's Intelligence Committee.¹ But Greenspun had gotten the information in December 1966 from one of the central figures in the Castro plots--the late John Rosselli. Rosselli, a gambler and fixer for the Mob, was a long-time resident of Las Vegas and knew Greenspun well. If he had not sworn Greenspun to secrecy, the Sun might have been the first paper to print the story.

Two of Greenspun's close friends and political allies, Drew Pearson and his then junior partner Jack Anderson, did print the story in early 1967.² Anderson admitted recently³ that their source had been Rosselli's attorney, Edward P. Morgan. The story, as told by Morgan (first to Anderson and later to the FBI), went beyond the claim that the Mob and the Agency had conspired to murder Castro. Morgan quoted Rosselli (without naming him to Anderson) as saying that Castro had gotten wind of the assassination plots and, blaming the Kennedy brothers, had taken his revenge in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

When Anderson let Morgan repeat this account to Drew Pearson, Pearson took the story to his friend, Chief Justice Earl Warren. This was in late January 1969, more than three years after Kennedy's death. Warren, of course, had headed the presidential commission that investigated the Kennedy assassination. On ~~January 31~~ ^{January 31} Warren informed the Secret Service of the Morgan-Rosselli allegations, and this touched off a complex official reaction involving the FBI, the CIA, and ultimately President Lyndon Johnson.

The whole affair seems to have been a deliberate attempt to provoke--perhaps to blackmail--the US government, with Rosselli only one of the actors in the operation. Neither the reasons for the provocation nor the nature of the official reaction ~~are~~ ^{are} yet well understood. Some details began to emerge in June 1976, when the Church committee issued a report on the Kennedy assassination.⁴ Most of the story, however, has been suppressed.

The seven-page chapter on the Rosselli affair was reported to have been heavily censored prior to publication.⁵ Morgan, a partner in the prestigious firm of Welch Morgan and Kleindienst, is referred to simply as a "Washington lawyer"; Rosselli is identified only as his "client".

Whether national security or politics led to this censorship is unclear. In either case, the deletion of Rosselli's name is inexcusable. The report pretends to assess the government's reaction to charges that Castro had killed JFK in revenge for CIA plots on his own life; at the very least the report should have mentioned that the source of the charges was a Mafioso who had been a principal participant in those plots.

II

One of the crucial parts of the story omitted in the report concerns the circumstances under which Greenspun first heard Rosselli's tale--or at least that part of it which dealt with the Castro assassination plots.

One evening in late December 1966, Clark County Sheriff's deputies had hauled Rosselli away in handcuffs from a Las Vegas casino. He was arrested and charged (according to Greenspun) with failing to register as an ex-convict, although he had lived in Las Vegas for some time and maintained, as Greenspun puts it, "excellent relations" with the office of Sheriff Ralph Lamb. (Incidentally, Lamb, who is still the sheriff, was indicted for federal income tax evasion in April 1977.)

Later that night Greenspun received a call from someone he would describe only as "a person in high authority" who instructed him to get Rosselli out of jail and to leave no record of his arrest. Greenspun called the sheriff and they met at the jail. When he was released, Rosselli himself refused to sign out his valuables, according to Greenspun. Reporters from the Sun had arrived at the jail, and Greenspun had to tell them not to breathe a word of the story to anyone. Later, Greenspun and his wife took Rosselli out to dinner at an Italian restaurant. Having seen to it that no record of the arrest survived, and having told his own reporters to ignore a story, Greenspun felt he had been placed in an embarrassing position. "Johnny, why have I done this?" he asked Rosselli. After swearing his friend to secrecy, Rosselli revealed that six years earlier, in late 1960, the CIA had recruited him to murder Fidel Castro.

Greenspun says he related this entire incident to the Church committee

in 1976. A spokesman for the new Senate Intelligence Committee (which has assumed jurisdiction over the assassination investigation) refused to comment when asked if Greenspun had been a witness. But Greenspun described to me in detail his appearance before the committee.

The Sun had just published a front-page article under Greenspun's byline claiming that Castro had killed both JFK and RFK. This article came out on March 1, 1976--the day on which the committee had scheduled the release of its final report, which was to include a report on the investigation of the Kennedy assassination by the intelligence agencies. The final report, however, was not issued until May, with the Kennedy assassination report following a month later. In the meantime Senators Gary Hart and Richard Schweiker had continued their investigation into the JFK case.

Greenspun was one of the new witnesses they called, as were Morgan and Rosselli. In the March 1 article, Greenspun claimed to have seen a February 13, 1967 memo from Secret Service Chief James Rowley to J. Edgar Hoover transmitting Morgan's (i.e., Rosselli's) allegations to the FBI. Nine years later, the Church committee was undoubtedly interested in knowing where Greenspun had gotten the Rowley memo; the Secret Service told the committee they were unable to locate copies either of the memo or of any other documents pertaining to the Rosselli affair.⁶

During Greenspun's closed-door testimony, Sen. Hart held up a copy of the March 1 Sun story on Castro and the Kennedy assassination. The headline was large and bright blue. Hart asked Greenspun if this were an example of responsible journalism. Greenspun replied, in effect, that no young whippersnapper, even if he was a senator, was going to tell him how to run his newspaper. He then launched into a story about his role in the liberals' attacks on Sen. Joseph McCarthy in the early 1950's, in which Morgan and Pearson were also involved. At a time when President Eisenhower was maintaining his hands-off attitude towards McCarthy's excesses and refusing to speak out against him, Greenspun printed a headline saying roughly "Eisenhower Denounces McCarthy". "So what if it was Milton Eisenhower," Greenspun declared. "I had a sub-head which referred to the 'President's brother'."

Greenspun was asked if the secret arrest of Rosselli in Las Vegas had occurred in December 1967. Apparently, Sheriff Lamb had supplied that date. But Greenspun's recollection was that the incident took place about

a month after Howard Hughes arrived in town, which would put it in late December 1966. (It was in early March 1967 that Fearson and Anderson first published the story about CIA-Mafia plots against Castro.) The committee seems to have checked back with the sheriff and confirmed not only the earlier date but also the fact that the arrest record was destroyed.

III

Rosselli was still alive on June 23, 1976, when the Schweiker-Hart report was released. He and Morgan were first publically named as the client and his Washington lawyer referred to in the report. (by this author) ~~Two days~~ Two days afterward, On August 22, the Washington Post repeated the identifications, and Morgan then confirmed them. But a few weeks earlier Rosselli had been murdered.

Why had Rosselli begun to talk about the CIA, Castro, and the JFK assassination, and what did this have to do with his death ten years later?

Rosselli was not averse to using his CIA affiliation as a lever in dealing with the government's attempts to prosecute him for his criminal activities. In May 1966, after the FBI had asked Rosselli to inform on his Mafia associates and he had turned them down, the Bureau threatened him with deportation. Evidently Rosselli had entered the US illegally as a child and had subsequently registered as an alien under a false name, in violation of federal laws. To avoid deportation, Rosselli contacted Sheffield Edwards, former Director of Security for the CIA and one of the initiators of the Castro assassination plots. Edwards then intervened on Rosselli's behalf with the FBI, and the Justice Department was apparently persuaded to drop the case. In 1971, the CIA again got the Immigration and Naturalization Service to stop deportation proceedings against Rosselli "to forestall public disclosure of Rosselli's past operational activity with CIA."⁸ Rosselli's deportation case was still in litigation at the time of his death.

In another case, Rosselli actually disclosed his role in the Castro plots in court. This was the famous card-cheating scandal at the Beverly Hills Friars' Club. For reasons which are still obscure, a Mob associate of Rosselli's, in early 1967, provided the FBI with enough evidence to prosecute Rosselli and others for defrauding unsuspecting businessmen and Hollywood stars of hundreds of thousands of dollars. After a grand jury

investigation later that year, Rosselli was brought to trial and convicted.⁹ He served two and a half years of a five year sentence, but not before telling the judge about his past work for the CIA.⁹ His attorney (Morgan?) also asked Robert Maheu, the former top aide to Howard Hughes who had recruited Rosselli for the assassination plots on behalf of the CIA, to make a statement to the court; Maheu declined to do so.¹⁰ While Rosselli was in jail, Morgan arranged for him to be interviewed by Jack Anderson, who in January 1971 published his second series of columns on this subject, this time naming Rosselli, Maheu, and James O'Connell (their CIA control agent), and mentioning again the alleged ties between the Castro plots and the Kennedy assassination.¹¹

Edward P. Morgan contends that Rosselli decided to get his story out ten years ago "to counter pressure from the FBI and Immigration Service."¹² However, there are several reasons to suspect this explanation. First, while it would make sense that Rosselli would invoke his past services for the CIA in order to get the feds off his back (it actually worked in 1966 and 1971), why would he have significantly raised the stakes by talking about the JFK assassination? Further, the secrecy and suddenness with which Rosselli was arrested in Las Vegas in December 1966, as well as the peculiar circumstances surrounding his release, suggest that he had already begun to talk at that time. In other words, this incident seems to have been more than a mere continuation of the government's pursuit of Rosselli the mobster, but rather a significant escalation of that process--an attack on Rosselli the political operative, designed to keep him from spreading his story further.

Explaining what motivated Rosselli has been made more difficult by the suppression of information concerning the early stages of the affair. The accounts which have emerged so far, both in the press and in the Schweiker-Kart report, have begun in late January 1967, with the Pearson-Warren meeting. The report omits altogether the role of Jack Anderson as the original intermediary between Morgan and Pearson, and Anderson has added to the confusion by his recent affirmation¹³ that Morgan first approached him with the story in January 1967; years ago, Anderson disclosed privately that Morgan came to him in 1966.¹⁴ Another obstacle has been the Senate Intelligence Committee's refusal to this day to acknowledge Rosselli's secret Las Vegas arrest.

IV

There was perhaps an element of self-protection in Rosselli's decision to talk, but this cannot be the whole explanation.¹⁵

Part of what may be the correct explanation was supplied by Edward P. Morgan himself. According to Morgan, in late 1966 both Rosselli and Maheu were subpoenaed by a Senate subcommittee chaired by former Senator Edward Long of Missouri which was investigating illegal government and private surveillance.¹⁶ The subcommittee was interested in a six-year-old wire-tapping case involving Maheu, Sam Giancana, and the Castro assassination plots. In late 1960, Maheu hired private operators from Florida to bug the Las Vegas hotel room of comedian Dan Rowan, who was allegedly seeing Giancana's girlfriend, Phyllis MacGuire. Giancana (the Mob boss of Chicago who was murdered in June 1975 just before he was to meet with Church committee investigators) was at the time deeply involved with the CIA in planning Castro's murder and was holed up in Miami. It has never been clear whether the bugging took place at Giancana's request to confirm his suspicions of the Rowan-MacGuire affair or whether the CIA undertook the operation to see how much Giancana had indiscretely spilled to his girlfriend about the assassination plot. In any case, Maheu's operators were caught in the act, and the Justice Department, unaware of the CIA connection, decided to prosecute Maheu, Giancana, and Rosselli for illegal wiretapping. The CIA finally dissuaded them from doing so in May 1962. Assistant Attorney General Herbert Miller (whose services as a criminal lawyer were retained twelve years later by Richard Nixon) determined that prosecution of this case would not be "in the national interest." In the course of this decision, both J. Edgar Hoover and Attorney General Robert Kennedy were informed that the CIA and the Mafia were conspiring to kill Castro.¹⁷

Somehow, by late 1966, the Long subcommittee had found out about the Las Vegas wiretap. The fact that Maheu had been subpoenaed (but not that the subpoena concerned the wiretap case) was revealed by the Church committee.¹⁸ But Maheu never testified, according to the committee. CIA General Counsel Lawrence Houston was told by Maheu's attorney--none other than Edward P. Morgan--that Maheu would reveal his past ties to the CIA if called to testify. Subsequently, Houston conferred with Sen. Long and the subpoena was dropped. ~~But~~ The Church committee did not acknowledge that Rosselli (another client of Morgan's) was also subpoenaed.

The chief counsel of the Long subcommittee was Washington attorney Bernard Fensterwald, who later became the head of the private Washington-based Committee to Investigate Assassinations and the lawyer for both James Earl Ray and Watergate burglar James McCord. Fensterwald had gotten interested in the CIA-Mafia plots while still serving on the subcommittee staff. In 1967 he learned of an alleged military intelligence plot on Castro's life in 1961 in which Robert Kennedy is supposed to have played a role. Because Anderson had published a "similar story" several months earlier (the March 1967 Pearson-Anderson column), Fensterwald says, he went to see Anderson on October 25, 1967. Anderson told Fensterwald that his source had been a "very prominent Washington~~er~~ attorney who, incidentally, was a former chief counsel of a congressional committee or subcommittee." (Morgan was the Democratic counsel to the Tydings subcommittee in 1950 which conducted the first investigation into McCarthy's charges about State Department security risks.) Fensterwald says he did not know at the time to whom Anderson was referring and only learned the identity of the attorney from news accounts in 1976.¹⁹

Anderson also told Fensterwald that "the lawyer said that the offense for which he was defending the clients would have the statute run out at the end of 1967; hence his lawyer-client privilege would expire at that time; this is a total mystery." Anderson told Fensterwald that Morgan first approached him with the story in 1966. Given that the Long subcommittee had subpoenaed both Maheu and Rosselli ~~xxxxxxx~~ in connection with the Las Vegas wiretap, it seems likely that the statute mentioned by Morgan was that against illegal wiretapping. But in that case, it is difficult to understand Fensterwald's bewilderment. As chief counsel of the subcommittee, it was he who was investigating Maheu and Rosselli. Fensterwald now maintains, in conflict with Morgan's version of the story, that it was not the Las Vegas wiretap but rather Maheu's involvement in a separate industrial espionage case which was of interest to the Long subcommittee in 1966.²⁰

Is it possible that Rosselli's arrest in Las Vegas around Christmas 1966 was designed to pressure him into not talking to the Long subcommittee?

V

Fensterwald also quotes Anderson as saying that the lawyer (Morgan) had two clients "who were in some way involved in the plan to assassinate

Castro and/or Kennedy." Morgan's FBI interview of March 1967, which is reproduced in summary form in the Schweiker-Hart report,²¹ also speaks of more than one client. The Church committee took testimony in 1976 from Morgan and from both clients. Morgan had told the FBI that his clients knew the identity of some of the counterassassins sent by Castro to the US. But nine years later, he claimed he couldn't even recall being interviewed by the FBI! The clients each denied having any recollection of having discussed Castro's alleged role in the Kennedy assassination with Morgan.²²

One of the clients, we know now, was John Rosselli. Rosselli testified in April 1976. He recalled telling several people (Morgan not among them; was Greenspun?) that he had heard rumors that Castro killed JFK.²³ Apparently, he denied ever having specific information to that effect. This version is contradicted not only by Morgan's 1967 FBI interview but also by Jack Anderson,²⁴ who says that Morgan told him ten years ago that Rosselli identified members of the organized crime family of Santos Trafficante, Jr. of Tampa (acting on behalf of Castro) as the assassins of Kennedy. Trafficante had been recruited by Rosselli and Giancana into the CIA assassination plots against Castro.

The other client has never been identified. All that is known for certain is that he was a client of Morgan's and was involved in the Castro plots.

Robert Maheu is the man who brought the Mob and the CIA together in the Castro assassination plots. He was also represented by Morgan in late 1966. Rosselli and Maheu were subpoenaed together by the Long subcommittee. Was Maheu the second client?

I asked Maheu this question and he refused to answer it, saying only that he "never made any statement" contradicting the Warren Report.²⁵

What Morgan told the FBI in 1967 was one of his clients "laughs with tears in his eyes" at the suggestion that Oswald alone killed Kennedy.²⁶ This was presumably Rosselli. If Maheu was the other client, his contribution to the story was ^{Simply} to supply confirmation of the fact that Rosselli had been hired by the CIA to kill Castro, a fact of which he had direct knowledge.

VI

Maheu's involvement would increase even further the likelihood that Rosselli's actions were not merely self-serving but part of a sophisticated attempt to influence the government. Maheu's connections are vast and various.

First of all, Maheu and Morgan have known each other since the 1940's when they both served in the FBI. Maheu worked in the Chicago and other field offices; Morgan was the Bureau's Chief Inspector for seven~~xx~~ years. During the 1950's Maheu operated a successful but shady private detective firm out of an office next door to Morgan's. Maheu's clients included the CIA, and he employed CIA agents for cover purposes.

It was during this time that Maheu began working for Howard Hughes. Morgan's friendship with Maheu led to his retainer by Hughes for various legal services. In late 1966 Morgan, through his connections to Hank Greenspun, was instrumental in convincing Hughes to move to Las Vegas. Maheu took care of~~ff~~ the elaborate security arrangements for Hughes' move to the Desert Inn, whose principal owner was Cleveland mobster Moe Dalitz. Hughes ended up buying the hotel from Dalitz. The sale, which was negotiated by Morgan, was finalized on March 22, 1967. Morgan and Greenspun both collected sizeable "finder's fees"; so did Johnny Rosselli.

Thus, the three central actors in our drama--Maheu, Morgan, and Rosselli-- had common interests in 1966-67 centering in the alliance between the National Crime Syndicate and the Teamsters' Union, which had fostered the growth of Las Vegas, and its developing relationship with Howard Hughes. Over the next few years Hughes acquired a number of casinos and became a major landlord in Nevada. But it soon became apparent that the Hughes "takeover" was largely cosmetic. The Desert Inn, for example, was in effect leased back to its former owners. In the meantime, Dalitz moved to his new Teamster-financed resort at La Costa in Southern California.

Maheu supervised all of Hughes' Nevada operations, including the control of state politicians. But it was the influence of Hughes on a national politician: ~~xxxxxxx~~ Richard Nixon, which led to the Watergate break-in. In 1973 the Senate Watergate Committee investigated both Maheu and Morgan in connection with the \$100,000 cash payment to Bebe Rebozo from Howard Hughes. Richard Danner, the man who actually delivered the money to Rebozo, is another old

FBI buddy of Morgan's. Danner introduced Richard Nixon to Rebozo in 1950. He had been in charge of the Miami office of the FBI before becoming City Manager, and he knew Rebozo through one of the latter's boyhood friends, former Senator George Smathers. In 1969 Danner went to work for Howard Hughes managing the Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas.

Danner testified that during the 1968 campaign Rebozo asked him to arrange a contribution from the Hughes people to Nixon. The first person Danner approached with this proposition was Edward P. Morgan, who was chosen because of his connections to Maheu. Morgan met with Danner and John Mitchell in mid-1968. Mitchell, then Nixon's campaign manager, scotched the deal when he perceived that Morgan wanted to hand the money personally to Nixon. (Rebozo was asked by the Watergate committee why he stopped using Morgan as a middleman in arranging the Hughes contribution after the election. There were several reasons, he replied, one of which was that Morgan was "Drew Pearson's lawyer.")

In November 1970, Maheu was forced out of Las Vegas and the Hughes empire by the "Mormon mafia", New York lawyer Chester Davis, and Intertel, the shadowy private security firm administered by former government officials and owned by Resorts International, proprietors of Caribbean (and soon, New Jersey) casinos. Hughes himself went, or was taken, to Resorts' stronghold in the Bahamas and never returned to the US until the day of his death more than five years later. The relationship between Hughes and the CIA, in which Maheu had played a role, deepened and culminated in the \$550,000,000 supership, the Glomar Explorer, which was built in the early 1970's for the CIA by the Summa Corporation, as Hughes' holdings came to be known. Hughes' political interests in Washington were now handled by people close to both the CIA and Nixon, notably the Robert R. Mullen public relations firm headed by Robert Bennett, son of former Utah Senator Wallace Bennett.

On December 4, 1970, it was Morgan who was asked by Chester Davis to inform his friend Maheu that he had been fired by Hughes. The Morgan-Maheu-Greenspun-Anderson axis began a counterattack against the new masters of the Hughes empire. In 1971, long before Watergate, Jack Anderson broke the story of the \$100,000 Hughes-Nixon payment. Greenspun came into possession of hundreds of handwritten Hughes memos detailing corporate machinations and political payoffs. Some of this information appears to have dealt with the business dealings of the president's brother, Donald Nixon. The Watergate

burglars were after these memos, as well as the files and conversations of Democratic Party Chairman Lawrence O'Brien, who was reportedly close to Maheu and had earlier been a Washington lobbyist for Howard Hughes.

VII

Peter Dale Scott has suggested that the reason why the Rosselli-Morgan story surfaced in early 1967 had to do with an organized, intense, clandestine lobbying and pressure campaign intended to keep Jimmy Hoffa from having to enter prison:

Hoffa's final motion to the Supreme Court on his Chattanooga conviction was filed January 27, 1967, about the time in "late January" that Pearson told Anderson's story to Earl Warren. The motion was denied on February 27 and the Anderson column was published five days later, on March 3. A similar final petition for Supreme Court review of Hoffa's other conviction (in Chicago) was belatedly denied on January 11, 1971, exactly one ~~month~~ week before the publication of Anderson's 1971 column.²⁷

There is no direct evidence that the save Hoffa campaign was behind the surfacing of the Rosselli-Morgan story. However, Scott's theory seems at least plausible.

In early 1967, the Long subcommittee was being used in a frantic last-minute effort on Hoffa's behalf. Life Magazine later revealed that Senator Long had received large "legal fees" from Hoffa attorney Morris Shenker.²⁸ Further details were added by Walter Sheridan, a former member of RFK's "get Hoffa" squad, in his book The Fall and Rise of Jimmy Hoffa. Hoffa's appeal of his Chattanooga conviction for jury tampering was nearly exhausted, and the Long investigation spent the last months of Hoffa's freedom in an attempt to find evidence of illegal government surveillance which might be sufficient to overturn the verdict. The principal Supreme Court decision on the Hoffa case came on December 12, 1966, when the Court upheld the Chattanooga conviction. Two days before, J. Edgar Hoover had sent a letter to Rep. H. R. Gross of Iowa claiming that Robert Kennedy, as Attorney General, had authorized widespread bugging in organized crime cases. On the day of the Supreme Court decision, Sen. Long invited both Hoover and Kennedy to give testimony on this matter to his subcommittee. At about this time, we now know, Maheu and Rosselli were subpoenaed by Long in connection with the

1960 Las Vegas wiretap--the incident which in 1962 had resulted in Kennedy's being briefed on the CIA-Mafia plots against Castro. Although calling Maheu and Rosselli would not have produced evidence about surveillance of Hoffa, it could well have been a way of putting pressure directly on Hoffa's chief prosecutor. This is not to say that Fensterwald, the subcommittee's chief counsel, realized at the time that Maheu and Rosselli had information about the Castro assassination plots. Nor does it explain how the subcommittee learned of the Rosselli story or the Las Vegas wiretap. It also leaves unexplained the question with which we began: why did Rosselli talk in the first place?

However, others among the dramatis personae of the Rosselli affair had ties to the save Hoffa forces. Morgan, for example, is from St. Louis, and reportedly knows Morris Shenker well. More recently, Morgan's newest law partner, former Attorney General Richard Kleindienst, has been under investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission for his role in negotiating an allegedly fraudulent insurance contract involving the Teamsters' Union Pension Fund.^{28a}

Jack Anderson was very close to one of the principal clandestine Hoffa advocates, I. Irving Davidson, a personal friend of Hoffa's and a controversial lobbyist implicated in the Bobby Laker scandals. Davidson paid Pearson's and Anderson's hotel bills at the 1960 Democratic convention. He and Anderson shared an office in downtown Washington for years, while Davidson was representing the governments of Indonesia, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic.

In September 1965, after Hoffa had filed a third motion for a new trial in the Chattanooga case claiming that the judge had told a prostitute he'd "get" Hoffa, Hoffa's attorney, Daniel Maher, and Davidson went to see the editors of the Washington Post claiming to have a tape recording of the judge's remark.

At the time of the Rosselli affair, on December 20, 1966, Hoffa ally William Loeb, publisher of the Manchester (N.H.) Union-Leader, told reporter Walter Trohan of the Chicago Tribune that Davidson had information about RFK's bugging of Hoffa. Trohan arranged for Loeb to see FBI Assistant Director Cartha DeLoach the same day. The next day Loeb called DeLoach back to offer a \$100,000 donation to Hoover's favorite charity if the FBI Director would write a letter confirming that Kennedy had illegally bugged Hoffa.

VIII

Even if Pearson and Anderson's surfacing of Rosselli's story had reasons connected with the save Hoffa drive, it is clear that Pearson and Anderson manipulated the story in other ways as well. Their column of March 3, 1967 began like this:

President Johnson is sitting on a political H-bomb-- an unconfirmed report that Sen. Robert Kennedy (Dem.- N.Y.) may have approved an assassination plot which then possibly backfired against his late brother. Top officials queried by this column, agreed that a plot to assassinate Cuban dictator Fidel Castro was "considered" at the highest levels of the Central Intelligence Agency at the time Bobby was riding herd on the Agency...It would have been impossible for this to ~~reach~~ reach the high levels it did, say insiders, without being taken up with the younger Kennedy. Indeed, one source insists that Bobby, eager to avenge the Bay of Pigs fiasco, played a key role in the planning...For weeks after the tragedy (in Dallas), this column was told, Bobby was morose and refused to see people. Could he have been plagued by the terrible thought that he helped put into motion forces that indirectly may have brought about his brother's martyrdom? Some insiders think so.

Robert Kennedy was the Democrat feared most by Lyndon Johnson. As Scott points out, this column appeared the day after Kennedy proposed a suspension of the bombing of North Vietnam.²⁹ Nor was this the first time that Pearson had helped LBJ deal with a delicate situation; Scott cites a 1964 column leaking official information discrediting a star government witness against Johnson protegee Bobby Baker.³⁰

Robert Kennedy had two reactions to the publication of the column. First, he told his aides that, far from being responsible for the assassination plots against Castro, he had actually been the one to turn them off--or so he thought. Second, he asked for a copy of the May 7, 1962 memo prepared by the CIA at his request.³¹ This memo explained the CIA's objections to the planned prosecution of Maheu, Giancana, and Rosselli for the 1960 Las Vegas wiretap and gave details of the involvement of the Mob in the Castro plots. Kennedy had evidently surmised something of the circumstances which had led to the publication of the column.

Anderson said recently that he only printed what he could confirm in March 1967. He has acknowledged that his principal source was Morgan

(and later, in 1971, Rosselli himself), and he claims that he confirmed the existence of the Castro plots through William Harvey, one of the senior CIA officers in the plots who died in June 1976. In fact, Anderson says he later learned that CIA Director Richard Helms had approved the release of the story in advance.³² But Anderson has never disclosed his sources for that part of the story which dealt with Robert Kennedy's involvement.

IX

To judge from the introductory chapter of the Schweiker-Hart report, at least one reason why the Church committee felt obligated to investigate the Rosselli affair was that "President Johnson took a personal interest in allegations (i.e., these allegations) that Castro retaliated" for CIA plots against him by having JFK killed.³³ But in the body of the report there is no serious effort to assess the importance of Johnson's interest. Instead the committee contents itself with criticizing the FBI for not conducting a proper investigation of the Morgan-Rosselli allegations.

By the time the Pearson-Anderson column was published, the FBI had known about Morgan's story for several weeks, having acquired the information in mid-February 1967 from the Secret Service. The Church committee leaves the impression that Johnson himself first learned of the story by reading the March 3 column. That column, incidentally, did not appear in the Washington Post; four days later, Pearson's column in the Post contained an abbreviated and considerably toned-down version of the story which omitted any mention of either Robert Kennedy or "underworld figures".

It is still unclear who prevented publication of the column in the Post. Johnson, at least, seems not to have been taken by surprise. According to Mark Greenspan, "another man" present at the late January meeting between Pearson and Earl Warren had informed the White House about the Morgan-Rosselli story.³⁴

The FBI's mid-February response to the Secret Service contained a recommendation that Morgan's allegations not be pursued. Copies of the FBI response were sent to Justice Department officials (including Acting Attorney General Ramsay Clark). But an internal FBI memo says mysteriously, "consideration was given to furnishing this information (Morgan's allegations) to the White House, but since this matter does not concern, nor is it

pertinent to the present Administration, no letter was being sent." The FBI supervisor who wrote this memo told the Church committee he was instructed to put this language in the memo but couldn't remember who issued the instructions or why he did so.³⁵

Two weeks after the column, on March 17, White House aide W. Marvin Watson called the FBI to convey Johnson's personal order that the Bureau interview Morgan. Watson told Assistant FBI Director DeLoach that this order "stemmed from a communication which the FBI sent to the White House some weeks ago."³⁶ The FBI seemed to be ignorant of any such request. DeLoach told the Church committee he believed the communication referred to by Watson actually came from the Secret Service.³⁷

The FBI reluctantly obeyed Johnson's order. This is not surprising; the Bureau has always given its total allegiance to the Warren Report, for which it was the principal investigating agency. On March 20, 1967 two agents from the General Investigative Division interviewed Morgan. A summary of the interview was forwarded by Hoover to the White House, the Secret Service and the Justice Department (but not to the CIA). Once again the FBI recommended that no further investigation be performed.

The FBI Intelligence Division was kept out of the Morgan case (as they had also allegedly been kept from supervising the original FBI investigation of the Kennedy assassination). It was for this reason that the FBI is criticized by the Church committee for its handling of the Morgan allegations. Agents from the General Investigative Division could not be expected to have the specialized knowledge needed to assess the charges of Castro's involvement in the assassination.

But the committee avoided any comment on the reasons for Johnson's "personal interest".

X

Johnson eventually came to accept the "Castro did it" theory. At least that is the impression he gave in several statements to friends and reporters after he left office. "When I came into office," he told one friend, "I found we were operating a damned Murder, Inc. in the Caribbean." In a 1969 interview with Walter Cronkite, Johnson said he thought there might have been an international plot in the assassination. In other statements he actually mentioned Castro.

When the Cronkite interview was broadcast, the portion on the Kennedy assassination was deleted at Johnson's request for reasons of "national security". The contents of the deleted passage, however, were leaked to the Washington Post. (Recently, just before the first Nixon-Frost interview, Nixon himself alluded to this incident.³⁸ He said the LBJ had told him "CBS went on the air ...without letting Johnson have an opportunity to edit it, and as a result Johnson was very unhappy." This is strange; the situation was exactly the opposite, unless Nixon knows of other material which Johnson wanted excised but CBS left in.)

Johnson's remark that he had found out about US assassination plots "when he came into office" remains mysterious. It may be relevant that the White House Special Group, in the summer of 1964, investigated charges that Cuban exiles in league with the Mafia tried to kill Fidel Castro. The investigation was prompted by a June 10, 1964 memo from the CIA's Deputy Director for Plans, Richard Helms, to CIA Director John McCone. Helms was reporting information about assassination plots "obtained by Agency officers from persons who were parties to the actions described."³⁹ But Helms disguises the true nature of the plots and the CIA's own role in them.

P A week later, McCone presented the information to the Special Group, chaired by McGeorge Bundy, Johnson's national security adviser. Copies of the Helms memo had been sent ^(without McCone's knowledge) to Attorney General Robert Kennedy, Bundy, State and Defense Department officials, and J. Edgar Hoover. McCone took the position that an investigation was not necessary, but Bundy ordered the FBI to investigate, saying that the matter was too important and if such plots were not prevented they could cause serious international incidents. In August, McCone transmitted seven FBI reports to Bundy. The conclusions of the FBI investigation have not been revealed. **P** All this took place during the period the Warren Commission was investigating the assassination of President Kennedy, but there is no definite indication whether the Commission was informed of the investigation, or whether the Special Group even considered the possibility that assassination plots against Castro had anything to do with the Kennedy assassination. However, on June 17, 1964, Hoover wrote a letter to Warren Commission General Counsel J. Lee Rankin "re statements by Fidel Castro, Cuban Prime Minister, concerning assassination of President Kennedy." ^{Most of} **A** this letter (CD 1359) is still classified. And it is perhaps not unrelated to this matter that Pearson and Anderson included the following remark in their March 3, 1967 column: "Shortly after Mr. Kennedy was gunned down, the FBI handed President Johnson a memo reporting that Cuban leaders

had hoped for Mr. Kennedy's death." It is thus possible that Johnson was referring to the 1964 Special Group investigation when he said that he had found out about assassination plots when he came into office. Bundy, however, has denied ever briefing Johnson about assassinations.⁴⁰

Johnson told his friend Leo Janos that, not only did he find out about a Murder Inc. we were running in the Carribean when he took office, but he asked Ramsay Clark to look into the matter (i.e., the matter of whether US assassination plots were connected to the Kennedy assassination). Clark reported back in two weeks that there was nothing to this charge, according to Johnson. LBJ was disappointed; he thought he had appointed Tom Clark's son to be Attorney General.

Why he waited three years to ask that the matter be investigated is unexplained. Presumably, Johnson and his aides would have claimed that they first learned of CIA-Mafia plots against Castro from the March 3, 1967 Pearson-Anderson column. Ramsay Clark became Attorney General ^{at} about this time and had been serving as acting Attorney General for several months.

On the same day the White House got a copy of the FBI's interview with Edward F. Morgan (March 22), it was also informed (presumably by the Justice Department) of two other facts: that the CIA had used "Maheu and Giancana" in a plot to kill Castro; and that Robert Kennedy, on May 9, 1962, had told the Agency never to do such a thing again without consulting him first.⁴¹ This ^{point} ~~is included~~ is included by the Church committee in the chronology appended to the Schweiker-Hart report without comment; it seems likely that ^{this} ~~is a reference to~~ ^{at least part of} Ramsay Clark's report to LBJ. The Church committee also discovered an FBI memo dated March 6 and addressed to Clark entitled "Central Intelligence Agency's Intentions to Send Hoodlums to Cuba to Assassinate Castro." This was three days after the Pearson-Anderson column, but the Church committee does not say if the memo deals with the Kennedy assassination.⁴²

XI

After the FBI refused to continue the Morgan investigation, Johnson turned to the CIA. On March 22, the same day he received the Clark-FBI report, he ordered CIA Director Helms to produce a report on the charges

in the Pearson-Anderson column. Helms entrusted this task to the office of the CIA Inspector General, who conducted a broad investigation and wrote reports on the CIA's attempts to assassinate Castro, ~~XXXXX~~ and its involvement in the deaths of former Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1961 and South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963. Apparently the first installments of the I.G. Report were available to Helms on April 24.⁴³ Sometime during the next month, Johnson was briefed orally by Helms on the contents of these reports, but he never saw the documents themselves. On May 22 a single copy of the report was returned to the Inspector General, and the next day, on Helms' orders, all working papers used in writing the reports were destroyed.⁴⁴

The I.G. Report, which is still secret, has had a lasting political importance. According to the executive session testimony of John Ehrlichman to the Senate Watergate Committee, in September 1971 Nixon demanded that Helms turn over to the White House a secret internal study of the CIA's role in the Bay of Pigs invasion. Ehrlichman was told by Helms that Nixon would have to speak personally to Helms about this matter. Nixon and Helms did meet and a report was given to Ehrlichman, but the report was found to be incomplete. Ostensibly, Nixon's reason for making this request had to do with a White House program to declassify documents dating from previous administrations in the wake of the release of the Pentagon Papers. The New York Times has conjectured that the report Nixon wanted was the 1967 I.G. Report.⁴⁵

On June 23, 1972, six days after the Watergate break-in, in a taped conversation whose release in 1974 was the prelude to Nixon's resignation, Nixon tells Haldeman to enlist the help of the CIA in stopping the growing FBI investigation of Watergate. Nixon told Haldeman that "we protected Helms" from a lot of things. Haldeman was instructed to tell Helms that, if the Watergate investigation continued, it could bring out "the whole Bay of Pigs thing". Did Nixon have the I.G. Report in mind?^{45a}

Eight years after it was written, the I.G. Report became the chief documentary source for the Church committee's investigation of CIA assassination plots.⁴⁶ The committee revealed that the concluding section of the I.G. Report suggested several possible responses to the charges in the March 3 Pearson-Anderson column about CIA assassination plots against Castro.⁴⁷ It is strange, however, that the committee does not discuss what the I.G. Report might have said about the possible relation between these

plots and the Kennedy assassination, which was, after all, the column's lead. Altogether, in its 1975 report of CIA assassination attempts and the 1976 Schweiker-Hart Report, the Church committee refers to the I.G. Report more than 80 times. The most logical place for the I.G. Report to have discussed links to the Kennedy assassination would be in its final pages. But, except for the single reference to the "concluding section" just mentioned above, there are at least fourteen pages at the end of the I.G. Report whose contents have been kept completely secret by the Church committee.

Was it the I.G. Report which was responsible for Johnson's apparent acceptance of the "Castro did it" theory?

Certainly some of the material in the I.G. Report, when released by the Church committee, fueled public charges of Castro's involvement in the Kennedy assassination, largely because of what came to be known as the "AM/LASH" story. "AM/LASH" was the CIA's cryptonym for Rolando Cubela, a hero of the Cuban revolution, with which he became involved not through Castro's 26th of July Movement but through the Revolutionary Student Directorate, a right-of-center group of anti-Batista students who often resorted to terrorism and assassination to achieve their aims and maintained ties to American mobsters both before and after the revolution. Cubela himself assassinated Batista's military intelligence chief in 1956, an act which was denounced at the time by Castro. Although Cubela became a high-ranking official in the government after Castro's 1959 takeover, he began to meet with CIA agents in 1961 who encouraged his ~~own~~ plans for a coup d'etat. For ~~more than~~ ^{about} a year, however, from the 1962 missile crisis to the fall of 1963, the CIA had no contact with Cubela.

Cubela's government post enabled him to travel outside Cuba with relative freedom. In September 1963 he began to meet again with his case officer and discussed plans to "eliminate" Castro. He was promised support for a coup, but the CIA for a time stalled Cubela on his request for a weapon with which to assassinate Castro prior to the coup. Cubela then demanded to see a personal representative of the Kennedy's. CIA Cuban Operations Chief Desmond Fitzgerald met Cubela in Paris on October 29, 1963, disguising his true identity but claiming to represent Robert Kennedy. Cubela was again promised support, but he was described as bitter about not receiving an automatic rifle with telescopic sight. Then, on November 22,

1963, the CIA provided Cubela with a poison pen device, which the Church committee, following the I.G. Report, says was intended for use against Castro. Some testimony indicated that the device was to be used by Cubela to commit suicide if his plot were discovered.

The original Morgan-Rosselli story was that Castro had discovered a CIA assassination plot in late-February or early March 1963.⁴⁸ The conspirators were supposedly arrested on a rooftop in Havana; they were tortured and confessed that they had been dispatched by the CIA. Castro retaliated in Dallas nine months later.

No such arrest has ever come to light. The I.G. Report says that the use of Rosselli in an assassination plot had been terminated by the CIA shortly before this time.⁴⁹ Only Hank Greenspun apparently still believes the original story. It is, of course, possible that Rosselli dispatched a final, unauthorized, team of assassins to Cuba.

But the AM/LASH scenario, whose official locus classicus was the I.G. Report, provides another potential basis for the "Castro did it" theory. The symbolic value of the poison pen episode occurring on the day Kennedy was assassinated is only part of the account. There is evidence that Castro found out about the AM/LASH-CIA relationship in the fall of 1963. On September 7, just after Cubela's first meeting with his case officer in ~~the~~ a year, Castro told an American reporter in Havana, in an unusual three-hour interview, that if the CIA continued to plot against Cuban leaders then U.S. officials themselves would not be safe.

The Church committee treated this matter with extreme delicacy, avoiding a direct revelation of the possible link between Castro's threat and Cubela's plot. To concede this link would have been to take the first step in the construction of a case against Castro in the Kennedy assassination. But four days before the release of the Schweiker-Hart report, a story carried on the CBS Morning News revealed that Cubela's September 1963 meeting with his case officer had taken place in Brazil. It had been known for some time that Castro's threatening remark to the American reporter on September 7 occurred at a reception in the Brazilian Embassy in Havana. The new information, which did not appear in the Schweiker-Hart report, made the link between Cubela and the Castro threat seem even more convincing.

But even if (as seems ^{less than certain} ~~likely~~) the CIA was actively engaged with Cubela in an assassination plot in the fall of 1963, and even if Castro found this out, there is no reason to believe ~~that~~ either that Castro would have blamed

Kennedy personally or that he would have decided to retaliate. It is only the alleged pro-Castro sympathies of Oswald (more likely a cover for intelligence activities of some kind) which keeps the suggestion of Castro's involvement alive. Castro knew that JFK himself was growing increasingly dovish on Cuba and was locked in a bitter struggle with powerful elements of his own government who advocated a new invasion of Cuba. After the Cuban missile crisis of late 1962, Kennedy had almost completely restricted military actions of Cuban exile groups based in the US. Secret negotiations aimed at improving US-Cuban relations were in progress between Kennedy and Castro at the time of Kennedy's death. There were new sabotage raids on Cuba in the summer and fall of 1963, tightly controlled by the CIA and authorized by Kennedy. But these were few in number and limited in extent; their approval is more a sign of Kennedy's yielding to intense public and private pressure for a new, tougher Cuban policy than a sign of Kennedy's own initiative. A White House group was actually asked in the fall of 1963 (presumably prompted at least in part by Castro's publically reported threat of September 7) to study whether Castro was likely to retaliate for these renewed sabotage raids. The study found no chance that retaliation would include attempts to assassinate U.S. officials. According to reliable reports, Desmond Fitzgerald, the CIA officer who met with Cubela in late October, was a member of this group. It is not known whether White House officials in the Kennedy Administration were informed about the CIA's relationship with Cubela.

After the Kennedy assassination, the CIA did use Cubela in an attempt to kill Castro. This is documented in detail in the I.G. report. Cubela was eventually arrested and jailed by Castro. According to Tad Szulc, this assassination plot, which culminated in 1965, was timed to coincide with a second Cuban invasion which was being readied in Central America under the leadership of Manuel Artime, who was the CIA's designated leader of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion brigade. The man who chose Artime in 1961, Watergate burglar Howard Hunt, was also involved in the 1965 operation.⁵⁰

How much did Lyndon Johnson find out about the AM/LASH operation which might have led him to conclude that Castro was involved in the Kennedy assassination? Helms told the Church committee that he did not brief Johnson on that phase of the AM/LASH plot which took place during his own administration. The committee failed to ask Helms whether the briefing covered the 1963 AM/LASH plot.⁵¹

XII

At least one reporter, Howard K. Smith, was sceptical of Johnson's sincerity when told by the ex-president of Castro's involvement in the Kennedy assassination. It has now emerged that Johnson may have had private suspicions at an earlier time of a different sort of conspiracy behind the assassination. A few days after the Schweiker-Hart report was issued, it was reported that in April 1967 Johnson told an aide that ~~xxx~~ he suspected the CIA was involved.⁵² According to this report, testimony about Johnson's view was deleted from an earlier draft of the Schweiker-Hart report's chapter on the Morgan-Rosselli affair. The story quotes Senator Schweiker as saying, "we never really were able to tell" if Johnson did think the CIA was involved Kennedy's death.

This report is based on the testimony of DeLoach about his April 3, 1967 phone conversation with Marvin Watson.⁵³ Watson told DeLoach that the President had expressed his belief that "a certain agency" was involved in a "conspiracy" in connection with the Kennedy assassination. This was two weeks after the FBI had interviewed Morgan and Johnson had commissioned the I.G. report. The "certain agency" could well be the CIA, but the "conspiracy", given just DeLoach's testimony, might ~~be~~ be a cover-up, not an assassination plot. But apparently DeLoach told the press after his closed-door testimony that Johnson suspected the Agency of actual involvement in the assassination.⁵⁴ According to DeLoach, Johnson was extremely worried that he too might be murdered. He requested extra FBI protection and insisted that the FBI assign an agent to every international presidential flight.

So far, DeLoach is the only source for the view that Johnson's adherence to the "Castro did it" theory might not have been fully genuine. After the release of the Schweiker-Hart report, Senator Schweiker called for testimony to be taken by the new Senate Intelligence Committee from Johnson's White House aides.^{54a} To this date, no such testimony has been disclosed.

In early 1967 Johnson faced the problem of what to do if the "political H-bomb" of the Kennedy assassination were to explode. Since mid-1966, public confidence in the Warren Report's finding that Oswald alone killed Kennedy had been severely eroded. Mark Lane's Rush to Judgment was a best-seller and along with other works critical of the Warren Commission had ignited a bitter

public controversy about re-opening the case. In November 1966, Life Magazine, which had been instrumental three years earlier in convincing the public that Oswald was guilty, called for a new investigation. It seemed likely that the "lone assassin" myth might have to be abandoned, and that the government might have to admit that the assassination had been the work of a conspiracy. Whatever he concluded privately, Johnson seems to have accepted the decision that a "Castro did it" scenario ought, if necessary, to be substituted for the Warren Report.

XIII

Two days before the March 3 Pearson-Anderson column, a man named Clay Shaw was arrested in New Orleans by District Attorney Jim Garrison and charged with conspiring to assassinate President Kennedy. Garrison had begun his investigation in secret in late 1966, perhaps shortly before Rosselli's story began to circulate. It was not until mid-February 1967 (when the Morgan-Rosselli story had reached the FBI) that the existence of the Garrison probe was revealed to the public. Five days later, Garrison's ostensible chief suspect, a mysterious former CIA pilot and adventurer named David Ferrie, who probably knew Oswald as a youth, was found dead. Garrison forged ahead and arrested Clay Shaw on March 1. The case against Shaw proved surprisingly weak and he was easily acquitted at his 1969 trial. Shaw, who died in 1974, was a prominent New Orleans businessman with apparent intelligence and right-wing political connections. The "evidence" produced in court by Garrison, however, had nothing to do with Shaw's more interesting associations. Instead Garrison produced witnesses of dubious credibility who testified concerning alleged meetings between Shaw, Ferrie, and someone who may or may not have been Lee Harvey Oswald. Garrison's case lent no support to the elaborate scenario he sketched in public involving a plot by right-wing elements of the military-intelligence-industrial complex.

But just insofar as he publicized such a scenario, Garrison was perceived as a threat by the Johnson administration and the CIA. The Agency today admits only that its Domestic Contact Service interviewed Shaw a number of times in the 1950's. This is standard procedure with regard to businessmen

who travel abroad. Recently, however, former CIA official Victor Marchetti revealed that he had attended meetings with top Agency officials, including Helms, where serious concern was expressed about Garrison's arrest of Shaw, since Shaw was, as Marchetti puts it, "one of our own". According to Marchetti, the CIA at least considered paying part of Shaw's legal expenses.

After Shaw's arrest, Attorney General Clark immediately issued a statement claiming that Shaw had been investigated by the Warren Commission and "found clear". This remark caused quite a stir when it was discovered that there were no reports dealing with Shaw in the National Archives. Clark's assertion was later quietly retracted.⁵⁵

Since the arrest occurred two days before the Pearson-Anderson column, and since Johnson apparently knew of the allegations in the column beforehand, it is not implausible to suppose that Johnson, in an effort to counter the Garrison scenario with the "Castro did it" theory, condoned the publication of the column. The March 3 column itself says that knowledge of CIA plots against Castro "may have started ...Garrison on his investigation,.. but insiders believe he is following the wrong trails." The March 7 column in the Washington Post again linked Garrison and the CIA plots.

Evidently, the FBI perceived this as one of Johnson's motives. When Watson instructed the Bureau to interview Morgan on March 17, DeLoach told him he hoped that Johnson realized that this "might be putting the FBI into a situation with District Attorney Garrison, who was nothing ~~xxx~~ more than a publicity seeker."⁵⁶ The agents who interviewed Morgan were instructed to make it clear to him that "the FBI is not interfering with any current investigation being conducted by local authorities in New Orleans."⁵⁷ On this question, the Schweiker-Hart report comments only that it is not clear whether "the Bureau's avoidance of any activity in support of, or interference with Garrison's investigation was the reason for its refusal to follow up on the lawyer's allegations..."⁵⁸

XIV

Garrison's own motives have never been clear. Walter Sheridan suggests that his investigation was manipulated by the political and criminal allies of Jimmy Hoffa.⁵⁹ Was Garrison himself part of a conspiracy? Certainly his office was used on occasion by the same Hoffa forces. Scott cites from

Sheridan a report which was carried on a Baton Rouge radio station in June 1967 allegedly based on an interview with an Assistant New Orleans DA.⁶⁰ This report stated that Baton Rouge Teamsters' official Edward G. Partin, the government's chief witness against Hoffa, was under investigation by Garrison for having possibly been associated in New Orleans with Jack Ruby and Lee Oswald. Such incidents, however, are not very illuminating with respect to Garrison himself.

Critics of Garrison point to the fact that he seemed to ignore the man who had been David Ferrie's employer on the day of the assassination, Carlos Marcello, Mafia boss of New Orleans, who had extensive ties to the Teamsters. Life Magazine claimed that Garrison had received favors from Marcello, as had many Louisiana politicians.⁶¹

On the weekend of the assassination, the New Orleans District Attorney's Office began an investigation of David Ferrie, officially because Assistant DA Herman Kohlman, who knew Ferrie and was aware of his exploits as a pilot and gunrunner, had received information which convinced him that Ferrie knew Oswald.⁶² Apparently Oswald was a teen-aged cadet in a Civil Air Patrol squadron commanded by Ferrie.⁶³ On the afternoon of November 22, 1963 Ferrie was in a Louisiana federal court where Carlos Marcello was being found not guilty of violating immigration laws. He had been employed as an investigator on the case by Marcello's attorney, G. Wray Gill. That night, Ferrie left on a mysterious two-day trip to Texas, stopping in Houston and Galveston and returning to New Orleans on the night of the 24th. Before he returned Ferrie was already aware that he was wanted in the assassination case, having learned this fact by telephone from Gill.⁶⁴ Ferrie gave himself up on Monday, November 25 and was questioned for several hours by Garrison's office. But federal agents quickly took control of the case and the Ferrie affair was hushed up.

Three years later, in late 1966, Garrison says he began a new investigation by taking another look at David Ferrie. Whenever he has been asked to explain what set him off, Garrison has referred to a plane trip to Washington which he took in November 1966 in the company of Louisiana Senator Russell Long and New Orleans oilman Joseph Rault. Long convinced him, Garrison said, that the Warren Commission had not discovered the truth. Rault later formed a group of conservative businessmen who gave financial support to the Garrison investigation.

Long himself is known to have been active in the save Hoffa effort.⁶⁵ He is also cited by the March 7 Pearson-Anderson column: "Sen. Russell Long has told us that Lee Harvey Oswald...trained with Castro revolutionaries in Minsk during his Soviet stay. This information, which Long swore is reliable, was never revealed by the Warren Commission."

We may never know what prompted Garrison to re-open his investigation, but the Russell Long story seems to be a cover. According to one account, the new investigation had begun earlier than November 1966 and had not necessarily centered on David Ferrie.⁶⁶ In late October Garrison contacted an attorney he knew named Dean Andrews. Andrews had told the Warren Commission in 1964 that Oswald, in the company of several gay Latinos, had visited Andrews' office during the summer of 1963 (when Oswald was living in New Orleans) seeking legal assistance in amending his dishonorable discharge from the Marines. Andrews added that on the day after the assassination he was called by a man whom he could recognize but whom he knew only as Clay Bertrand. Several times in the past Bertrand had referred gay clients in trouble with the law to Andrews. Bertrand asked Andrews to defend Lee Harvey Oswald, who had been arrested in Dallas the day before. (Andrews, incidentally, had also been employed by Gill for Marcello's defense.) Andrews was in the hospital at the time recuperating from pneumonia. The Warren Commission discounted his testimony about Bertrand, but it was supported by two of his associates. Garrison later claimed that Clay Bertrand was Clay Shaw, and Andrews was convicted in 1967 for perjury when he refused either to make this identification or to deny it. Shaw turned out to have extensive connections in the gay community of New Orleans.

This is not the only indication that Garrison suspected Shaw earlier than he has admitted. But the reasons for his suspicions remain unknown. Shaw was interviewed by the DA's office in December (a few months before his arrest) but was questioned only about Oswald's having handed out leaflets in August 1963 in front of the New Orleans International Trade Mart, where Shaw was Managing Director.

In any case, Garrison's scenario consistently differed from the Rosselli-Morgan story. Whatever his true motives, the "Castro did it" theory played no role in Garrison's thinking about the assassination. Since it seems likely that Rosselli began transmitting his story just after the

beginning of the 1966 Garrison investigation, it is possible that whoever put Rosselli and Morgan up to what they did was ~~not~~ formulating an eventual public response to Garrison. Realizing that the existence of the Garrison probe (which was an open secret among journalists and others) would soon be revealed, the promoters of the Rosselli-Morgan story may have hoped to manipulate the New Orleans investigation toward a Cuban, rather than a domestic, target. Later, the publication of the Pearson-Anderson column, coming as it did two days after Shaw's arrest, may have been partly aimed at diverting both public and official attention away from the Garrison scenario.

XV

Rosselli's death will certainly make it more difficult to learn more about the whole affair. He was not the first nor the last mobster involved in the Castro plots to meet a violent death. Sam Giancana was murdered in June 1975 just before he was to meet with Church committee investigators; two years earlier, one of his chief aides, Richard Cain, who was also involved with the CIA, had been killed. In March 1977, another Chicago mobster with ties to the Castro plots, ^{Charles Nicolletti,} was also murdered. After Rosselli's death, Senators Howard Baker and Gary Hart, both members of the Senate Intelligence Committee, conducted a limited investigation and forced then Attorney General Edward Levi to order an FBI investigation, which has so far produced no results. Local authorities in Miami are also conducting an investigation in the course of which major Mafia figures (including Meyer Lansky) have been subpoenaed. According to the officer in charge of this probe, the focus is on Rosselli's "organized crime activity".⁶⁷

According to government sources familiar with the case, Rosselli met in June 1976 in Los Angeles with three high-ranking Mafia members: Jimmy "the Weasel" Frattiano of San Francisco, Frank Bompensiero of San Diego, and "Dragna" (presumably Lou Dragna, nephew of former LA Mafia boss Jack Dragna). (Bompensiero himself, an FBI informant, was murdered in February 1977). These sources say that Rosselli was scheduled to meet in July with a "West Coast enforcer" but was executed prior to that time.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that even if ^{it was} the Mob ^{who} did away with Rosselli their reasons may have been connected to their alliance with the CIA. As a New York Times editorial put it, in calling for a congressional

investigation of Rosselli's death, "incantation of the familiar words, 'gangland style killing,' should block neither people's minds nor further inquiries."⁶⁸

Rosselli's 1966 charges, in one respect, stepped in where Garrison feared to tread. According to Jack Anderson, Morgan's version of Rosselli's story included the assertion that the people hired by Castro to kill Kennedy were members of the organization of Santos Trafficante, Jr.⁶⁹ Twelve days before his death, according to Anderson, Rosselli dined with Trafficante at the Landings Restaurant in Fort Lauderdale.

Many investigators had come to suspect that Trafficante may have played a role in the Kennedy assassination long before they heard about Rosselli's story. Trafficante is the Mob boss of Tampa and is said to have controlled the world traffic in heroin and other drugs for many years. He was also the chief steward of the Mob's gambling and other interests in Cuba before the revolution. He played a significant part in the CIA assassination plots against Castro, having been recruited by Rosselli and the CIA because of his numerous contacts among the community of Mob-connected gamblers and anti-Castro Cubans who remained in Havana after 1959.

He was also a close associate of Marcello and had extensive ties to Hoffa and the Teamsters. It was recently reported that Trafficante told a prominent Cuban exile who was also an FBI informant in Miami in September 1962 that JFK was going to be assassinated because of the administration's anti-Hoffa campaign.⁷⁰ A similar threat by Marcello is supposed to have occurred at about the same time.⁷¹ The Cuban exile who heard Trafficante's threat was Jose Aleman, Jr., a wealthy backer of the anti-Castro movement who had been a revolutionary associate of Rolando Cubela (AM/LASH) since the 1950's. Another exile, Victor Espinosa Hernandez, referred to in the Schweiker-Hart report only as "A", who was also a lifelong friend of Cubela, told the FBI and CIA in the spring of 1965 that the same mobsters (i.e., Trafficante) who had been involved in the 1960-2 CIA plots to kill Castro may also have had knowledge of the AM/LASH operation. ~~_____~~ ^{Espinoza} was one of eleven people detained at a house near New Orleans on July 31, 1963 where large amounts of explosives were found. The explosives were to be used to bomb a Cuban oil refinery. The FBI was involved in the bust, but no arrests were made. Others at the house included the Minutemen leader

Richard Lauchli and a reputed stock swindler and associate of Trafficante's named Sam Benton. The property was owned by ^{the brother of} another alleged stock swindler from Florida, Mike McLaney, who had been associated with Trafficante in Cuban gambling operations. The Schuiker-Hart report asserts that these individuals were also responsible for organizing a "training camp" for Cuban exiles nearby. This camp was abandoned a few days after the bust at the McLaney house, and several members of the New Orleans Cuban exile community helped the exiles from the camp return to Miami.⁷² The purpose of the camp was to serve as a transshipment point for exiles interested in joining the forces of Artime in Central America who were at this time preparing for a second Cuban invasion. Lee Harvey Oswald came into contact with several exiles associated with this training camp a few days after it broke up. Oswald posed as an anti-Castro sympathizer and offered to use his skills in helping to train guerillas. Several days later, one of these exiles, Carlos Bringuier, was arrested with Oswald after what appears to have been a staged scuffle as Oswald was handing out pro-Castro leaflets.

Trafficante was called as a witness by the House Assassinations Committee in March, 1977. He declined to answer any questions about the Kennedy assassination or his relationship with Rosselli.

Notes

- ¹Senate Select Committee to Study Intelligence Operations, Report on Alleged Assassination Plots involving Foreign Leaders, November 20, 1975; hereafter referred to as "Assassination Report" (AR).
- ²Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson, "Washington Merry-go-round," March 3, 1967.
- ³Jack Anderson, Boston Globe, September 9, 1976.
- ⁴Senate Select Committee to Study Intelligence Operations, Final Report: Book V, Investigation of the Assassination of President Kennedy: Performance of the Intelligence Agencies, June 23, 1976; hereafter referred to as "Schweiker-Hart report" (SHR).
- ⁵SHR, pp. 80-86 ("1967: Allegations of Cuban Involvement"); Seth Kantor, "LEJ Hinted CIA Plot in Kennedy Slaying," Detroit News, June 27, 1976.
- ⁶SHR, p. 80, n. 21.
- ⁷Washington Post, August 22, 1976, p. 1; CBS Evening News, Fred Graham interview with Edward P. Morgan, August 22, 1976.
- ⁸AR, p. 85, n. 4.
- ⁹"The (Million dollar) Sting at the Friars Club," New York Magazine, July 21, 1975.
- ¹⁰New York Times, April 13, 1976.
- ¹¹Jack Anderson, January 18-19, 1971.
- ¹²Miami Herald, September 19, 1976.
- ¹³Jack Anderson, Boston Globe, September 9, 1976.
- ¹⁴Bernard Fensterwald, Memorandum for the record re conversation with Jack Anderson on October 25, 1967.
- ¹⁵~~is~~ Sam Giancana also used his CIA ties to stop the government from prosecuting him. ~~was~~ In 1963 the Justice Department declined to cross-examine Giancana during the latter's testimony in his civil suit against the government for alleged harassment and illegal surveillance. And in 1965, after Giancana had spent a year in jail for refusing to testify under immunity to a Chicago federal grand jury, Justice Department lawyers, acting on instructions from their superiors in Washington, decided not to grant Giancana immunity for a second time. Reportedly, Giancana's attorney, Edward Bennett Williams, had been told by his client about the Castro assassination plots. (New York Times, April 13, 1976)
- ¹⁶Miami Herald, September 19, 1976.
- ¹⁷AR, pp. 77-79, 125-135.
- ¹⁸AR, p. 79, n. 3.

¹⁹ Personal communication from Fensterwald.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ SHR, p. 84.

²² Ibid., p. 85, n. 55.

²³ New York Times, February 25, 1977.

²⁴ Anderson's most detailed account of what he learned about Rosselli's story from Morgan is his column of March 24, 1977. Morgan himself acknowledged to CBS News on August 22, 1976 that "Rosselli apparently believed that the assassins were associated with Mafia operatives in Florida who had teamed up with Castro." See below, sec. XV.

²⁵ Interview with Robert Maheu, September 9, 1976.

²⁶ SHR, p. 84.

²⁷ Peter Dale Scott, Crime and Cover-up, p. 27.

²⁸ Life, September 1, 1967.

²⁹ Scott, p. 26.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 25-6.

³¹ SHR, p. 106.

³² Jack Anderson, September 9, 1976.

³⁴ Las Vegas Sun, March 1, 1976.

³⁵ SHR, p. 82.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 83.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 83. Watson, by the way, was a Texan active in 1972 in Democrats for Nixon. He was a vice-president of Occidental Petroleum, and in 1976 he pleaded guilty to a charge brought by the Special Prosecutor's Office for helping Occidental president Armand Hammer arrange an illegal contribution by Hamner to the Nixon campaign.

³⁸ TV Guide, April 30, 1977.

³⁹ Document no. 3 ~~from the 1975 declassification review~~ and 4, released by CIA, May, 1976 in Borosage v. CIA; AR, pp. 177-78.

⁴⁰ House Select Committee on Intelligence, Hearings, Book V, Testimony of McGeorge Bundy, pp. 1807-8.

⁴¹ SHR, p. 106.

⁴²AR, pp. 127-8, n. 3.

⁴³SHR, p. 106.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 106; AR, p. 3.

⁴⁵Senate Watergate Committee, Executive Session Testimony of John Ehrlichman; New York Times, March , 1976. Ehrlichman has since published a novel about high-level political blackmail concerning a report by the CIA Inspector General on a US-supported invasion of a Caribbean country

⁴⁶AR, p. 3.

^{45a} Nixon referred to the Kennedy assassination twice at his Aug. 22, 1973 press conference, implying that it was a conspiracy

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 110, 114.

⁴⁸SHR, p. 84.

⁴⁹AR, p. 84.

⁵⁰Tad Szulc, "Cuba on our mind," Esquire, Feb. , 1974.

⁵¹SHR, p. 86.

⁵²Seth Kantor, Detroit News, June 27, 1976.

⁵³Church Committee, Hearings, Book VI, p. 182.

⁵⁴Zodiac News dispatch, December 8, 1975.

^{54a}CBS "Face the Nation," June 27, 1976.

⁵⁵Harold Weisberg, Oswald in New Orleans, pp. 212-26. Clark was probably told by someone that there were reports dealing with "Clay Bertrand" (see below, p. 26), and that Garrison suspected Shaw was Bertrand.

⁵⁶SHR, p. 83.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 85, n. 54.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 85, n. 54.

⁵⁹ Walter Sheridan, The Fall and Rise of Jimmy Hoffa, esp. ch. XIII ("Louisiana Hayride").

⁶⁰Scott, pp. 27-8 and n. 100.

⁶¹Life, September 1, 1967.

⁶²CD 75, p. 301.

⁶³CD 75, pp. 220, 289-92.

⁶⁴CD 75, pp. 283-4, 314-5, 320

⁶⁵Sheridan, 411-2, 424-5, passim.

⁶⁶Milton Brener, The Garrison Case, p. 61.

67 New York Times, October 23, 1976

68 New York Times,

69 Jack Anderson, ~~XXXX~~ March 24, 1977.

70 George Crile, Washington Post, May 16, 1976.

71 Ed Reid, The Grim Reapers, p.

72 SHR, p. 12.