

Roger: Please read and return.

Sylvia

October 31, 1986
Paul L. Hoch

The acoustical evidence:

One reason for questioning the authenticity of the DPD Dictabelt is the presence of certain messages relating to Officer Tippit. Basically, the following exchanges are suspect because of their content, the formal tone of transmissions 590 and 592, and the apparent absence of the expected reaction. (See 3 EOC 7.2. The message numbers and the transcriptions are from the Kimbrough transcript.)

- 389. [Disp.] 87, 78, move into central Oak Cliff Area.
- 390. [78 (Tippit)] 78, I'm about Kiest and Bonnie View.
- 391. [87 (Nelson)] 87's going north on Marsalis on R. L. Thornton.
- 392. [Disp.] 10-4....
- 588-589 [Disp.] 78. [78] 78.
- 590. [Disp.] You are in the Oak Cliff area, are you not?
- 591. [78] Lancaster and Eighth.
- 592. [Disp.] You will be at large for any emergency that comes in.
- 583. [78] 10-4.

I sent my analysis to Prof. Murray Miron, a psycholinguist whose work on another case was described in 8 EOC 1.2. The following is from a letter I sent to the Justice Department on September 16, 1986, describing his independent analysis, which provided some support for my own work:

"Prof. Miron... has not yet prepared a formal report, but he has provided me with the following conclusions: 'Our preliminary findings... suggest that the communications directed to Officer Tippit are anomalously at variance with the other transmissions of the tape record.... The transmissions to Tippit are quite stilted. They have the appearance of transmissions made more for an audience's benefit than those for which the intent is to convey instructions. The query regarding Tippit's current position is rhetorical rather than questioning.'"

"Prof. Miron emphasized to me that his analysis does not preclude a quite innocent explanation for the anomaly. The messages could have been added to the recording after the fact, or they might have been made in 'real time' but sound anomalous because the persons involved knew that something unusual was going on."

"For example, if Tippit was taking time to attend to personal business (as suggested by Mr. Hurt's book), a dispatcher might have covered for him by assigning him to the Oak Cliff area, with his voice betraying his knowledge that the assignment was not routine but somehow designed to keep Tippit out of trouble. (This is clearly speculation, of course.)"

"Even alteration of the recording after Tippit's death could have been motivated by nothing worse than a desire to protect his reputation."

"On the other hand, the rebuttal of the HSCA's acoustical analysis by the Ramsey Panel rested in part on the belief that the police would not tamper with important evidence."

The rest of this letter [#71; 4 pp., including my 1981 letter to Barger on these messages] mostly repeats information from EOC (e.g., 7 EOC 2.2), with one other new point:

"Mr. Todd Vaughan sent me a copy of a letter from the National Archives to him, dated March 2, 1982. [#1986.72] In response to an inquiry about the disposition of the Dallas Police Dictabelts, Mr. George Perros told Vaughan that the Justice Department, since receiving that evidence from the HSCA, has 'returned it to the Dallas Police Department, according to an official of the Justice Department.' I hope that you did keep copies; in any event I think you really should get the originals back."

Unfortunately, it is very unlikely that anyone will do anything with this; my letters to Justice are not even routinely acknowledged these days. As far as I know, the JD has neither finished nor abandoned its long-overdue review of the HSCA report.

London Weekend Television program:

73. 31 Jul 86 (NY Post) "23 year[s] later, Oswald goes on trial" Twenty-five witnesses recently appeared before TV cameras (and a judge and jury from Dallas) in London. They included medical, forensic, and ballistics experts, and some eyewitnesses; several were not called by the Warren Commission. The verdict is being kept secret. Edited highlights will be shown on two nights, around November 22.

Harry Chandler, director of program development at Showtime, said that some of the witnesses "had a real tough time on the stand. It was fascinating. There were matters brought up which were not considered by the Warren Commission, matters relating to the body of the President and his wounds. The jury saw a version of the Zapruder film... which was enhanced... and there was information in the stills I was unaware of."

"Said prosecutor [Vincent] Bugliosi: 'In the future, this is the document that researchers into the assassination will want to get their hands on.' Defense attorney [Gerry] Spence: 'It doesn't matter who won the case. The American people are the winners here.'" Spence is good at dramatically presenting the innocence and virtue of his clients - probably not the best way to get at the historical truth about Oswald, but we'll see.

I hope that LWT will be able to make available any information which was too complicated for TV but of potential value to researchers. Letters to Showtime can't hurt.

74. 16 Jul 86 (AP) General comments by a LWT spokesman. The program "would be 'a documentary exercise, not a dramatized reconstruction.'" It "would be modeled on the company's recent mock trial of... King Richard III."

75. 16 Jul 86 (AP) Comments by U.S. District Judge Lucius Bunton (a cousin of LBJ), who was to play the judge (trying the case under present federal law, not 1963 Texas law).

Also on TV:

I missed "Yuri Nosenko, KGB" on HBO in September. Would someone like to give us more information than these clippings?

76. 31 Aug 86 (NYT) The story is told "from the perspective of the CIA agent [in the Soviet Bloc Division, under Angleton] who virtually scuttled his own career by insisting that Mr. Nosenko was a Soviet double-agent sent to spread disinformation." British playwright Stephen Davis said he "spent six months trailing around after people from the intelligence community who were centrally involved."

77. 5 Sep (LAT) A very favorable review. Davis' best guess: Nosenko was a disinformation agent whose "job was to be dangled in front of the CIA in Europe, but... he was not supposed to defect.... The central mystery is why the CIA went to such extraordinary lengths to rehabilitate Nosenko, as if he had been trustworthy. I think the case is unresolvable."

78. 5 Sep (UPI) The 90-minute program is "fascinating... history."

79. Sep 86 (Cable Guide) [2 pp.] "Davis spent a year researching the script with the help of Edward Jay Epstein." The Russian emigre actor who played Nosenko thinks he was a real defector. Davis concluded that "every way you turn it around you find it's like a Rubik's Cube that won't ever quite work out." Not a bad analogy for the whole JFK case.

Worthy organizations:

If you did not get a letter from AARC in mid-August, please ask me for a copy. (#80, 2 pp., no charge) This includes a "special plea for permanent members" from Bud Fensterwald. The primary goal is not to get the membership fees, but to demonstrate a substantial degree of public support when approaching private foundations - the few which are willing to become involved with such a controversial topic. Institutional memberships would be particularly appreciated.

Item #80 also includes a progress report, dated August 1. Among other things, Jeff Meek's massive index of (mostly) published JFK material has been computerized. I am now on the Board of Advisors, not the Board of Directors.

"The Third Decade" (see 6 EOC 4.4) needs (and deserves) more subscribers.

I have a descriptive form letter from FAIR, "Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting." [#81, Sep 86, 2 pp.] The director of this new progressive counterpart to AIM is Jeff Cohen; fellow AIB veterans Marty Lee and Bob Katz are also involved. FAIR has been involved "in the effort to expose and counteract ABC's pending 12-hour miniseries, 'Amerika.'"

The saga of Earl and Edgar:

A story on the Warren Commission got a lot of newspaper play on the day after Thanksgiving last year - remarkable, even though that was, as usual, a slow news day. As noted in the NYT's news summary (#82, 29 Nov 85), the WCR "apparently ended a long political alliance between [Warren and Hoover], according to Government documents just released. The commission criticized the FBI for what it called its 'unduly restrictive view of its role in preventive intelligence.' Mr. Hoover said the criticism was unjust."

The story itself appeared on page 32, with a Durham (NC) dateline, as a "special to the NYT" with no authorship indicated. (#83, with photos) The article seems rather unfocused. (It does not even specify what 1300-page file had been released under FOIA; it was the FBI's file on Warren.)

Among other things, the dispute got Warren dropped from Hoover's list of favored correspondents, although he had been there on a first-name basis.

The NYT story derived from an article in the Durham Morning Herald by Durham lawyer Alexander Charnes (aided by a grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism). [#84, 24 Nov 85, 3 pp.] Experts quoted include Harold Weisberg, who "believes that Warren knew that the FBI was withholding" but "felt that it was his 'national duty to preserve tranquility,'... and therefore... did not press the FBI." (Charnes noted that some of his information came from previously released documents which Weisberg had.) Warren biographer Edward White said that "the chief justice really believed, given what they were investigating, that the FBI and CIA would cooperate with the commission."

The rift is not news to us; it was mentioned in some of the press coverage of the 1977 FBI release. Charnes' account emphasizes how closely Hoover cooperated with Warren in previous years.

The topic of the FBI-WC interaction (especially on the question of what the FBI knew about Oswald) has long been a special interest of mine. It was the subject of a draft manuscript which I put together in 1972, in those pre-Watergate days when I thought what we had to do was persuade some people, with detailed arguments based on WC documents, that just maybe the Warren Commission (without being part of a conspiracy) had blown it. That manuscript is quite out of date, of course. Now I often find myself trying to convince people that the original investigation was not simply a complete and deliberate coverup. The released FBI documents tend to support my original analysis - although the FBI's hostility was far worse than I could infer from the WC files. The manuscript did serve some purposes; among other things, I think it led the HSCA to uncover much of the story of the deletion of the Hosty entry from the FBI listing of Oswald's notebook. (HSCAR 186) If you did not see that 1972 manuscript long ago, please let me know if you are interested. (98 pages, each two reduced pages of double-spaced clean typescript; index included; cost (including postage): \$6 or less, depending on the number of requests received by January 1, 1987.)

A break from clippings (for the rest of this issue, at least):

Current clippings are generally less interesting than, e.g., old

clippings and the HSCA volumes. What are people interested in reading about in EOC, or getting copies of? (My Garrison analysis [#1986.68] generated just one request for a copy.) What about new FBI and CIA documents, or my old files of WC documents?

I would particularly like to hear from the people who have been helpful by sending me clippings, especially if you feel I have incurred an obligation to list them in EOC, or to otherwise preserve or disseminate them.

I just drifted into doing a newsletter; should I drift back to reading documents, or to some other projects? Do we collectively have the computer power, the time, and the interest to divide up work on indexes, lists of clippings and documents, and chronologies? I would appreciate help with these difficult questions. In the meantime, some documents, more or less from the top of the pile on my desk.

From the Warren papers:

As noted in 7 EOC 3.10, some of Warren's files at the Library of Congress have been released.

In March 1974, Alfred Goldberg (the WC's staff historian) interviewed Warren about the Commission's work. The transcript [11 pp.] is #85; correspondence about it is #86 [2 pp.] Warren took Goldberg up on his offer to make changes; according to his secretary's letter, he "expressed reservations to me about the wisdom of including the material concerning the personal and political views of certain members of the Commission.... He has never made any comment about the difficulties he may have encountered with the other members, and after reading what he had told you he felt it would be better if those portions were not included."

Of course, the passages marked for deletion are the most interesting. "The Department of Justice sent a young man over to the Commission to act as liaison with them. He was very critical of me from the time he came over to us. Lee Rankin as Chief Counsel was in a very delicate position." This reference is probably to Howard Willens (age 32), who was listed as liaison with the Justice Department, and who can be rather difficult, I am told. Warren may also have been thinking of Charles Shaffer (age 31), who (according to John Davis' book) was detailed to the WC by RFK to keep an eye on Hoffa-related leads.

There are other deletable tidbits on personnel matters, and other fairly interesting comments. For example, Sam Stern's report on the SS and FBI was not thought to be "objective or logical" (his work was actually quite good); the story of Oswald in Alice, Texas, held up the Report (news to me, if true); there were "no special problems from Hoover and the FBI"; and the testimony of the autopsy doctors was the "best evidence" on the wounds.

Warren's files include a nonsubstantive response to Wesley Liebler's memo of November 1966, in which he recorded David Lifton's observation of the "surgery of the head" remark in the Sibert-O'Neill report. (See "Best Evidence," Ch. 10.) In a short note to Rankin, dated 12 Dec 66, Warren said that what Rankin told "Liebler" in his letter of 1 Dec "was correct and in the right tone. I believe that many people who were somewhat enamored by Lane and Epstein are finally becoming disillusioned." (#87)

Speaking of the Warren Commission staff, "Professional men who wear bow ties to the office are distrusted by almost everyone, says image consultant John Molloy. Attorneys traditionally avoid putting a bow tie wearer on a jury because they believe the wearer is not likely to be moved by sound argument." (#88, UPI, 28 Dec 85)

Also from the Warren papers: a letter from the publisher of "Six Seconds in Dallas" to John McCloy, urging him to do the right thing [#89, 5 pp.]; McCloy's draft response, saying that he was not impressed [#90, 16 Jul 69, 3 pp.], and an exchange of letters between McCloy and Warren [#91, 3 pp.], in which Warren agreed with McCloy but suggested that he not send the letter.

CIA interest in identifying the Mexico Mystery Man:

Last November, the CIA released eleven documents to Bud Fensterwald in connection with his FOIA request for records relating to efforts to identify the Mexico Mystery Man (MMM), the man whose description (taken from Embassy surveillance photos) was attached to Oswald in October 1963.

The new documents are among 54 which "relate to a theory explored in 1977 that a particular foreign national might be the 'unidentified man.' That individual had been a target of CIA intelligence interest for many years for reasons unconnected with the Kennedy assassination." (From #92, CIA to Fensterwald, 29 Nov 85, 2 pp.)

The substance of this material interests me less than the fact of the CIA's interest. The suspect's nationality is withheld, but I would guess he is Russian or Cuban. I see no reason to assume that he was thought to be a KGB or DGI covert operative, rather than (say) someone involved in "innocent" diplomatic or technical activities of interest to the CIA.

The basic CIA analysis is a "memorandum for the record," dated April 1977. (#93, 12 pp., with much deleted) Oddly, the author seems to take seriously the "Saul" story in Hugh McDonald's book, "Appointment in Dallas." (Although I found little credible in that book, McDonald and his purported friend, Herman Kimsey, were interesting people.) Over half of this memo tallies "striking parallels between the backgrounds of 'Saul' as given in McDonald's book and [deletion]." (Only the published half of these parallels is not deleted.) After noting that "McDonald said he believes 'Saul' was telling true story," the CIA author wrote "I do too."

This memo seems to have been prompted by the fact that "On 17 March 1977, [deletion] recognized photographs of the unidentified man as [deletion]." (#94 records a request of March 11 to show an MMM photo to an unnamed subject.) McDonald's Indenti-Kit composite of Saul is said to "bear a striking resemblance to the photos of [deletion]." (Speaking of striking resemblances, anyone who is not convinced that they sometimes occur by coincidence, not conspiracy, should have a copy of my #95, including a photo of Zbigniew Brzezinski looking rather like the MMM. I will not entertain conspiracy theories involving Brzezinski.)

Items #96 (25 & 29 May 77, 3 pp. in all) relate to a photographic comparison which concluded that, within the limitations of poor photo quality, the two subjects "could very likely be the same person."

Another memo, also dated only April 1977, seems to be a summary of the theory. (#97, 3 pp.) Practically everything of substance is deleted.

This information may have been made available to the HSCA. Scott Breckinridge was instructed to review this material and make it available to Blakey and Gary Cornwell "if appropriate." (13 Jul 78, #98) The author of this memo tried to maintain some distance from the theory. "Although the material contained in the attached folder is entirely theoretical and does not constitute an official file or position of this Division or Agency, it may be of interest to... the HSCA." If made available, it would be "with the understanding that it is a theoretical unofficial research undertaking." The folder contains "informal and preliminary research based on a theory that [deletion] might be identifiable with" the MMM.

What do we know about the CIA researcher who pursued this hypothesis? Only that she "undertook to research the theory that [deletion] might be the unidentified man as a result of the indepth study she conducted as the [deletion] of this Division's efforts to determine if there could have been Cuban complicity in the John F. Kennedy assassination." (From #98)

What an interesting effort for the CIA to undertake during the HSCA probe. I assume it was not done to absolve Castro. Why was it done, at least in part, "unofficially," and by someone who took the Saul story seriously? What else did she and her colleagues believe? Can anyone tell us more about this in-depth CIA study? I guess it was related to the Task Force Report

prepared in response to the Schweiker Report. (HSCAR 108, 10 HSCA 156)

The memos, as released, do not say much about possible Cuban involvement. The second April 1977 memo asks three questions, including "Could [deletion] be 'Saul'?" and "Could [deletion], therefore, be mystery man who boarded plane in Mexico City for Havana on 22 November 1963?" (Cf. HSCAR 117) (The third question is deleted.)

Related released documents: #99, 4 pp. The CIA list of 40 documents on this subject (dated 12/62 through 7/78, mostly withheld) is #100, 3 pp.

Nazis and other anti-Communists:

Former Justice Department official John Loftus made some noteworthy comments in his House testimony on a GAO report on Nazi war criminals in the U.S. (For more on Loftus, see 6 EOC 4.10.) In a list of 29 areas which he could talk about only in executive session, he included "17. Nazi connection with covert assassination programs" and "19. Warren Commission files involving Nazi recruitment programs."

Does anyone know what this might be about? Larry Haapanen suggested that CD's 597, 817, 1096, and 1544 might be related. CD 1096 (6 pp.) appears to be a routine review of a French book entitled "Fascists and Nazis Today," which speculated that right-wing Hungarian refugees were under close FBI surveillance; this book came to the Commission's attention because it was mentioned in the NYT. CD 597, described as a BND [West German Intelligence] file, came to the WC from the FBI. According to CE 3107 (to which CD 1544 relates), CD 597 is a routine-sounding unsupported allegation of a pre-assassination reference to Oswald. CD 597 could be the material forwarded by the WC to the CIA, whose reply, CD 817 (CIA #660-833), was described (in the uncensored CD list) as relating to allegations concerning Anton Erdinger. The CIA indicated that the subject matter was so peripheral to the WC's work as to call for no further investigation.

Loftus' testimony is #1986.101 [17 Oct 85, House Judiciary Committee Serial 39, 8 pp.] Among other interesting points, he noted that several of the most famous KGB moles in England were involved with Nazi immigration into the U.S., and he said that "the Nazi groups which we imported from the British [were] riddled with communist double agents." (P. 90)

Loftus also alleged that "in 1944, the Eastern European fascist leaders began to defect back to the British and were reorganized into a new front group called ABN (the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations)." (P. 89)

In 1959, the secretary-general of the American Friends of the ABN was Spas T. Raikin. He is now a history professor at East Stroudsburg University, in Pennsylvania; his letter on the history of the oppression of his fellow Bulgarians recently appeared in the NYT. (#102, 10 May 86)

As a volunteer for Traveler's Aid, Raikin talked with the Oswalds on their return from the USSR. (Peter Scott discovered Raikin's interesting past connection to ABN; see "The Assassinations," p. 366, or "The Dallas Conspiracy, p. II-23.) I know of no actual evidence that his contact with Oswald was other than routine.

Raikin apparently was the conduit for a claim by Oswald that he went to Russia with the State Department's approval, either to work as a radar specialist or to serve with the Marine Corps at the Embassy. (CD 1230, p. 3; 26 WCH 12; Oswald's claim is erroneously reported as a fact known to HEW in CD 75, p. 461, and Summers, p. 217.)

Most probably Oswald himself was trying to mislead people about his stay in Russia. I wonder, however, if Raikin might have had an interest in portraying Oswald as an agent of the State Department, rather than (say) as a loner, or as an agent of another intelligence agency? (Just speculating.)

Book news:

Kitty Kelley's new book on Frank Sinatra ("His Way," Bantam, \$21.95) is rather political, with quite a bit on the Kennedy-Exner-Giancana-Sinatra nexus. I think there is some new information, much of it apparently based on allegations by Peter Lawford (who would not talk about JFK's "broads").

For example, Lawford "formally approached his brother-in-law by making an appointment to see the attorney general in his office at the Justice Department. There Lawford begged Bobby to listen to Sinatra's pleas for Giancana. Robert Kennedy intended to make Frank's mobster friend the Justice Department's top priority in Chicago and curtly told Lawford to mind his own business." (P. 293)

Notre Dame professor "Paul Blakey" (then a JD lawyer) told Kelley about an opposing attorney who indicated an acquaintance with the then-Attorney General, RFK; Blakey was told that, from electronic surveillance, it was known that the attorney "had Sinatra's money in West Virginia and that it was mob money." (P. 530(n))

"FBI records indicate that when in 1961 Carlos Marcello... had become one of Bobby Kennedy's targets for deportation, the New Orleans don contacted Santo Trafficante... who in turn called Frank to use his influence with 'the President's father' on Marcello's behalf." (P. 295) This story has appeared (with little emphasis) in the Blakey-Billings book (which does not specify that a contact with Sinatra was made; p. 242) and at 9 HSCA 70 (which does not specifically refer to JFK's father).

Years after the JFK assassination, "when [Sinatra] learned that Lee Harvey Oswald had watched Suddenly a few days [sic] before shooting the President, he withdrew the 1954 movie in which he played a deranged assassin paid to kill the president. He also forbid the re-release of The Manchurian Candidate." (P. 328; cf. 1 3D 6.13, noted at 7 EOC 3.9)

In a column prompted by the book, W. Safire called Reagan's award of the Medal of Freedom to Sinatra "obscene." [30 Sep, #103] In 1975, Safire had strong words about the Sinatra-Exner-Giancana story (Davis, pp. 740-1); I don't know if the Church Committee took up his challenge to question Sinatra.

There is a provocative sentence in Dan Moldea's new book on Reagan, MCA, and the Mafia, "Dark Victory." In a discussion of Joseph Hauser, "a convicted insurance swindler who... allowed himself to be used as the hub of several FBI sting operations... that yielded a pending indictment against [Trafficante] and the bribery conviction of Carlos Marcello..." Moldea asserts that "Hauser had also received thinly veiled admissions on tape from Marcello during... BRILAB... that he had been directly involved in the assassination of John Kennedy twenty years earlier." This unfootnoted claim is contrary to what I recall from earlier reports, which were along the lines of Blakey's assertion that even though Marcello admitted his Mafia membership, he "pointedly refused to discuss" the assassination. (Blakey & Billings, p. 242)

Can anyone clarify this issue for us? One reason for my skepticism is apparent overstatement in some other references to the JFK case. Moldea says that Oswald "had close ties with the Carlos Marcello Mafia family in New Orleans, particularly with Charles Murret, a top man in Marcello's Louisiana gambling network. Oswald had also been seen by numerous witnesses meeting with Marcello's personal pilot just days before he murdered the president." While Murret's importance to Marcello and his closeness to Oswald are debatable, the claim in the subsequent sentence is news to me. Also news to me in part, and disputable in part: that "many of those on the panel [i.e., the Warren Commission] had been directly involved with the CIA in the CIA-Mafia plots to murder Fidel Castro - which the Kennedy brothers had no knowledge of until May 1962, at which time they ordered them stopped." Who on the WC besides Dulles? (See Moldea, pp. 234-5, 338-9; #104 [2 pp.]

I have also read "Alias Oswald," by W. R. Morris and R. B. Cutler, and "JFK: The Mystery Unraveled," from the Liberty Lobby's "Spotlight."

(#105: ad from "Spotlight" for the book [107 pages for \$6.95]; see #1985.102 for one chapter.) I would prefer not to have to say more about these books, so I won't, at least in this issue.

I have some relatively routine reviews of the Hurt book, and a few of the Davis book (which is now out in England, and will appear next March in a German edition with new material on Marcello). The first part of "Best Evidence" has been out in Japan for some time now, and you can have a sample page to impress your friends. (#106, with drawings of the head wound)

If you are interested in the problems facing authors of serious nonfiction, I recommend "Publishers wary of lawsuits: Libel Lawyers Wield Blue Pencils on Books." (#107, LAT, 26 Jun 86, 3 pp.)

KAL 007:

Three months after the KAL disaster, while the press was noting the twentieth anniversary of the JFK assassination, the government was seemingly commemorating it with a major coverup, arguably the biggest in twenty years.

On the occasion of the publication of Seymour Hersh's new book, "The Target is Destroyed," Time magazine drew a different parallel: "Like the Kennedy assassination, the KAL incident has created a cottage industry of conspiracy theorists.... Hersh's explanations [excerpted] in the Atlantic seem far more convincing. They involve no conspiracies or even any evil intent on either side. Yet that is hardly reassuring. It is in some ways more frightening to be reminded just how fragile sophisticated military systems are and how frail their human operators can be." (#108, 1 Sep) A valid enough conclusion, but I think it is a misreading of Hersh's book, and even more so of his evidence, to call his account nonconspiratorial.

109 is a favorable review and good summary by J. Nance. (28 Sep, SFC) Hersh's main point is "the mishandling of intercepted electronic intelligence by the Reagan administration.... He paints a fascinating picture of how an outraged government seized on the worst possible interpretation of the earliest intelligence reports and jumped to the conclusion (without adequate evidence) that the Russians had indeed identified the target as a civilian airliner," although Air Force Intelligence knew promptly that they had not.

There are indeed parallels to the JFK controversy. Hersh' appearance on TV in SF was very *deja vu*, reminiscent of the Lane - Belli encounters of 1964. Hersh was cast into the Belli role, arguing against allegations that KAL 007 was on a spy mission, partly with facts and partly by asking if people could really believe that our CIA would send 269 people to certain death. The role of Mark Lane was taken by Melvin Belli, of all people, who is representing the families of some victims. Belli acted old and lawyerly. The direct involvement and intensity supplied by Marguerite Oswald in 1964 was provided by the mother of one of the victims. To my surprise, the studio audience was very conspiratorial, and I found myself sympathizing with Hersh.

There is, of course, very little hard evidence available. The argument about whether 007 could have been off course by accident is reminiscent of the acoustical analysis. It is even more technical, and looks to me like an argument among experts, unresolvable by laymen. For its flavor (with somewhat out-of-date information), see the rather nasty exchange between M. Sayle and D. Pearson (#110, NYRev, 25 Apr and 26 Sep 85, 27 pp.)

Hersh's Arlen Specter is airline pilot Harold Ewing, whose "single-bullet theory" is a detailed reconstruction of the chain of errors and omissions which could have put 007 on the course it took. Remember, I'm inclined to believe the SBT, so that is not a putdown - but if you believe Ewing's account you may never want to fly again.

Hersh's Angleton is General James Pfautz, the head of Air Force Intelligence. He is not as peculiar as Angleton, but almost as heavy. The book, however, does not speculate on the possible importance of the split represented by someone of his rank going public with his dissent.

One parallel drawn by "Time" and others is basically misleading - the allegedly nonconspiratorial nature of Hersh's "innocent" explanation. Indeed, Hersh seems to treat the ideology of Reagan and his crew as an external, almost extenuating, factor. (They rushed to judgment "in what amounted to good faith...." [P. 249]) The story of how the Air Force version was discounted emphasizes normal inter-service bureaucratic infighting and personal conflicts.

With the same facts, someone could make what happened sound like a very substantial conspiracy. Hersh does tell us that a general requested a phony report justifying provocative action against Russia, but was turned down (p. 74), and that a hardline deputy to William Clark discussed military action against Cuba (p. 122-3). The government's insistence on "look[ing] the other way when better information became available" (p. 249) is arguably at least as bad as planning a covert action which unpredictably failed. I don't find that alternative as implausible as Hersh tried to make it sound when arguing with the conspiracy buffs. The government's anti-Soviet campaign based on false intelligence undeniably did endanger many innocent people, albeit obviously to a lesser degree than using an airliner on an intelligence mission.

For a moderately conspiratorial view, see the book "Shootdown," by Oxford professor R. W. Johnson. (#111 [2 pp.] is his own summary, from the London Telegraph (18 May 86), as reprinted in Intelligence/Parapolitics.) Before reading the Hersh book, I found "Shootdown" quite plausible in concluding that KAL 007 was probably being used as a passive probe, in the reasonable expectation that the worst that could happen was that it would be forced to land. Hersh did not completely convince me that Johnson was wrong.

Johnson, in contrast to Hersh, is emphatic about how extreme - and how besotted with covert operations and dubious information - the Reaganites are. After all, they have given us the Contras, the plot against the Pope, Grenada, Libyan hit squads, and Star Wars. Johnson's distance from an American perspective is occasionally off-putting, but more often helpful.

Hersh's debunking of more conspiratorial accounts is often persuasive, but not always. For example, his suggestion that the Russians planted a phony black box, and that the crash site can be located in Russian waters from the testimony of Japanese fishermen who turned up with gasoline-soaked notes more than 30 days later, may be true, but the book doesn't deal with Johnson's detailed arguments about the search for the black box.

Hersh has no indexed reference to the KCIA (whose alleged connections to KAL get much attention from Johnson). More relevant to his own story, Hersh does not (I think) refer at all to Korean COMINT capabilities, or to the presence or absence of US COMINT facilities in Korea. In my mind, this leaves a gap in his assertion that he came across no indication of any prior or real-time knowledge of a mission involving KAL 007, and that he would have done so.

The book certainly doesn't give the impression that the story was in any sense handed to Hersh, or that he is a friend of the intelligence community. For example, he throws in an apparently gratuitous disclosure of the location of some NSA facilities. (P. 47n) There are many other juicy details. But one has to wonder if what he learned represents a major ongoing split within the government. People talked to him, and he got things using FOIA. Was that just because he is a good reporter?

The existence of dissenting positions in the intelligence community is not a completely new story; some newspapers reported on it in 1983 (pp. 177, 265), and there was a bit of a flap when a witting Pierre Trudeau revealed some of what he knew in October 1983.

I wonder about the timing of a decision by "a senior military intelligence officer" to give Hersh his "first account" of the abuse of COMINT in this case "late in 1984." [P. xi] Did the people in the intelligence community who knew the story wait until the 1984 elections were out of the way before spilling the beans? As with Watergate and Epstein's "Legend", the

disclosure of important information may itself be a bigger part of the real story than the casual reader (of "Time," and even of this book) would think.

This is in EOC because we all should be interested, not just because of the parallels with the JFK case. The case is in the courts and will not just go away. There seems to be a network of 007 buffs - are any EOC readers in touch with them?

Readers of the Grassy Knoll Gazette are familiar with Bob Cutler's analysis, according to which KAL 007 was not shot down by the Russians, but destroyed by an on-board explosion at the same time the Russians shot down a U.S. military plane. Cutler has published a book, titled "Explo 007." If you are willing to keep Occam's Razor sheathed, and if you trust Cutler to have convincingly eliminated all simpler explanations, you should read that book; I haven't.

Queries from readers:

Q77. According to P. Maas' book on Ed Wilson, in 1964 the CIA helped get Wilson a job as an advance man in Humphrey's VP campaign, in connection with his assignment to "Special Operations." (P. 24, #112) On the assumption that the capitalization is not a typo, can anyone tell us about such a CIA unit?

Q78. Can anyone provide a copy (or photocopy) of "Lucky Luciano," by Ovid Demaris (Monarch Books paperback, 1960, 148 pp.)?

Q79. Does anyone have an FBI document describing a test, prior to November 29, 1963, of the firing speed of Oswald's rifle?

Castro again:

Speaking of theories of Cuban involvement (as we were on page 5): in his March 16 speech on Contra aid, President R. Reagan closed with an anecdote from Clare Booth Luce, who recently spoke of an encounter with JFK. She said that history has time to give any great man no more than one sentence. Kennedy asked what she thought his would be. "'Mr. President,' she answered, 'your sentence will be that you stopped the Communists - or that you did not.' Tragically, John Kennedy never had the chance to decide which that would be." (#113, NYT, 17 Mar 86)

It sounds like Reagan was just one word away from blaming the Communists for JFK's death. ("Tragically" could have been "ironically" or "of course" or "it is no coincidence that.") (See 6 EOC 3.6 for Reagan's 1979 suspicions.) The case may not be quite as dead as it seems.

For a different perspective, see "One Thousand Fearful Words for Fidel Castro," a pre-invasion 1961 poem by S. F.'s Lawrence Ferlinghetti. "It looks like Curtains for Fidel/ They're going to fix his wagon/ in the course of human events.... History may absolve you, Fidel/ but we'll dissolve you first, Fidel." This copy [#114, 4 pp.] bears the rubber stamp of the S. F. chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, with genuine phone and P.O. box numbers.

Late news:

David Phillips is to receive "substantial" damages in a settlement of a libel suit against the London Observer, over excerpts from Summers' book "Conspiracy." ("Challenge" press release and clips, #115, 2 pp.)

Credits: Thanks to M. Ewing (#115), B. Fensterwald (80), J. Goldberg (73), L. Haapanen (101), G. Hollingsworth (77-8, 105), M. Lee (81), D. Lifton (106), P. McCarthy (83), J. Marshall (102), S. Meagher (84), J. Mierzejewski (79), G. Owens (76), R. Ranftel (85-7, 89-94, 96-100, 107, 110), P. Scott (104, 112), E. Tatro (74-5), and T. Vaughan (72).