

"Reasonable Doubt":

Henry Hurt's book should be in your local bookstore now, although it did not reach some of the big chains quickly. The official publication date was January 27. (Holt Rinehart Winston, 555 pp., \$19.95)

I am too close to the case (and to the book) to judge "Reasonable Doubt" as a whole, rather than by assessing each piece of evidence as new or old, and each argument as familiar or unfamiliar, persuasive or implausible.

We will see what the reviewers and publicists do with a book which claims that it is not pushing a specific solution to the mystery of the JFK assassination. So far, I have seen no ads and only the reviews listed below.

Hurt's reluctance to endorse a single solution is particularly understandable in light of the history of his involvement in the case. Exposure to the legendary Ed Epstein and then to a volunteered "confession" could make anyone wary of anybody's solution. The beneficial result of that introduction is that Hurt was very willing to look at the work of critics who could provide hard facts and careful analysis. Even the jacket copy says nice things about the buffs, and nothing about who killed JFK.

Understandably, Hurt is not optimistic about the chances for a resolution: "The seeds of neglected evidence sown across the landscape in the wake of the assassination have matured into a jungle of powerful contradictions. Nourished by solid information, each promising theme contends with other themes. The entanglement has become so impenetrable that no single theory, no final answer, can break free to stand unchallenged as a solution...." (P. 429) Hurt endorses Jim Lesar's suggestion of a special unit in the Justice Department, with specific Congressional funding, patterned after the anti-Nazi Office of Special Investigations.

Since I don't think I know who killed Kennedy, Hurt's approach generally appeals to me. I think the book does a good job of reflecting the ambiguity of much of the evidence, and the variety of plausible explanations.

A new perspective on the murder of J. D. Tippit:

Hurt's most striking new evidence, surprisingly, does go directly to the question of "who did it" — but in the Tippit case. He does not overemphasize it, but it is a lead which raises the same kind of basic challenge to the integrity of the Dallas evidence as David Lifton's work does to the Bethesda evidence.

Hurt persuaded me that Tippit was in Oak Cliff an hour after JFK was shot to take care of some very personal business. Hurt talked to a woman who had an affair with Tippit. She thought she was pregnant by Tippit; the timing suggests that she may have just learned this on November 22. This was a problem not only for Tippit, who was married, but also for the woman. She had recently been reconciled with her ex-husband, who was previously jealous enough to follow her and Tippit around Oak Cliff at night.

Hurt's exposition reflects the kind of caution that lawyers would be expected to encourage. For example, he does not name the woman, whom I will refer to as Rosetta Stone. Her name is available to anyone with access to the HSCA volumes who can ignore a typo in Hurt's footnote and find the Tippit material in Vol. 12. (Or see "Coverups," 12/85) Her name has been known to some critics for years. Hurt credits Larry Harris with finding her, prompted by an anonymous 1968 letter to Jim Garrison which Gary Shaw obtained. (Rosetta was not named in that letter, but described as a waitress who worked with Tippit at Austin's Barbecue.)

It is not clear if Hurt believes that he and Harris have discovered why Tippit was killed, or merely why he was in Oak Cliff. He seems persuaded by other evidence that Oswald did not do it.

The jealous husband and Rosetta "both deny any knowledge of Tippit's death other than what is in the official account." (P. 168) Hurt does not go into detail, but I doubt that he accepted Mr. Stone's denial at face value.

Hurt does quote a retired DPD officer who "asserted flatly and without prompting that he believed Tippit was killed as a result of a volatile personal situation involving his lover and her estranged husband. He added, 'It would look like hell for Tippit to have been murdered and have it look like he was screwing around with this woman.... Somebody had to change the tape.... Somebody had to go to the property room and change those [cartridge] hulls and put some of Oswald's hulls in there....'" Other DPD officers reportedly share these beliefs.

The book contains a brief discussion of the implications of this account. "The purpose [of the alteration of evidence], perhaps, would be twofold: to seal the case against Oswald [in the JFK case] by showing irrevocably his capacity for violence and to wrap up the case of Tippit's murder without disgracing him, his family, and the unborn child. And, of course, there would be an outpouring of grief [and financial support - PLH] for a police comrade slain by the presidential assassin." (P. 168) I would emphasize that if such relatively innocent tampering can be confirmed, the question of tampering with the evidence against Oswald in the JFK case has to be raised with new intensity.

This area seems ripe for additional investigation, official or unofficial. For example, what can we now make of the sighting (near the Tippit murder scene) of a license plate number traced back to a friend of Tippit, Carl Mather? (12 HSCA 37) The HSCA apparently failed to reach a conclusion, but if you ignore the claim that Oswald was in the car, the story -- and Mather's nervousness when interviewed by Wes Wise -- might be significant.

Hurt reviews the familiar evidence on Tippit's problematic presence in Oak Cliff, and the radio instructions which sent him there. He interviewed R. C. Nelson, supposedly instructed to go to Oak Cliff at the same time, who seemed puzzled by Hurt's questioning and reluctant to talk. Dispatcher Murray Jackson "stoutly denied knowledge of any fraudulent manipulation of the tapes in order to provide an excuse for Tippit's being so far away from his assigned district at the time of his death," but his account seems unsatisfactory to me. (Pp. 162-3)

Before I knew about Rosetta Stone, I argued that the messages in question didn't sound right. In November 1981, I raised this issue in a letter to Dr. James Barger. (#1986.1, 2 pp.) If tampering with any of the recordings could be shown, the timing problem in the acoustical analysis resulting from the "hold everything secure" crosstalk match might have to be reconsidered.

I suggested that both the tone and wording of two key messages were in the "formal mode" which one would expect only in important messages -- or in a later re-creation. "You are in the Oak Cliff area, are you not?" seemed significantly more formal than "What's your location?", "Are you en route to Parkland, 601?", and similar inquiries recorded that day; it resembles "You do not have the suspect. Is that correct?", where the "formal mode" is expected. Similarly, "You will be at large for any emergency that comes in" contrasts with "Remain in downtown area, available for call" and "Stand by there until we notify you."

This kind of analysis has been of evidentiary value in at least one other case, involving a tape (released by Larry Flynt) purportedly of a conversation between John De Lorean and FBI informant James Hoffman. Jack Anderson reported that psycholinguist Murray Miron was able to establish that the tape had been faked. (24 May 84, SFC, #1986.2) In addition to the anomalously unresponsive content of "Hoffman's" remarks, his "speech cadences... are consistent with those to be expected from one who has rehearsed or is reading from a script." Anderson described Miron as a "longtime FBI consultant." The Justice Department should certainly sponsor that kind of analysis of the Tippit messages.

*** JFK's physician believes in a conspiracy:

There is a second very provocative piece of new evidence, resulting from Hurt's 1982 phone call to Adm. George Burkley. He said "that he believed that

President Kennedy's assassination was the result of a conspiracy." He subsequently refused "to discuss any aspect of the case." (P. 49)

As JFK's personal physician, and the only doctor present at Parkland and the Bethesda autopsy, Burkley was in an especially crucial position. He did not testify to the Warren Commission (which published his contemporaneous report containing basically no medical details, CE 1126.) He did give five interviews to William Manchester (the last one in July, 1966). Manchester recently told me that Burkley did not then believe there had been a conspiracy. However, Hurt notes that in a 1967 oral history interview, Burkley was asked if he agreed with the Warren Commission on the number of bullets that hit JFK; he replied, "I would not care to be quoted on that." The HSCA interviewed Burkley at least once, generating in addition an outside contact report and an affidavit -- all unpublished and unavailable.

Along with the Tippit evidence, the Burkley assertion of conspiracy calls for intense examination by the Justice Department and, I hope, by some reporters. (For my letters to Assistant AG Stephen Trott, ask for #1986.3 [1 Feb 86, on Burkley] and #4 [2 pp., 4 Feb 86, on Tippit].)

Hurt devotes only a few pages in a "grab bag" chapter to Lifton's thesis, but there is some interesting speculation in an area where Burkley might know crucial facts. (Incidentally, much of the "classical" critique of the single bullet theory and other aspects of the medical and physical evidence in Hurt's earlier chapters seems obsolete. The SBT is implausible but supported by a surprising amount of HSCA evidence; if it is wrong, tampering on a Liftonesque scale must have taken place, and we need to either pursue Lifton's argument or come up with another scenario. Studying the flaws in the official investigations is not likely to produce progress in this area.)

Hurt concludes that "Lifton builds a powerful case" that JFK's body was separated from the ceremonial motorcade, and that his "evidence is equally strong on the point that something happened to the wounds on the body between Dallas and Bethesda. However, his sinister interpretation of what might have happened does not have the strong supportive evidence found for his basic points." (P. 427)

Hurt suggests that "the Secret Service and other powerful elements in the government might have felt an overwhelming necessity to examine the body for evidence at the soonest possible moment," given fears of a conspiracy. "It does not seem unreasonable that these circumstances could have coalesced into an overriding concern for national security that demanded the President's body be placed on an autopsy table as soon as humanly possible -- without awaiting the folderol of transporting the body through the streets with the family and public at hand. Moreover, it does not seem unreasonable that certain security people in the government were appalled that the official autopsy was going to be conducted at the whim of the family and by Navy brass with pitifully little experience in forensic pathology."

When I saw this speculation in Hurt's draft of this section, it struck me as plausible and well worth pursuing. The perspective of people who realized that the body might provide conclusive evidence of a conspiracy should be taken into account (and I don't think it generally has been).

Certainly an "innocent national security autopsy" does not explain away Lifton's evidence indicating changes to the wounds, and Lifton can discourse at great length (and with considerable persuasiveness) against such a hypothesis, which I raised with him in general terms long ago.

At the very least, however, Hurt's analysis might lead us to new information about what key people really think happened to JFK's body before the Bethesda autopsy. I have assumed for years that there must be some explanation going around in official and family circles, and I was surprised that none surfaced after "Best Evidence" was published.

Hurt's manuscript led me to check the record on the authorization of the autopsy. Is it possible, I wonder, that the record significantly minimizes Jacqueline Kennedy's opposition to an autopsy? If the opposition was very

strong or more prolonged than is generally assumed, I have no trouble believing that someone decided to go ahead with an "inspection" regardless.

Burkley's own account noted that, while kneeling before Jackie, he "expressed [the] complete desire of all of us and especially of myself to comply with her wishes, stating that it was necessary that the President be taken to a hospital prior to going to the White House. She questioned why and I stated it must be determined, if possible, the type of bullet used and compare this with future material found." (CE 1126, p.6) This makes more sense if you insert a few words: "her wishes to go directly to the White House, but stating...." In his oral history interview, Burkley said that Jackie's decision to go to Bethesda was arrived at "after some consideration," which might mean it took a while to convince her.

It is not unfair to read Burkley's comments critically, with the suspicion that he was minimizing Jackie's reluctance to authorize an autopsy or even his own knowledge of alternative plans. As late as the 1967 oral history interview, he took the Kennedy family line on JFK's adrenal and back problems, describing JFK as an "essentially normal, healthy male," with above-average "vigor and vitality."

Kenneth O'Donnell testified that "we didn't tell her [Jackie] there was to be an autopsy." (7 WCH 454-5) Evidently the matter was discussed with her in terms of going to a hospital to remove bullets.

Restrictions during the Bethesda autopsy have been dealt with in some detail by both the HSCA and Lifton. The HSCA did not publish anything about earlier restrictions — e.g., Jackie's resistance to the whole idea of even a limited effort to remove the bullets. The HSCA may well have gathered relevant evidence.

One reason Hurt's hypothesis appeals to me is that concern for Jackie's feelings — since her wishes were essentially bypassed — might explain why there was no quasi-official detailed rebuttal to Lifton's book. I would be glad to share more of my thoughts on this hypothesis with reporters or anyone else in a position to work on it.

* More highlights of "Reasonable Doubt":

The chapters on Oswald in New Orleans and on the questions relating to intelligence agencies are particularly good.

Neither the HSCA nor its case against the Mafia gets a lot of attention. I generally like Hurt's analysis of Garrison, but I am not impressed by his treatment of Blakey and the HSCA.

The detailed citations, including many to unpublished FBI and CIA documents, add to the value of the book as an overview. There are also many references to Hurt's own interviews.

Some interesting hypotheses were already familiar to me (and some got to Hurt through me), but I'm particularly pleased to see them in wider circulation.

For example, Hurt explores the idea that Oswald was (or thought he was) working on behalf of Sen. Thomas Dodd's investigation of mail-order firearm sales. This was suggested by Sylvia Meagher ("Accessories," p. 194) and pursued in detail by Fred Newcomb. It might explain Oswald's peculiar weapons purchases. (P. 300 ff.)

In this context, Hurt also reports some of my old analysis of a Klein's Sporting Goods ad in Oswald's possessions, torn from a magazine which was found in Adrian Alba's garage — after a mysterious stranger, claiming to be a friend of Alba's, showed up on the morning of November 23rd to "borrow" some magazines. (P. 297)

Hurt also reports Larry Haapanen's observations on the official concern about Commie influence in the Clinton civil rights drive, and its possible relevance to Oswald's alleged presence there. (See 3 EOC 7, pp. 3-5.)

The book also includes quite a few interesting points which were completely new to me. For example:

A Naval Intelligence officer at the Moscow Embassy says he thought that

Oswald was being handled for the CIA by someone in the Naval Attaché's office. (P. 243)

There is some new information from Hurt's old interviews (for "Legend") of some of Oswald's Marine associates. One such person told Hurt that he had been recruited for intelligence work when he left the Marines. (P. 243)

SA Vince Drain believes the palmprint on the rifle was faked. (P. 109)

There is a more-plausible-than-most story of a telephone warning by Ruby to Billy Grammer of the Dallas Police. Hurt notes that if Ruby was really under Mafia pressure to kill Oswald, it would make sense for him to try to abort the transfer with such a phone call. (P. 407)

A technical examination done for Hurt suggested that the curbstone at the location of the Tague shot may well have been patched. (P. 138)

Hurt interviewed alleged Marcello and Ruby associate Harold Tannenbaum, who was not as dead as the HSCA thought. He denied any Mafia connections. (P. 180)

Billy Joe Lord, who shared Oswald's cabin on the boat to Europe, added little of substance about Oswald, but told of a peculiar interest in him by someone in France. Hurt suggests this could have been a KGB check to see if U.S. intelligence was talking to people who had been associated with Oswald. (P. 207)

Louise Latham of the Texas employment office made some odd comments, suggesting that she sent Oswald out for a job more than once. Hurt seems suspicious of her husband's "post office" career. (P. 221)

John Hurt's widow told Henry Hurt that he had admitted being drunk and trying to call Oswald in jail. (This should take care of that story.) (Pp. 244-5; cf. 2 EOC 7, p.5)

Hurt speculates that the KGB's interest in the Oswalds may have been to establish Marina as a sleeper agent. (Might that explain the allegedly anomalous friendship between the Oswalds and the DeMohrenschildts?) (P. 240)

And now for something completely different:

It's... Chapter 12, "The Confession of Robert Easterling."

At least, I think it's completely different.

I find Easterling's story too incredible to be worth summarizing here. Whenever I hear about meetings involving the speaker, Oswald, Ruby, Ferrie, and Shaw, I reach for my skepticism. In fact, any story involving Clay Shaw starts with two strikes against it. Hurt makes a point of the alleged uniqueness of Easterling's claim of direct involvement (pp. 348-9), but what strikes me is the similarity of so many elements in his story to others we have heard over the years.

I do not believe Easterling's story has anything like the same level of plausibility as even the most speculative allegations elsewhere in the book. My impression is that this chapter fails to reflect the critical judgment which Hurt applied to the more familiar evidence in other chapters.

The chapter both starts and ends with descriptions of Easterling as a psychotic, alcoholic, violent criminal. A long footnote (p. 351) describes aspects of his "confession" as "flagrantly preposterous" and delusional. Certainly Hurt can't be accused of hiding all the flaws in Easterling's story.

Some of Hurt's justification for devoting a chapter to Easterling is mild enough. He grants that "By any standard, [he] is a terribly sullied witness." However, "in the absence of a full revelation of facts by government agencies, it would be irresponsible not to present Easterling's story." (P. 383) As a reader, I would have settled for an appendix or a long footnote.

Fortunately, Easterling's name does not appear outside this one chapter. But this confession is what got Hurt into his own research on the case, as he explains in the introduction. (P. 7) It must have colored his approach to the evidence he later encountered. His personal experience in dealing with the FBI on this matter certainly contributed to his very negative evaluation of the official investigations of the JFK case. That is, Hurt learned that

Easterling's was definitely not the best of the conspiracy allegations which were not taken seriously.

The publisher's handout (#5, 5 pp.) does devote a paragraph to "the most shocking revelation of all" in the book, alleging that "Easterling presents... a convincing case that he could have been involved with a group that murdered the president." As is all too common in a publisher's supplementary material, the other specifics mentioned in this handout fail to reflect the general coherence and scope of the book. They include some familiar questions which the book does not claim to answer. (For example, why did Humes burn his notes? The book just reviews the old evidence; Hurt called Dr. Humes about Lifton's book, but he would not discuss details. [Pp. 42, 427]. Similarly, "what government official permitted [Souetre's] deportation?" See p. 419; Hurt doesn't seem to know.) Unfortunately, this handout may discourage reviewers from focusing on the important new information.

It would be disappointing if many readers and reviewers dismiss the whole book because of this one chapter. On the other hand, if any official investigators, or many reviewers or EOC readers, seem to be taking Easterling seriously, I will be glad to jump into any debate on the details.

One structural problem is that the bad Easterling story has the same relationship to the rest of the book as the good story about Mr. & Mrs. Rosetta Stone does to the Tippit chapter: each appears towards the end, each is fairly heavily qualified (and many readers won't be able to tell how much of the caution is pro forma), and there is not the detailed followup or evaluation of the new material that I would like.

Disclaimers aside, there are signs that Hurt has taken Easterling very seriously at some point. (Some of his language suggests that his conclusions were rewritten and somewhat weakened.) For example, "In the end, [his] claims... could not be substantiated to the point that no doubts about the veracity of his confession remained." (Intro, p. 8-9) The chapter itself has a slightly less disturbing formulation: "In the final analysis it is not possible to prove that the Easterling confession is true." I think it is possible to conclude, from Hurt's presentation, that the confession is false. Hurt's fallback justification is more defensible, although I do not agree with it: "However, it is possible to show that there is, at least, every reason for the FBI to investigate Easterling's leads vigorously." (P. 389)

Another example of hedging which gives Easterling's account more support than it deserves: "A careful reading of Easterling's account cannot lead to any certain conclusion as to who killed John F. Kennedy. It is perhaps significant, however, that when one considers those who may have wanted Kennedy dead — Cuban exiles, Fidel Castro, fanatical right-wing oil men, renegade elements of the intelligence services, the mob — they all play roles in this remarkable story." (P. 390) I would turn this observation around: almost all the plotters in the most popular conspiracy theories play roles in Easterling's account.

Unfortunately, the section of this chapter entitled "A Final Assessment" includes a recounting of some of the familiar old evidence which allows Hurt not to dismiss Easterling entirely, but which in fact supports any number of conspiracy theories. The existence of such evidence is indeed crucial to a final assessment, but only in combination with a very skeptical approach to Easterling.

My guess is that Easterling's alcohol-soaked brain became incapable of distinguishing between what he remembered happening to him, and what he had heard about the JFK case. I wonder if a psychiatrist familiar with the criminally insane would tell us that this particular kind of delusion is common.

In any case, the omission of a professional psychiatric opinion of Easterling's story, by someone familiar with the kind of details on the JFK case which have been publicized, is a conspicuous deficiency in this chapter.

As noted in my comments on Blakey's book, there may well be no significance to a claim by Johnny Roselli that he "knew" there was a shot from the

grassy knoll. (3 EOC 3, p. 3) I have no trouble believing that Roselli or some member of his family (or Family) heard Mark Lane's lecture (if not Garrison's scenario) and was convinced. (Everyone has heard Lane, it seems.) Admittedly, it is a little harder to picture Easterling in a public library, reading "Accessories After the Fact." Still, anyone living in Baton Rouge at the time of the Garrison investigation would be exposed to a regular flow of details about the mysteries of the case. (P. 379)

I think the most likely explanation for Easterling is not simply a hoax but a basically genuine delusion, supplemented by the prospect of financial or other benefits.

Hurt says that, if Easterling's confession is a hoax, "then there is a fascinating story to be told about such an extraordinary scheme." (P. 351) True enough, and even if it is a delusion which Easterling himself never understood, there should be an interesting story about how and why Hurt (and the Reader's Digest) took it seriously enough to pursue.

Hurt does not discuss the Digest's original interest in the project, or its decision not to publish the book. (See 6 EOC 2, p. 6.) Hurt told me that the new editor-in-chief was not completely persuaded that the thrust of the book was correct. In fact, the book does not identify Hurt or the two men to whom the book is dedicated as Reader's Digest employees. (Why, the reader might wonder, was Hurt doing interviews for Epstein's "Legend"? [P. 7]) Was the Digest ready to publish the Easterling story in one of the three excerpts which were to appear starting in the June 1984 issue, using more of the confession and fewer of the doubts? There may well be a story buried here.

Although it is hard to take the confession seriously enough to really worry about its impact if the Digest had endorsed it, any allegations involving Fidel or Raul Castro have a potential for serious mischief. In 1974, the brother of Easterling's original Cuban contact showed him photos of material "apparently... exhibited in Raul Castro's den." (Pp. 380-1) This included photos of Easterling, Oswald, Ruby, Ferrie, and Shaw/Banister, with X's over the faces of the deceased and a question mark for Easterling. Oh, and also the Czech rifle which had been used, mounted, with a plaque reading "Kennedy 1963." The best I can say about this fantasy is that Easterling might have thought — if he was thinking at all — that the Reader's Digest wanted to hear it.

I have many specific objections to Hurt's analysis. For example, he has the same problem as the HSCA with the claim that Shaw was associating with David Ferrie and Oswald. The stories (of Easterling, and of the Clinton witnesses) are much more plausible if it was Guy Banister, not Shaw. The HSCA wrote around the witness-credibility problem, concluding that Oswald had been seen with "Ferrie, if not Clay Shaw." (HSCAR 145) Similarly, Hurt talks about Easterling being with Ruby and the man he believed was Clay Shaw. (Why not "Shaw and the man he believed was Jack Ruby"?) (Pp. 363, 381)

If I had any reason to find Easterling's story credible in the first place, I would do a thorough search of published sources to see where similar elements appear. For example, Hurt notes that Easterling's claim to have driven Oswald from New Orleans to Houston fills in a gap in the official account of his travels. I would start by testing the hypothesis that Easterling read about this problem. I certainly would not treat this as "perhaps the most significant point of confirmation for Easterling's story." (P. 369)

Likewise, what about the coincidence between Easterling's claim that he was to wait for Oswald in Monterrey, Mexico, and the allegation by Donald Norton that he delivered \$50,000 to "Harvey Lee" in that city? (RD, p. 367; Brener, "The Garrison Case," p. 195) Or the similarity between Easterling's firing test (with coconuts!) and a test-firing scene at the beginning of "Executive Action" (the book, if not the movie)?

Not surprisingly, the points which Hurt could even try to verify had little direct connection to the assassination. Discovering (even with difficulty) that there was a fire like one Easterling described does nothing

to support his claim that he was picking up Oswald nearby. The story of Igor Vaganov (Esquire, 8/67) is a useful reminder that there were many odd things going on in Dallas in November 1963 which had nothing to do with the JFK assassination.

Easterling may well have been up to something, perhaps criminal, perhaps with some Cubans. Even if it could be established that he knew Ferrie or some other person who has been named in the assassination controversy, which in itself would not be unusual, the odds would still be high that his "confession" was nothing but a delusion.

Reviews of "Reasonable Doubt":

6. 22 Nov 85 (Pub Wkly) Brief and mostly favorable. "The prose is a bit breathless at times," but "the components of [the] mystery are laid out with notable clarity." The theory of a "Cuban conspiracy" involving an Oswald impostor "does not seem so outlandish after [Hurt] produces a likely candidate [Thomas Eli Davis, I suppose] and a witness whose testimony, though 'terribly sullied,' provides an abundance of plausible detail."

7. 23 Feb 86 (NYT Book Review) "Oswald and others?" asks reviewer Adam Clymer, a veteran reporter who is now an assistant to Abe Rosenthal. A fairly short and quite positive review of Hurt's "compelling yet fundamentally calm analysis." Clymer likes Hurt's critical analysis but non-conspiratorial evaluation of the old investigations. "Original research is not what commends this book," and the reviewer mentions none, except for the "psychotic drifter" Easterling. He endorses the book's least credulous comments on that story: "Hurt does not take this source as a touchstone. Instead, he argues that Mr. Easterling's story ought to be given official attention."

** More details about Oswald in Mexico:

"The Lobster" has reprinted almost all of the Afterword from the U.S. paperback edition of Tony Summers' "Conspiracy." Summers reported significant progress in his search for Maurice Bishop, and prepared additional information for articles in the London Observer. "Unfortunately," notes Steve Dorril, "owing to continuing legal difficulties with David Phillips, they were never officially published. Much of the material appears now in [the] Afterword and the following notes (which are the responsibility of The Lobster.)" [#1986.8, 4 pp., from issue #10; the Afterword alone was previously listed as #1981.314]

Dorril's notes include much information which seems to come from a good HSCA source, if not from the HSCA's Mexico City staff report (which, Summers revealed in 1983, he had "had sight of"; see 6 EOC 1, p. 1). For example: "We understand that the [HSCA] confirmed that [journalist Hal] Hendrix was a CIA contract agent."

"A number of Phillips' colleagues... have indicated that the Phillips/Bishop identity 'holds water.' They include the Naval Attache in Cuba." Incidentally, Gary Mack reports that Phillips has threatened to sue Hurt. (Coverups, 12/85) So perhaps I should emphasize that, whether or not Phillips was Bishop, I am not inclined to believe Antonio Veciana's story that he saw him with Oswald.

Dorril gives the real names of "Ron Cross," "B. H.," and "Doug Gupton." "Cross" allegedly helped set up the DRE (but not Bringuier's N.O. chapter).

The CIA man in charge of surveillance of the Cuban consulate in Mexico City recently was the director of the Berlitz School in Madrid. (On Oswald's alleged contact with Berlitz, see "Oswald in New Orleans," pp. 344 and 348, and "Conspiracy," p. 318.)

"In a long memorandum or manuscript [Winston] Scott refers to 'a photo of Oswald.' Three CIA officers claim to have seen it [the memo? the photo?] whilst two others claim to have heard of it." Phillip Agee is among the five, all named. (I'll pass up the opportunity to list unfamiliar people here. Any reporter who wants to make a test case out of those CIA names is welcome to do so. I hear that "The Lobster" is developing a reputation in the U.K. for

naming sensitive names.)

A named CIA officer "is believed to have told an untruth to the HSCA" about the 1 Oct 63 photo of the mystery man. The 10 Oct 63 teletype to CIA headquarters about this "was, in fact, doctored, according to evidence developed by the HSCA investigators." (This sounds like what Counsel Sprague was going on about in 1977; I have still seen no evidence to support this claim.)

Virginia Prewett, a journalist whom Summers found from a clue provided by Veciana, "was a CIA asset handled by Phillips." The five CIA "disinformation agents" in Mexico City (four run by Phillips) and two other agents of Phillips are named by "The Lobster."

This is clearly very important material, but I'm rating it only two stars as a reminder to be careful: just the fact that the HSCA staff believed it and it got locked up for fifty years doesn't make it all true.

In the case of Phillips-as-Bishop, at least, there is evidence that some CIA people were trying to mislead the HSCA. As with the Nosenko case, the HSCA may have bumped into issues of great sensitivity inside the CIA, where selected facts were passed around for the purpose of making one faction or the other look bad. (For example, one can be skeptical of the account of Angleton making off with a photo of Oswald.)

Although I am inclined to trust the HSCA staffers who specialized in the CIA investigation, I have many problems with what I know about the unpublished and published investigation in other areas, and I know that some HSCA sources doubt some conclusions of the Mexico City staff report.

Jim Garrison -- on the bench and off the wall:

In October 1985, Garrison told Ted Gandolfo that he was working on a new book, entitled "A Farewell to Justice." He said that "there is no question in my mind that it is the absolute and ultimate truth down to the last detail about the Kennedy assassination," but that he can not get a publisher "because they are controlled by the CIA." (This is from the first issue of Gandolfo's newsletter, "Assassination U.S.A." Write him at 1214 First Ave., NYC 10021, or ask me for information.)

Garrison sent a long letter to Louis Sproesser, a buff who inquired about this book. [#9, 30 Dec 85, 3 pp.] The book is "completed" and being considered by a publisher. Garrison has been working on it for four years.

Garrison's rhetoric has not softened over the years, and I'll be very surprised if his critical attention to the facts has improved.

Judge Garrison asserts (on Court of Appeal stationery) that "Anyone who wishes to understand the assassination, must appreciate at the outset that the deep involvement of the Agency in the President's assassination requires that it give the maximum reinforcement to the two major false sponsors which it has created: Organized Crime and Fidel Castro.... If the author [of a book] so much as infers that Organized Crime or Castro were behind what so plainly was an Agency project.... then one has in his hand the typical product of one of the Agency's stable of hungry scribes."

Garrison also disputes allegations that Organized Crime is behind him. "While I lay no pretense to being the epitome of virtue, with regard to connections with organized crime I think that you can safely place me as having approximately the same such connections as Mother Theresa and Pope Paul." Obviously the CIA's disinformation machinery is at work, he says. (Is Garrison dropping a hint about various popes? And this "Mother Theresa," usually known as "Teresa" -- is she related to Vinnie Teresa?)

In particular, Garrison complains that a recent book "by a dashing Englishman (one of the Agency's more accommodating prostitutes) refers to 'a secret meeting'" between Garrison and John Rosselli. "The 'author's' complicity in this attempted discreditation is underscored by his having had the book published without ever troubling to learn that I have never even seen John Rosselli in my life..."

The reference is to p. 498 of "Conspiracy," by Tony Summers (who is,

indeed, sort of dashing), which accurately asserts that the CIA found such a meeting "particularly disturbing." Summers quotes (but does not cite) an HSCA staff report by Mark Flanagan, which in turn refers to an unpublished page of the CIA Inspector General's Report. The allegation of a Garrison-Rosselli meeting also appears on page 118 of the IG Report, which is published. (See 10 HSCA 190-1 (note 55), 4 HSCA 146-7.)

As usual, there is a trace of validity in Garrison's complaint. The IG Report is obviously not an unimpeachable source, even if endorsed by an HSCA staffer. But Garrison's overall certitude doesn't seem to need much anchoring to reality.

Hurt's book includes a rather good discussion of the Garrison affair, and of the subtleties of the interactions between Garrison, the real New Orleans evidence about Oswald, and the vulnerability of Clay Shaw due to his apparently irrelevant CIA links and homosexuality.

If any of you want to spring to Garrison's defense, here is my \$64 question: at the time he arrested Clay Shaw, what serious evidence did he have that he had in fact conspired with anyone to kill JFK?

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Credits: Thanks to S. Dorril (#8), G. Hollingsworth (6,7), H. Hurt (5), R. Ranftel (7), and L. Sproesser (9).

More press coverage of Hurt's book:

The following items arrived as this issue was being completed. They are from the Chicago Sun-Times, 9 Feb 86. (Thanks to J. Gordon.)

* 10. "Who killed JFK? Not Oswald, book claims" [2 pp., with a big page-one headline] Apparently based on an interview of Hurt by William Hines. Castro "had ample reason to want Kennedy dead, Hurt said.... Revenge was clearly Castro's motive to mount a counter-assassination campaign, and organized crime in the U.S. was his avenue of attack." A Hurt quote is singled out for emphasis in large type: "My feeling is that some combination of Cuban interests and organized crime in this country pulled off the assassination. How they did it, I don't know."

Is that reasonable? I doubt it. The book doesn't allege that, much less make a case for it. Even if Castro was in control of Cuba, Hurt concluded, "that does not yield a clear answer to the ultimate question of whether Castro, as a desperate act of self-preservation, brought about the assassination. Today, all that can be said is that whatever his connection, if any, Castro was better served than any other leader in the world by [JFK's] death." (P. 345)

Mafia involvement in a Castro plot has been advanced from time to time, notably by Roselli and by George Crile (who focused on the Castro-Trafficante relationship; 5 HSCA 308-11). In their book, Blakey & Billings rejected this theory, "because all the reasons that militated against Castro's striking at Kennedy by himself could be applied to his doing it in conjunction with gangsters." (P. 156) They also made the first of many obvious counter-arguments: that Oswald, "a known leftist, pointed squarely at Castro."

11. "A Startling Confession" [3 pp.] A long article by Jim Quinlan. "According to Hurt, the center of this historical storm was Robert Easterling...." Except for a reference to Easterling's mental state, this article applies no critical judgment to his account.

12. A photo of Hurt, and a sidebar on his secluded office in Redeye, Va.

13. Photos accompanying #11. [3 pp., routine]