

Outside contact report: how I spent my vacation: Sue, Beth and I spent most of May visiting with my parents; I also got six relaxing days on the train. I did take care of some business: for two days, I visited Harold W. and checked out his basement. (Warren Commission critic's heaven: 47 file cabinets, slowly being filled up with FBI files.) We spent a couple of days with Jeff G. in Washington. Bud hosted a dinner party in his Alexandria safehouse, with me, Jeff, Dick Billings, Bob Fink, Jim Lesar, Dan Moldea, Fletcher Prouty, and Ken Smith. Discussion ranged from AM/LASH to AM/TRAK, with a frank and candid exchange of views on EMK's credibility re Chappaquiddick. Dick Billings was pumped for news of the book he and Blakey have written. (It is now due out in November or December, I understand. Will the thesis be "I'm G. Robert Blakey and you're not?" Maybe; the editor is Chevy Chase's father.) The next day, Jeff and I met with Mike Ewing, to find out what's really going on. In Charlottesville, we saw Mark Allen, Esq., just done with law school and admitted to the Bar. He joined us for lunch with an old family friend, who was EMK's landlady when he was in law school and who also knows Anastasia. (That is, the Charlottesville pretender taken seriously in Tony Summers' previous book, "The File on the Tsar.") Coincidence or conspiracy? I'm pretty much recovered from all this vacationing, but I'm nowhere near caught up on my work and correspondence. My apologies to those I owe letters to. But inspired by the Summers-Phillips brouhaha on "Today" yesterday, I might as well jump into the issue of the day: the Veciana-Bishop-Oswald story.

"Other than that, Mr. Phillips, how did you like the book?"

Where you draw the line on Veciana's credibility is a difficult issue. Obviously, there are problems if you believe there was a Morris Bishop (and the HSCA's supporting evidence, including that which points to Phillips), and if you believe that Veciana saw Bishop with Oswald, but believe that Veciana is lying when he denies that Phillips is Bishop (as the HSCA suggested). All I can say for Veciana's credibility is that those who trust him the most are people who have talked to him - Dick Russell, Gaeton Fonzi, Tony. I remain very skeptical. I'm inclined to believe there was a Bishop, and that if we find out exactly what the relationship between Alpha 66 and the U.S. government was, we will find out something worth knowing. (But it may not have anything to do with the Kennedy assassination.) I'm strongly inclined to believe that Veciana did not see Bishop with Oswald (or even with "Oswald"). To explain my bias, I think I should set out the origin and chronology of my interest in Veciana.

In about 1970, Jim Schmitt discovered the link between the Odio matter and an apparent CIA plot to kill Castro - that is, after the attempt led by Veciana failed and he escaped, his co-conspirator Reinol Gonzales was arrested while hiding on the Odio family farm. I detailed this link in my memo to the Rockefeller Commission (as reprinted in "The Assassinations," with Veciana not named). Also, I tried to interest Tad Sculz and Jack Anderson (mea maxima culpa!). None of this produced any visible interest. (The CIA is still withholding their response to the Rockefeller Commission on my memo.) Late in 1975, George O'Toole and I put together the short article which appeared in the Saturday Evening Post for March 1976.

Our conclusions were, I think, appropriately unsensational: "Like the two Cubans who, with 'Leon Oswald,' visited Sylvia Odio in September 1963, Antonio Veciana was 1) an anti-Castro activist, 2) engaged in raising funds for the commandos, and 3) acquainted with Sylvia Odio's father. While this falls far short of proving it, a real possibility exists that Veciana was one of the two Cubans who visited Sylvia Odio, or that he at least can shed some light on the Odio incident. There is nothing in the available records of the Warren Commission to indicate that the government investigators ever pursued this line of inquiry or were even aware of this subtle link between the abortive assassination attempt in Havana in 1961 and the successful one in Dallas two years later."

We weren't really too taken by the idea that Veciana was one of the Odio visitors, but rather by the possibility that he might know something about it. The article pointed out that he had been in Dallas in April 1964, that Alpha 66 met at 3126

Since I'm mentioned in Tony's preface, I think I should pass on my opinions. I've been corresponding with Tony since early in 1979, and I concluded quickly that he was interested in the right things - i.e., what I was interested in. That was a relief, since there are so many weird theories floating around. I didn't see the manuscript until it was in page proofs, so there wasn't time for long discussions of points of disagreement, such as Phillips-Bishop. There are certainly a number of witnesses whom Tony takes much more seriously than I do. But on the whole, his overall view of the case is pretty close to mine - especially when one considers the wide range of books that could be written now. With people like Belin and Sprague and Sprague and Eddowes around, I don't hesitate to say that this is a good book, and a good book to have out at this time.

Since I'm so close to the case, it's hard to read the book without just passing over what we all know and generally agree on, and noting only the points which are new or controversial: here's some interesting new stuff on Atwood; nothing really new on the acoustics; look - he takes Delphine Roberts pretty seriously, but here's a pretty good disclaimer on Bruneau and Oswald's bail; and here are some pretty dubious witnesses (Hemming, Marchetti, Gaudet). We all have to read the book that way, but I've been trying to keep my eye on the main point. The book brings together material in the familiar areas of Cubans and intelligence, in the new context created by the acoustical evidence and the HSC findings. That is something the press has conspicuously failed to do since the acoustical evidence came out.

And now for something completely different-the Lifton book:

I am pleased to be able to announce the scheduled publication, by Macmillan in January 1981, of "Best Evidence: Disguise and Deception in the Assassination of John F. Kennedy," by David S. Lifton.

You may well ask, what's it about? About 600 pages. But seriously, folks, it's about the best evidence on the assassination. And it's very heavy.

The wheels of Justice: I haven't heard much recently. By letter of May 7, Rep. Stokes advised that "there has been little action [on the MLK case] beyond examination of the work of the HSCA. However, the Department has made a firm commitment to explore further the acoustic evidence in the murder of President Kennedy, and is looking into other questions concerning his death as well."

In my letter, I had also asked if Stokes could send me the missing MLK footnotes, the JFK investigative plan, and a full list of witnesses. He explained how not everything could be published, and how everything is now at the Archives. "Thus, I regret, particularly with respect to any omitted footnotes, that I cannot furnish the material which you have requested." [For these letters, ask for #148.]

I've always assumed that the missing footnotes were just an accident. But they seem unduly difficult to get. Is it possible they include something sensitive?

FBI files: After two days in Harold's basement, I decided I really don't want to try to do serious research on our library's microfilm copy of the FBI files. Of course, microfilm is inconvenient. Even more important: you need the field office files, the indexes to the Dallas files, and the inventory worksheets giving cross references to the HQ files. Also, new material (such as items originally withheld or referred to other agencies) is slowly but steadily being released. The new material includes files which Harold found references to and insisted on getting; the new material tends to have a higher fraction of interesting items.

There is certainly useful work still to be done on these files. I have no reason to believe that the HSC went over them with an appropriately critical eye - especially the field office files. At the very least, they chose not to fill a published volume with goodies. Given the HSC's overall balanced position on the virtues of the FBI-WC investigation, it is no surprise that they didn't make a big fuss over documents like the one Harold just sent me: a memo for the file by Shanklin, reporting on a phone call from Malley in D.C. about "a bunch of real crackpots" who will be coming to Dallas - Hubert, Redlich, Ball, and Jenner. "A loyalty investigation is being conducted on Genner and Ball. Redlich has been over in Russia and is on the borderline. Mr. Malley instructed that all personnel be told

SS files at the Archives: Larry Haapanen has forwarded an official description (from an Archives publication) of these files, recently given to the Archives. They total 4 cubic feet and include "reports, correspondence, interviews, biographical profiles, transcripts of telephone conversations, internal memorandums, movie films, sound recordings, photographs, slides, and scale drawings of the presidential limousine." (I mentioned these files in the previous issue, but haven't been able to do any followup myself.) [This description is item #149.]

LBJ Library material: The library has sent me an updated list of available material. [Item #150, 6 pp.] Of the available oral histories, 44 are said to have material on the assassination. Someone ought to look at these.

Books: One of the pleasures of riding the train cross-country is that you have time to read whole books. I got through "Wilderness of Mirrors" (Dave Martin), "Bay of Pigs" (Peter Wyden), "Will" (Gordon Liddy), and "The Search for the 'Manchurian Candidate'" (John Marks). All fascinating, and recommended for anyone with some spare time. I didn't learn anything directly relevant to the assassination, except perhaps a reminder of what kind of weird people there are out in the real world. If G. Gordon is willing to knock of people from Howard Hunt to Jack Anderson, and talk about it, it hardly seems possible to dismiss Tony Summers' speculation about renegade elements in U.S. intelligence on the grounds that nobody would get involved in anything like that.

To me, Dave Martin's book was most valuable in depicting Harvey as someone with a non-bizarre past - before, he just seemed to be a total wild man who popped up in the plots against Castro. I was surprised that Martin takes the charge that Angleton himself was the mole as seriously as he does. The book (which is basically about Harvey and Angleton) has little that was new to me on the Castro plots, or on the JFK case. Unlike Epstein, Martin reports the weird logic of the counter-intelligence people, without appearing to endorse it.

There is an interesting reference to Soviet use of a U.S. passport to get an impostor into the U.S. (the Tairova case). [Interesting in that it may explain the CIA-FBI concern, that is.]

From p. 122: "The farce (of the blown CIA-Mafia plots) would have been laughable had not the plotters left a trail leading directly into the Oval Office and even the President's bedroom. Kennedy had actually met personally and publicly with one of the plotters,... Tony Varona. The President's only purpose had been to assure Varona and several other leaders of the exile community that every effort would be made to rescue their comrades.... But the mere fact that he had met with Varona would forever rob the administration of any moral authority should the plot become known." (See p. 2 of the 1/1/80 issue for my comments on Varona. I still think a chronology would be worth doing.)

The Wyden book gave me a new understanding of the depth of the exiles' anger at JFK. I've been referring for years to that anger, but in a pro forma way.

The Marks book indicates that the CIA mistreatment of Nosenko was not a casual malicious act, but presumably based on extensive CIA studies of how to break someone. Despite all the HSC's attention to Nosenko's handling, I don't recall any attempt to tie it in to other CIA work on mind control! Marks seems to have entertained some heavy suspicions about Sirhan as a 'Manchurian Candidate' (pp. 191-2), but the suspicions are muted, and Sirhan is not even named in the book. One final item: reference to trying to buy off the head of Cuban intelligence in a Madrid hotel in 1966, for \$1,000,000. Did we know about that? Any relevance to the AM/LASH plot?

Liddy's book is, I'm afraid, a good read, but I was left with the strong feeling that Liddy doesn't really know what Watergate is about. (That reminds me - if any of you do know, Jeff Goldberg would be interested. I don't even know what the right question about Watergate is - but I'm pretty sure it isn't what Nixon knew, and when.)

More on the Summers book: Tony reported on his work at a cocktail party at Norman Mailer's place a couple of weeks ago. Among the celebrities present were Tom Wicker, Bob Silvers, Carl Oglesby, Swifty Lezar (who used to book acts into Jack Ruby's nightclub), Diane Keaton, Jeff Goldberg, G. Robert Blakey, and Candice Bergen. Ah, for the life of a New York intellectual!

- \* 167. 26 May 80 Village Voice; Eliot Fremont-Smith praises Epstein's review (#164); calls Epstein credible because of 'Inquest' and his book on CIA mole-hunting, "Agency of Fear" [sic]; the latter "particularly notable for its extensive documentation.... I see no escape for Martin on moral/journalistic grounds...." Disgusting! If anyone doesn't have, and wants, my critique of "Legend," it's still available.
- \*\* 168. June 80 Covert Action; item on Weberman v. NSA. A.J. is after Earl Ruby's 1962 telegram to Havana. The NSA refused to acknowledge existence or nonexistence of the document, but has been ordered by the District Court to do so. Good for A.J.! I wonder what the HSC got from NSA?
169. 2 Jun 80 Zodiac; chemist Dwayne Wolfer (RFK case figure) fired by LAPD.
170. 3 Jun 80 WP, WS, and NYT obits for Jack Wasserman, prominent immigration law expert. (Marcello case not mentioned.)
- \* 171. 8 Jun 80 Parade [4 pp.] "Young People who Love Politics," including Shanin Specter, who thinks public servants are okay. (Photos too.)
- \* 172. 8 Jun 80 NYT; letter from Blakey calling for a proper investigation of the shooting of Vernon Jordan (and referring to the HSC recommendations).
173. 9 Jun 80 Newsweek; favorable review of Dave Martin's book.
- \* 174. 11 Jun 80 W. Star; James Earl Ray says a publisher is trying to get him to write a book. Also, his marriage is going pretty well. (And, on the same page
- \* 17 Jun 80 UPI; police looking for John Larry Ray in connection with 5/30/80 robbery of the Farmers Bank of Liberty.
175. 14 Jun 80 Nation [3 pp.] Robert Sherrill review (favorable) of Frank Donner's book, "The Age of Surveillance." "I gather that Donner, because the belief in 'huge, all-embracing' conspiracies has done so much damage to the national psyche [when held by people like Hoover], tries to avoid believing in them himself."
- \* 176. 18 Jun 80 WP (Lardner) [2 pp.] "U.S. Accuses 4 of Insurance Bribery" (Marcello, Davidson, et al.)
- \*\* 177. 17 Jun 80 Official JD press release [2 pp.] on the Marcello indictment
178. The Marcello et al. indictment [25 pp.] Some details, lots of legalese.
- \*\* 179. 24 Jun 80 UP in SFC; former DPD chief Jesse Curry dies. (Heart attack, age 66.) Quoted on LHO being influenced. [On the same page: psychiatrist John Holbrook, who testified against Jack Ruby, dies - suicide.]
- \* 180. 25 Jun 80 AP in SFC (based on St. Louis P-D story); Larry Ray (captured 6/23) questioned about the shooting of Vernon Jordan, but not considered a suspect.
181. 25 Jun 80 UP in SFC; Marcello, Davidson et al. plead innocent.
182. July 80 Mother Jones [12 pp.] Excerpts from the new Dinges-Landau book on the assassination of Letelier. A good book, Peter Scott says.
- [Thanks for clippings to Mike Ewing (154-6,158,162-3,168,171,177-8), C.P.R. (157,159,166), Jeff Goldberg (158,160-1,164,169-70,174,176), Bob Ranftel (160,167) and Tony Summers (141-7,153,172). Many May-June SFC clips have not been listed yet.]

6/27/80)

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More HSC material has turned up in my mailbox. (A) Draft, by Surell Brady, on the John Hurt allegation [28 pp.] I think my quick 1970 analysis, done without access to official sources, is just as good. Brady concludes that Hurt wasn't involved in the assassination, but fails to zero in on the likelihood that he was a crank who tried to call Oswald. (B) Robert Genzman's analysis of the issues raised by Oswald's military service [25 pp.]; I'm quite unimpressed. (C) Testimony of Richard Edward Snyder [54 pp.]; the questioning (by Genzman and Mickey Goldsmith) again does not impress me. Snyder didn't admit anything (like an ongoing CIA connection), although the questioners would have liked that. (D) Interview of William Sullivan by Bob Fink, then with the Abzug Committee. A bit on the JFK case; nothing earth-shaking. I got some of this testimony earlier; I now have 122 pages, which is almost but not quite all the interview.