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The HSCA investigation of Oswald in Mexico:

Photographs were made during the "Oswald" visit to Mexico City, and they were either destroyed or deliberately withheld from the House Assassinations Committee. This charge was made by journalist Tony Summers, appearing on Pacifica radio on November 22. Summers revealed that he has seen the unpublished HSCA staff report on Oswald in Mexico.

Summers said that five former CIA officers told the HSCA that such a photo did exist. The CIA has never admitted having any photo of the real Oswald in Mexico, and has said that the unidentified man whose picture was shown to Marguerite Oswald (and published by the Warren Commission) was not an Oswald impostor or associate.

The HSCA staff, according to Summers, also "tracked down" a secret "memoir" prepared by the Mexico City station chief, Winston Scott. The authors of the HSCA staff report were convinced that a photograph of Oswald was taken, and was preserved (along with a written record) until Scott's death. Subsequently, this material was removed from Scott's safe by "a senior and renowned counterintelligence chief," and the photo has now "to all intents and purposes vanished."

The House Committee did not publish these details, presumably in part at the insistence of the CIA. The HSCA Report includes citations to the "classified staff study," which is entitled "Lee Harvey Oswald, the CIA, and Mexico City," and which consists of at least 247 pages. [HR 641-2]

The HSCA Report does refer to some of these allegations. Most strikingly, a footnote on page 125 states, without amplification, that "The committee believed that photographs of Oswald might have been taken and subsequently lost or destroyed."

More discreetly, the Report notes that "the committee had other reports that the CIA had obtained a picture of Oswald" (i.e., other than the photos provided by the Cuban government of the alleged location of the surveillance camera), but that "The CIA, however, denied that such a photograph had been obtained, and no such pictures of Oswald were discovered by the committee during its review of the Agency's files." [HR 251]

Similarly, the Embassy visitor "reportedly spoke broken, hardly recognizable Russian," but the Report gives no clue as to the nature of these reports. [HR 251] Summers says that the conversations were "bugged," and that the real Oswald spoke Russian quite well. There were newspaper reports in 1975 and 1976 about tapes of Oswald which were routinely destroyed. I don't know if the HSCA staff cleared up the conflicts in the published accounts of these tapes, or how well they established the existence (at any time) of tapes with "Oswald" speaking broken Russian.

Summers believes that Oswald did go to Mexico, but was not the sole cause of the stir at the Communist embassies. My impression is that the photo was supposedly of the real Oswald.

Two cautions have been brought to my attention. Although the supposed authors of this staff report have a good reputation, their analysis may have gone further than the evidence requires, or may otherwise be in error. Also, just because CIA people told the HSCA something doesn't make it true. It is possible that the conflicting accounts could be related to some internal CIA dispute, like the split over Nosenko which shaped the public testimony of CIA officials.

Item #1 (i.e., #1984.1) is my transcript (8 pp.) of the Mexico segment of Larry Schlossman's Pacifica program. The panelists were Jean Davison, Phil Melanson, Tom Powers, and Peter Dale Scott; Summers joined in by phone. Among other things, Summers noted that he had located (in New York) Daniel Harker, the AP reporter to whom Castro made his warning in September 1963. Despite the importance of Harker's story, he has evidently never been interviewed in depth about it (in the public press, that is). Despite the name, Summers says, "he's in fact an

extremely Latin journalist who to this day is very shaky in English."

Peter Scott noted that the Alvarado ("D") story about Oswald at the Cuban Consulate (talking about killing someone) can be seen as the first version of what later became the Comer Clarke story. He suggested that some of the CIA people who were involved in minimizing evidence of Oswald associates in Mexico "may have been trying to get rid of this false hypothesis, this false evidence that Castro had done it," while Ambassador Mann was pushing for more attention to that hypothesis.

The information about the Oswald photo was, I think, the most interesting factual information to emerge from the anniversary media blitz. This program was perhaps the best wrapup of the assassination controversy. In addition to the participants named above, there were cameo appearances (by phone) by Harold Weisberg, Dan Moldea, and Frank Donner. The accompanying three-hour program on the JFK presidency, which was also well done, dealt primarily with civil rights, organized crime, and Cuba. It was based on taped interviews of Garrow, Wofford, Navasky, and many others. These three hours can be obtained from Pacifica Tape Library, 5316 Venice Blvd, LA 90019. They are apparently not selling the two-and-a-half hour panel discussion on the assassination; if this becomes available, I'll let you know. Limitations of time and equipment - not to mention copyright restrictions - prevent me from copying many tapes, but I will entertain requests if you have a special need. If you can't wait, item #2 is my notes - handwritten, rough, and unedited. [6 pp.]

Much of this issue of EOC consists of status reports on the official and unofficial investigations, and on selected areas of evidence.

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The Justice Department position:

On November 16, the Justice Department advised Rep. Louis Stokes that the Attorney General was expected to report to the Speaker of the House "early next year" on the results of the JD's review, "and to make recommendations regarding any further Department of Justice activity in this matter." It is not clear if this information is to be made public, but I have heard nothing more. (For a copy of this status report, ask for #3, a 2-page letter from the office of Assistant AG Stephen S. Trott of the Criminal Division, who has taken over the case since the departure of Robert Keuch.)

The JD letter noted that issuance of its "final report," originally expected "shortly after the completion of the NAS [Ramsey Panel] analysis" of the acoustics, has been delayed "to assure consideration of the views and recommendations of the numerous interested citizens who have been writing to the Department." There has been a "surge in unsolicited correspondence from the public" since the release of the NAS study. Although the JD's letter gives the impression that such material consists mainly of "general opinions regarding the assassination" and specific comments on the acoustics, it remains possible that the delay has been produced in part by substantive non-acoustical leads. The JD said that it "envisioned" completing, by the end of 1983, "all actions undertaken in response to the HSCA report, including acoustical analyses, FBI investigative activities, and Criminal Division review of all relevant information which has been submitted to the Department since the Committee concluded its work." (My emphasis.) I have no idea what FBI activities are being referred to. Perhaps some leads have come from citizens who are more than just members of the general public, such as former HSCA staff members.

Henry Macrory reported that JD investigators "have spent the last four years pursuing new lines of inquiry suggested by" the HSCA. The JD "would tell [him] nothing of its findings in advance, only agreeing that its work had been 'very extensive.'" [#4; Sunday Express (England), 30 Oct 83, 4 pp.]

On the other hand, CBS Morning News said on November 21 that "Earlier this month, FBI Director William Webster said the Justice Department is not reviewing the House Assassinations Committee report and considers the assassination of

President Kennedy a closed case." [#5, 2 pp.] (Can anyone provide a copy of Webster's remarks, or tell me where they were made?) This is consistent with the impression I got from Prof. Blakey in August: that nothing is really going on in Washington. He said that, as far as he knew, the JD had not pursued the organized crime angle, and that nobody in a responsible position in the JD, the FBI, or the CIA puts any credence in the hypothesis that the Mafia killed JFK.

Acoustics:

The JD letter to Stokes does not mention any official rebuttal to the Ramsey Panel. Gary Mack wrote in December that a "detailed response" from James Barger was "due soon," specifically "in the next few weeks." (See the November issue of "Coverups," which is, as usual, well worth reading.) I have heard nothing else about such a rebuttal by the HSCA's experts.

On November 13, Independent Network News reported that the HSCA acoustical experts were asking the government for half a million dollars to run new tests. This may simply refer to Barger's year-old letter to Blakey. (See 5 EOC 1, p. 1)

The JD letter does mention a "recently received 16-page 'rebuttal' to the NAS study." This is presumably Anthony Marsh's paper, "Rebuttal to Ramsey." There might be some valid new points - some of Marsh's arguments seem unfamiliar to me - but much of his statistical analysis went over my head, and I don't have the energy or the inclination to dig back into the technical details of the acoustics before an official rebuttal appears. I think that in general my own analysis (published or referred to in previous EOC's) is a better and more reliable guide than Marsh's paper to the weak spots in the NAS analysis.

To get the Marsh paper from me, ask for #6. (The revised and corrected edition, dated December 1983, is 17 pp.) Item #7 is a 5-page letter from Ramsey to Marsh (December 16), primarily a response to the overheated rhetorical attack in Marsh's first two pages. Item #8 is a 2-page response by Marsh (January 16).

HSCA files:

I have no news on the progress of the House resolution to open the HSCA records. [See 5 EOC 2.] Mark Allen from ACCESS has responded to Prof. Blakey's comments in 5 EOC 4. Allen says that "it's a fair assumption that the problems cited by Blakey are not so serious as he has sought to portray them." Allen notes the HSCA's "strict and explicit rules regarding the identification and segregation of classified material. [See 2 L&AR 22-44.] And one wonders how Blakey intended to protect his sensitive sources if pledges of confidentiality were not routinely recorded."

Allen says that Blakey "has little to gain by release of the HSCA records" and that he "is well aware that the majority of JFK assassination researchers are unpersuaded by his [Mafia-did-it] 'solution' and would utilize the HSCA records in pursuit of other avenues of inquiry." (While Blakey's publication of a book might in theory constitute a financial stake in his theory, as Allen suggests, I don't consider this a significant factor. The book is now being remaindered for \$3.98 at Crown stores.)

According to Allen, the sponsors of H. Res. 160 are confident that the Archives staff can properly process the HSCA records, as they did those of the Warren Commission. "By all accounts, the HSCA intended just the sort of review and release which is imminent. Due to lack of time and funding at the close of their investigations, it was not feasible. It is now however possible because they did not lose their will and they did find a way."

The full text of Allen's comments is #9. (My convention is that listed items are one page each, unless otherwise specified.)

Photographic evidence:

In mid-December, Gary Mack reported that he was trying to find someone to do more work on the Moorman photo. He said that an unfinished study "at a major eastern university" persuaded one of the scientists involved that the questioned

image is "definitely a person." (Coverups #13) Mack also critiqued the Itek study of the Bronson film, which I have not seen.

On an anniversary broadcast in New York, Robert Groden reportedly said that he had located a "new" print of the Zapruder film, allegedly more complete. (That is, it would include missing frames or images between the sprocket holes.) Groden reportedly believes there is significant information in this new material, but I have no further information and will be hard to convince. I was told that this story might appear in "The Rebel," where Groden is now listed as Associate Publisher. However, I have also been told that "The Rebel" is folding.

Medical evidence:

The Canadian Broadcasting Company devoted a large part of its one-hour anniversary program to David Lifton's work. Some of his filmed interviews of key witnesses were broadcast, along with new interviews of Donald Rebutisch (who emerged after "Best Evidence" was published and confirmed some of the two-casket story; see 3 EOC 1, p. 2). Dick Billings appeared in rebuttal, noting that Dr. Baden insists that the entry wound in the back of the head is real. (I do not yet have a transcript.)

I was disappointed by the generally meager anniversary coverage of Lifton's analysis. I told several reporters that I think that significant information could be uncovered with relative ease. As far as I know, nobody has systematically gone back to the witnesses cited in "Best Evidence" for additional comments. My hunch is that there may well be a quasi-official rebuttal floating around in government or Kennedy family circles - perhaps in the form of an explanation for "security measures" surrounding the autopsy. But no reports of such a rebuttal have reached me.

What I am eager to see - especially from people who dispute Lifton - is not just a reaction to his overall trajectory-reversal scenario, but a detailed commentary on his evidence from the various doctors involved. Some of the doctors probably know - or think - interesting things. For example, Robert Ranftel has seen the transcript of the oral history interview given by Admiral Burkley to the JFK Library in October 1967. Of course, Burkley agreed with the Warren Commission on the cause of death (the head shot). However, when asked if he agreed on the number of bullets which hit JFK, he said "I would not care to be quoted on that."

A Fresno Bee reporter wrote about a Parkland emergency room intern previously unknown to me. (He did not work on JFK.) Gary Fogg, now an ophthalmologist, was told that JFK's pupils were dilated - but he might also have heard something more significant. (20 Nov 83, #10)

With basically no success, I have been trying to dredge up Lifton-related documents under the Freedom of Information Act. I was recently told by the FBI that they had found nothing relevant in certain files relating to Sibert and O'Neill. From the CIA, I asked for anything on the return of JFK's body (such as monitored communications with Air Force One), the circumstances of the autopsy, and the transmittal of the autopsy findings to the CIA, either at the time or later. They said they couldn't find anything. I FOIA'd the Secret Service last year, particularly to see if they had any in-house rebuttals to Lifton's best-selling book; they say they have no records on Lifton! (My original letters, which explain the reasoning behind my requests, are items #11 [FBI, 13 May 81, 4 pp.], #12 [CIA, 7 May 81, 2 pp.], and #13 [SS, 14 May 83]. The agency replies are much less interesting, but let me know if you need them.)

When I talked with Robert Blakey in August, he didn't have anything good to say about Lifton's thesis, but he did indicate that, under certain circumstances, further official inquiry would be appropriate. Although the acoustics now seems to be a dead issue, Blakey felt that "to advance the investigation, you have to do the acoustics." With Rep. Stokes, he made an effort to convince Rep. John Conyers to hold hearings on the acoustics, and he "also suggested that somebody

ought to record under oath the evidence relevant to what David Lifton said." Blakey wouldn't hold hearings on the Lifton material alone, but if he held hearings, he would include it. Of course, nothing seems to have come from this Blakey-Stokes proposal.

Blakey mentioned that he had talked to some Secret Service agents, including Paul Landis. He noted that Lifton implied SS complicity in the assassination, and said that the agents "should be given an opportunity to come in and express what I know to be their moral outrage."

Blakey considers Lifton's thesis "nonsense"; the words "absurd," "bizarre," and "macabre" also came up. He is satisfied, from talking with Dr. Baden and others, that the overall thesis is "impossible." However, when I asked if he was convinced that the body went straight from Dallas to Bethesda, with no peculiar security measures, Blakey said he had a "suspended judgment" on that.

#### Book news:

Lifton told Publishers Weekly [6 Jan 84, #14] that he has made substantial progress on his sequel, "Best Evidence: The Scenario." I think that publication is still quite some time away, however. Among other things, the new book will deal with Connally, and with "what the assassins' plot looked like on the drawing board - because what was intended is not what did happen." There is talk of a film based on the first book. (No, the sequel will not be "Second Best Evidence.")

The book by Henry Hurt of the Reader's Digest should be out around September, under the title "Reasonable Doubt." Look for at least one excerpt in the magazine a few months before that.

#### Anniversary press coverage:

More was written and broadcast on JFK personally and on the Kennedy administration than on the assassination, and much of the latter was unremarkable. Some of the wrapups of conspiracy theories, and profiles of the buffs, were quite decent, but only a fraction broke new ground. Still, there were many assassination-related articles which are listable by normal EOC standards. I'll get to this material as time permits - which probably means spread out over the next year, while press coverage of the case is likely to be minimal. (Watch "Coverups" and TCI for reprints of some of the anniversary coverage, especially from Texas.) If any of you have a special interest in specific areas of the coverage, let me know. Perhaps I can copy unlisted items, if you will make annotated lists to share.

I have a fair amount of radio and TV coverage on tape, and some of you have already told me that you have certain additional programs. I think there is no rush to deal with this material, but I hope we can eventually make (or get) transcripts of the really significant bits. Any volunteers? If you have tapes of non-network coverage, please let me know. But please don't send tapes, unless you have something which you think is of special interest.

My thanks to everyone who has sent clippings. We have a pretty good sampling, but I would still like, eventually, any non-routine stories. At this point, you might prefer to tell me what you have before making copies.

I don't have much from New York and Washington (other than the Times and Post respectively), or from Boston (where there are many EOC subscribers). I would be particularly interested in anything non-trivial from New Orleans (Garrison quotes?), Philadelphia (Sprague?), and the Congressional Record.

#### Clippings:

For starters, a small potpourri of unusual and noteworthy items:

15. 20 Nov 83 (WP) "Did Oswald Act Alone? We Evaded the Truth Then, And Now It Can't Be Found" [4 pp.] By David Kaiser, a history professor at Carnegie-Mellon. "Within hours of the crime, three of the nation's most powerful men [Hoover, LBJ, and RFK] had concluded that Oswald's background and connections

raised questions they did not wish to have answered." After an inquiry "severely limited" by the concerns of Hoover and Johnson, the Warren Report "accepted everything tending to confirm the theory of the lone assassin, while ignoring or explaining away contrary evidence."

Kaiser reviews some leading theories, calling Epstein's (in "Legend") "the most convincing 'lone assassin' theory," and accepting Oswald as an authentic leftist. Oswald may have been part of a large or small conspiracy, or "he may even have acted alone." The controversy over the acoustics has simply "added a layer of ambiguity to a case that hardly needed any more of it." "We do not know for certain if that [current] belief [in a plot] is correct, but we do know that our world is much more complicated than we allowed ourselves to believe in 1963."

For an overview by an establishment historian in the Washington Post, this is okay. Kaiser is surprisingly sure of himself on a number of controversial points. For example, he seems to imply that Hoover definitely knew of Oswald's note to Hosty. He says that photo evidence confirmed the location of the police motorcycle found by the acoustics (which I have never been persuaded of). Lifton is not mentioned, but Kaiser asserts that a thorough autopsy would have revealed JFK's adrenal problem; "Thus ... his body was forcibly removed [from Dallas] and turned over ... to Navy doctors at Bethesda ... who had no qualifications as forensic pathologists." (I'm sure there is more to it than that.)

\* 16. 20 Nov (WP) "One Day's Events Shattered America's Hopes and Certainties," by Haynes Johnson. As a lead for this primarily contemplative article, Johnson repeats the story of his phone call to Robert Kennedy on the 22nd (as discussed at 3 EOC 3, page 6, and 3 EOC 4, page 7). The Cuban leader with whom Johnson met is now partly identified, as "Harry" - that is, undoubtedly, Harry Ruiz Williams. RFK "was utterly in control of his emotions when he came on the line, and sounded almost studiously brisk as he said: 'One of your guys did it.'"

Unfortunately, Johnson's only explanation is a parenthetical one: "In those early minutes of confusion after the assassination, apparently the first report he received, whether from the FBI or Secret Service I never knew and never asked, had identified Lee Harvey Oswald as being involved with the anti-Castro Cuban group." I know of no such report; Oswald was linked to the FPCC when Hoover gave his name to RFK within an hour and a quarter of his arrest. So, RFK's immediate reaction - particularly interesting in light of what he knew of the CIA-Mafia plots, and of the possibility that it resulted from more than just confusion about Oswald - remains unexplained.

\* 17. 20 Nov (San Jose Mercury News) "From Dallas to Watergate: The Blackmailing of America," by Jonathan Marshall. [I still have some originals available at no charge except postage; thereafter, 12 pp.] The assassination "launched the CIA and other covert forces - including powerful members of organized crime - into a prolonged cover-up of crimes that preceded Kennedy's presidency but might have caused his death, a cover-up that would warp American government for years to come.... The cycle of cover-up and blackmail, only now dimly understood, would [culminate in] Watergate."

This is a well informed and densely factual wrapup, which touches on the CIA-Mafia plots, Maheu and Hughes, Rosselli, Ruby, Jack Anderson's reporting, the CIA Inspector General's report, Nixon's concern about "the whole Bay of Pigs thing," and much more. Marshall seems particularly interested in possible indirect connections between Oswald and the CIA-Mafia plots. Marshall asserts that Oswald was "often maneuvering furtively with individuals on the periphery of the CIA's death squad," such as members of the CRC, a Cuban at the training camp near New Orleans, and even Frank Sturgis. I'm dubious of linkage-based theories, but this one (which, unfortunately, is not explored in detail in this article) does appeal to me more than one based on Uncle Dutz the bookie.

"But in the absence of absolute proof, neither the [Castro] retaliation theory nor its more sinister counterpart, the rogue-agent theory, any longer has

the power to twist government agencies and warp public policy.... [The] background of the case is now out in public view, and thus no longer useful as blackmail.... What we need to learn from John F. Kennedy's assassination is not who pulled the trigger, for that hardly matters any more. Rather, it should be how covert institutions and policies make such a murder, and its subsequent cover-up, possible."

\* 18. 20 Nov 83 (DMN) "Nov. 22 - Twenty Years Later" An eighty-page special supplement to the Dallas Morning News, comprising 23 articles on such topics as Dallas then and now, Oswald, Ruby, the official and unofficial investigations, and "cultural aftershocks." Many of the individual articles will be listed in later EOC's; "Oswald the Loner" was reprinted in Coverups #13. I found some of the background on Dallas particularly interesting. The articles about the assassination itself seem to contain some new tidbits, and information on the whereabouts of witnesses which might be useful to active researchers. I have about a dozen extra copies available for \$2 plus postage. (Specify slow or fast mail; in the U.S., \$1.05 or \$1.56, for 9 oz.)

\* 19. 22 Nov (Wall Street Journal) "Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?" By Edward Jay Epstein [2 pp.] He was your basic Commie assassin, that's who. The "real question is not how but why" Oswald did it, and forget "whether." "The endless tangle of questions about bullets, trajectories, wounds, time sequences, and inconsistent testimony that has ... obsessively fascinated, if not entirely blinded, a generation of assassination buffs ... probably never will be resolved." (Epstein's eyesight, of course, has been miraculously restored by J. Jesus Angleton.) "In light of this overwhelming evidence [that Oswald did it], the issue that ought to have concerned Americans was not Oswald's technical guilt, but his dangerous liaisons abroad."

There is less emphasis on the KGB here than in "Legend." Epstein's Oswald now seems driven by ideology; if he did it for anyone, it was for "his avowed hero - Castro." Maybe Castro, rather than the USSR, is the current target du jour in Epstein's circle. (Epstein must know that there is a difference between Cuba-did-it and Russia-did-it. Blakey and Billings mention in passing that Castro "was marked [by the Russians] for elimination twice - in 1961 and 1966." [P. 113]) Oswald is depicted as a proto-terrorist. "He openly [?] subscribed to the terrorist creed that a man with a rifle could change history." (Certainly not an idea he could have picked up in the Marines, of course.)

Characteristically, Wall Street's favorite scholar spices up his rhetorical flourishes with some dubious analysis and controversial (or maybe genuinely new?) facts. For example, Epstein says that the Cubans "pressured" Oswald "to prove his loyalty and worth," and that the Cuban Foreign Ministry approved a visa for him on October 18, 1963. Can anyone explain what he means? I found only a dispatch dated October 15 and 17, saying that compliance with his request for a visa was conditional on Oswald getting a Soviet visa. (25 WCH 817)

Epstein says that the dossier Oswald showed the Cubans included "documents he had stolen from a printing company engaged in classified map reproduction for the U.S. Army." All I know is that he intended to attach "Tax returns of JCS," which I would interpret as statement-of-earning forms to prove he had worked there. (16 WCH 346)

Epstein notes that Oswald wrote from Moscow that he would "kill any American who put on a uniform against his cause." But it is clear from the letter - even as quoted by Epstein - that Oswald meant that he would defend the USSR against American soldiers "in the event of war." Epstein says that this letter was "routinely intercepted by the CIA and microfilmed"; the CIA has denied this and Epstein has never substantiated his claims about CIA interceptions of Oswald's mail.

According to Epstein, after intercepting Oswald's letter to the Soviet Embassy in Washington, "FBI counterintelligence ... urgently requested its [sic] field agents in Dallas to locate him." Hosty "rushed over" to the Paine home and talked to Marina, but "did not find Oswald until Nov. 22." That's not in my copy of the

Schweiker-Hart Report. The WR says that the FBI didn't learn of Oswald's letter until November 18, and that Hosty got this information on the 22nd. (WR 439-40)

Is Epstein just making this stuff up, or what? Or is he doing field work for his forthcoming book on "international deception"?

In light of this "scholarship," it's hard to evaluate the most striking factoid in this article. Epstein says that, just before his suicide, George DeMohrenschildt "explained to me that he had been asked to keep tabs on Oswald" by a Dallas CIA officer, clearly J. Walton Moore. DeMohrenschildt agreed, hoping that Moore "might help him in future ventures," but the Walker shooting caused him to part company with Oswald. In Epstein's view, the CIA was keeping track of someone "presumed to be unfriendly," but of course there are other interpretations.

Surprisingly, this story is not in "Legend." Perhaps Epstein or his editor recognized DeMohrenschildt's unreliability. But this story isn't new; Epstein told it to Earl Golz when "Legend" was published, with the additional claim that DeMohrenschildt "said he wouldn't have seen Oswald without Moore's encouragement" and that Oswald "gave him [DeM] a long memo of what he had done in Russia." (#20, 30 Mar 78)

21. 25 Nov. (WP) "Oswald as Avenger," by Daniel Schorr. This generally follows along the lines of Schorr's book and his 1977 NY Review article (cited in 5 EOC 4, p. 9). "Since the [Warren] Commission filed its report, evidence has emerged - some of it still officially secret - suggesting a chain of circumstance that led Lee Harvey Oswald to become the self-appointed avenger of persistent efforts by the CIA to assassinate Fidel Castro.... Thus, after two decades, it appears that the Kennedy assassination may have involved a tragic and historic irony, a conspiracy of circumstances in which an arrow launched to kill a troublesome foreign leader fell back to slay our own."

I am inclined to take Schorr's new data more seriously than Epstein's. Now a CNN correspondent, Schorr may have good access to withheld material. He says that Castro, at the Brazilian Embassy just before his interview with Harker, launched into a "tirade against President Kennedy and the CIA, accusing them of plotting his death. 'Let Kennedy and his brother, Robert, watch out,' he said. 'They, too, could become targets of assassination.'" I recall no reference to any threat this explicit, and certainly no mention of RFK. (Can anyone correct me?)

Schorr may also have new information about CD 1359, which is supposedly based on what Castro told Morris Childs. "As summarized in Hoover's letter, Castro said that 'Oswald had vowed, in the presence of Cuban consulate officials, to assassinate the President.'" Does anyone know if Schorr is really quoting CD 1359? (A second reference to what Castro said in 1964 seems to be derived from the Comer Clarke article, which I consider suspect and perhaps not independent of CD 1359.)

22. 26 Nov [3 pp. + 2 pp. of documents] An unpublished letter to the WP editor from Harold Weisberg, with a critique of Schorr's article. Among other things, Weisberg objects to the omission of relevant facts, such as alleged intelligence aspects of Oswald's Marine career.

23. 25 Nov (WP) "JFK Death Investigators Move to Open Hill Files," by George Lardner. "Although 20 years have passed..., secrecy is still the rule for the [HSCA], which conducted the last major inquiry into the murder." The resolution to open the records has been introduced by "all but one of the members of that committee who still are serving in the House." "But this measure has been stalled in the House Administration Committee because of objections from Rep. Louis Stokes..., apparently acting on the advice of ... G. Robert Blakey. As a result, no hearings have been held on the resolution, although it has picked up almost 40 other co-sponsors...." Blakey said that release would be "a waste of time," and that "he is not flatly opposed to the resolution, but thinks it would be unproductive."

\* 24. Special issue (#2, 1983, 18 pp.) of "The Lobster," which is "a journal/newsletter about intelligence, parapolitics and so forth," produced by British buffs

Steve Dorril and Robin Ramsay. Issue #2 is "atypical," consisting of the following 4 items on the JFK case. I recommend "The Lobster" for para-buffs with international interests, even though much of the first issue (#30 below) was over my head.

\* 25. (R. Ramsay, in #24) "The Assassination of John Kennedy: An Alternative Hypothesis" [4 pp.] This provocative essay suggests one way in which a coverup by powerful forces could have followed a "small" conspiracy. The form of the actual shooting, Ramsay says, seems too crude for a "big" conspiracy - e.g., one with government involvement. "Never mind 'triangulation of fire' and the rest of the speculation that's been raised to try and convince us that this was some kind of masterful operation. It wasn't." "This was a high-risk operation which almost failed.... [Either it] was a crude attempt to bushwack Kennedy; or it was something designed to look like one."

Although he believes that a lone-assassin conclusion was politically inevitable, Ramsay thinks that the investigation did not fail simply because people were routinely covering up links to Oswald or other information of dubious relevance - something real was being hidden. "My hunch - and that's all it is - is that some creative individual within the intelligence community had the bright idea that one way of sticking it to Castro and aborting Kennedy's peace feelers, would be to fake an attempt on Kennedy's life which could be attributed to Cuba. But ... someone in, or close to, the plan realised that the perfect conditions were going to be created for a real hit to take place. Security would be lax," a coverup was assured, and a setup around Oswald was already in place.

I agree with Ramsay that such a scenario allows you to explain a lot. For example, it is a way to make sense of Oswald's role without falling back on psychohistory. He claimed to be a "patsy" - oddly specific, suggesting that he knew he had a role in something. The pressure to blame Castro "was swiftly and comprehensively smashed by the government," as could be expected, but in the original plan the Cuban connection was not required to stick, since the goal may have been "the relatively modest" one "of putting a stop to the peace feelers." "Pity the poor Warren Commission, trying to put the lid on the case when the material they had to work with was never designed for such close scrutiny."

Although he considers Lifton's book "a monumental achievement, one of the greatest pieces of detective work ever accomplished," Ramsay discounts his conclusions about Secret Service involvement. He suggests that there was enough time after the fact to decide that physical evidence of a conspiracy, if any, would have to be suppressed.

At the HSCA conference with critics in 1977, we were pressed to offer our favorite theories, even if speculative. One Texas buff suggested that a fake assassination might have been planned by Robert Kennedy to enhance JFK's popularity, and that it was turned into a real attempt by someone else in the government. Ramsay's variant (which, as far as I know, he came up with independently) seems less implausible.

This is, of course, preposterous, but some strange things do happen. I recall an incident in California years ago (in a Senatorial campaign for George Murphy, I think - but don't quote me!) in which demonstrators were egged on by Ronald Reagan, and the incident was exploited in a full-page ad by the Murphy campaign, trying to link his opponent with the people who had endangered Reagan's life. It would be unfortunate if an elaborate plot became undetectable simply by failing the Occam's Razor test.

\* 26. (S. Dorril, in #24) "From Prague With Love: Maria Novotny, Michael Eddowes, Profumo and Kennedy" [5 pp.] Dorril summarizes what is known about the relationship between JFK and Novotny, who died in February 1983. Dorril has interviewed her husband, and has had access to some of her papers.

Eddowes has said that, in his opinion, the KGB attempt to discredit JFK through Novotny casts light on the subsequent KGB conspiracy to kill him. The mysterious Harry Towers reportedly set Novotny up with Peter Lawford and JFK -

for the Russians, Eddowes thought.

Dorril's explanation of Eddowes' apparent logic, and its flaws, assumes more knowledge of the Profumo case and related matters than I have, unfortunately. (Wild parties with a "famous Minister-in-the-mask incident"?) Even keeping track of who was working for whom is complicated. Novotny eventually worked with British intelligence, Dorril says, and so did Stephen Ward - which causes problems for Eddowes' theory.

All very strange, but I admit to a certain interest (not entirely prurient) in the Novotny story. (See, e.g., 3 EOC 1, p. 3.) Eddowes' pre-assassination activities, as discussed in this article, are rather more interesting and less bizarre than you would expect from his fake-Oswald analysis. Dorril says that Eddowes was three-quarters of the way through a book with Novotny (in the late 1960s) when he was scared off.

27. (R. Ramsay, in #24) "Decoding Edward Jay Epstein's 'Legend'" [3 pp.] An earlier version appeared in TCI. (September 1982; see #156 in 5 EOC 3.)

"'Legend' is a kind of smoke-screen behind which Epstein hopes to conceal what Angleton was doing with the Israelis.... Epstein would have us believe that the real reason for his ouster is the dispute over Nosenko.... Hersh's mail-opening story handed Colby the perfect pretext to rid the Agency of Angleton and shut down the CI-IIS link.... What Epstein does, in effect, is to restore the parapolitical world to the state of innocence [existing] before the Bay of Pigs."

\* 28. (S. Dorril, in #24) "Permindex: The International Trade in Disinformation" [4 pp.] Dorril starts with an appropriately skeptical overview of the Garrison affair. He traces the growth of the Clay Shaw - Permindex connection, starting with the Italian Communist paper Il Paesa Sera, then Pravda, and on through the Torbitt manuscript and Lyndon LaRouche's U.S. Labor Party.

Dorril has studied some old clippings on Permindex, and finds the Paesa Sera version distorted. Permindex may have been used for economic intelligence or to finance politicians. However, Dorril suggests, the emphasis it got at the time of the Garrison probe was part of a disinformation campaign which had more impact in Italy than in the U.S.

"An earlier episode [involving Paesa Sera] illustrates the international trade in disinformation and partly illuminates the Permindex connection. In 1961, French generals prepared a putsch against President DeGaulle," and rumors of CIA involvement first appeared in print in Paesa Sera. In March 1967, that paper linked Permindex to the anti-Gaullist OAS. The split between pro- and anti-U.S. factions within the French government was also reflected by the mysterious book "Farewell America."

29. Cover page for #24, with subscription information.

30. Issue #1 of "The Lobster" [September 1983, 8 pp.], with an essay on the Kincora scandal in Northern Ireland, and more.

Credits: Thanks to M. Allen (#9), T. Davis (14), S. Dorril (4, 24-30), J. Goldberg (15, 16, 21, 23), G. Hollingsworth (14), H. Hurt (5, 16), H. Irwin (4), A. Marsh (6-8), J. Marshall (17), G. Owens (18), H. Weisberg (3, 22), and G. Winslow (21, 23).

Subscription information: There were 4 issues of EOC last year; let me know if you missed any. The minimum rate for a paid subscription is 5¢ per page, plus postage. For 1983, that comes to \$2.70 in the U.S. and Canada. (Including 20¢ per issue postage, the breakdown is 60¢ for 5 EOC 2 [8 pp.] and 70¢ for each of issues 1, 3, and 4 [10 pp.]) For postage to Europe, add 40¢ per issue; to Australia, 50¢. Additional contributions cover complimentary subscriptions and help with other expenses. Yes, I do accept small checks from large corporations. If you are getting an unwanted complimentary subscription, please let me know.