

NARRATION

Thursday, September 28, 1978

Was organized crime involved in a plot to assassinate President Kennedy? It had the motive, opportunity and means, and from the testimony thus far, the possibility cannot be dismissed, although it can hardly be said to have been established. At this point, it is, in your words, Mr. Chairman, perhaps only a little more than "a suspicion suspected" not a "fact found".

The Committee decided early in this investigation, as soon as it was realized that a Mafia plot to assassinate the President warranted serious consideration, to assemble the most reliable information available on organized crime. The details of this phase of the investigation will appear ^{HOPEFULLY IN FULL} in the final report - the background of organized crime in America, the structure of the Mafia in the early 1960's, efforts by the Kennedy Administration to crush the mob, the evidence that the assassination might have been undertaken in retaliation for those efforts.

To scrutinize the possible role of organized crime in the assassination, the Committee brought on board one of the country's leading experts on the subject. He is Ralph Salerno, whose career as an organized crime investigator with the New York City Police Department goes back to 1946.

Mr. Salerno ^{WAS SINCE} retired from the NYPD in 1967 as supervisor of detectives, having spent his entire span of service in the organized crime field.] NYT SAID - HE KNEW MORE ABOUT THE MAFIA THAN ANY NON-MEMBER.

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and 64. It is also fair to comment that had this sort of investigation taken place at that time, when the evidence was fresh, it is possible, though hardly a sure thing, that a lot more information might have been forthcoming.

But the Committee must face this fact: the question of organized crime involvement is still an open one. Nothing that has been uncovered excludes it. And much that is new points toward it. Yet, frustration may be the result of its efforts. To address the issues raised by this frank recognition of the possibility of ultimate frustration, and to comment on the investigation of the Warren Commission and this Committee as well as the future, the Committee has invited ^{THE HON.} Burt W. Griffin to appear here today.

Judge Griffin was an assistant counsel for the Warren Commission. As such, he shared responsibility for the investigation of Jack Ruby and the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Judge Griffin received a B.A., cum laude, from Amherst College in 1954, and an LL.B. from Yale Law School in 1959, NOT READ [where he was note and comment editor of the Yale Law Journal. Before joining the law firm of MacDonald, Hopkins and Hardy in Cleveland, Ohio in 1962, he was a law clerk to Judge George T. Washington of the U. S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and an assistant U. S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio.]

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Mr. Salerno has been a consultant to the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, working with the Organized Crime Task Force. He also has advised the President's Commission on Violence and the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals. In 1974-75, he was the chief rackets investigator for the Queens County, New York District Attorney.

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Mr. Salerno is the author of numerous articles and the co-author of a book, The Crime Confederation.

It would be appropriate at this time, Mr. Chairman, to call Mr. Salerno.

It could be said, Mr. Chairman, that the Committee has come full circle. It began with a question: could organized crime have been involved in a plot to murder President Kennedy? It has run an exhaustive check of the possible conspiratorial associations of one key figure in the assassination, Jack Ruby. The Committee ^{OBVIOUSLY} has more work to do - on Ruby's associations, as well as Lee Harvey Oswald's - and it will have the opportunity to say more about them in its final report in December.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the Committee's investigation into the possible involvement of organized crime has been more complete than that of the FBI or the Warren Commission in 1963

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Judge Griffin has served as Director of the Cleveland Office of Economic Opportunity, Legal Services Program, as well as Director of the Cleveland Legal Aid Society. On January 3, 1975, he was appointed Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

It would be appropriate at this time, Mr. Chairman, to call Judge Griffin.