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Let's face it: No one, except a handful of people with vested interests of one sort or another, now believes the Warren Commission. What's worse, fewer and fewer Americans are willing to believe that the one-assassin, magic-bullet theory is even an innocent mistake. More and more, the unthinkable comes into focus—that agencies of the United States government were involved in President Kennedy's assassination or, at least, were a part of a subsequent process which has passed into our vocabulary as "cover-up."

If we want the truth, and it's by no means certain that most Americans do, we won't get much help from President Ford. He's among those with a vested interest. He was one of the seven members of the Warren Commission. Furthermore, he wrote a book on its findings, a clip-and-paste job that insisted on Lee Harvey Oswald's singular and mindless culpability. One can reasonably assume that whatever institutional obligations Ford has acquired since entering the White House have simply reinforced his temperamental and self-interested objections to any re-examination of the Warren Commission's conclusions.

Senator Richard Schweiker, a moderate Republican from Pennsylvania, recently has taken the lead in demanding that Senator Frank Church's special committee on intelligence reopen the assassination inquiry. He cites compelling evidence of perjury on the part of J. Edgar Hoover in minimizing the Federal Bureau of Investigation's involvement with Oswald. A recently declassified letter to former Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren from J. E. Curry, then the Dallas chief of police, states that Curry had been pressured by the FBI to conceal its contacts with Oswald. FBI Director Clarence Kelley has since admitted that the FBI had destroyed a threatening letter it received from Oswald shortly before the assassination. Schweiker maintains that this evidence is sufficient to justify a new inquiry, but Church has refused, saying that "this committee already has enough on its plate."

From the beginning, the structure of the Warren Commission would have made it impossible to implicate the FBI in the assassination, whether or not such implications existed. One of the first decisions the Commission made, and one which fixed its entire course, was to establish no investigative force of its own but to rely exclusively on the FBI. J. Lee Rankin, the Commission general counsel, recognized that this was a mistake, but no effort ever was made to repair it. In a recently released transcript of Warren Commission deliberations, the following discussion is recorded:

**Rankin:** Part of our difficulty in regard to it [the scope of the investigation] is that they [the FBI] have no problem. They

# THE MAFIA, THE CIA, AND THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION

An effort to make sense out of all the assassination talk, including a review of the most discussed critics and theories.

By Milton Viorst

have decided that it is Oswald who committed the assassination, they have decided that no one else was involved, they have decided . . .

**Senator Richard Russell:** They have tried the case and reached a verdict in every aspect.

**Representative Hale Boggs:** You have put your finger on it.

**John J. McCloy:** They are a little less certain in the supplementals than they were in the first place.

**Rankin:** Yes, but they are still there. They have decided the case . . .

Today, it is possible to hypothesize a variety of motives for FBI involvement in the assassination, not the least of which was J. Edgar Hoover's profound resentment of the Kennedy Administration's efforts to put the agency under its effective jurisdiction. In addition, FBI-watchers have forever been at a loss to understand Hoover's persistent indifference to organized crime, and a few have publicly questioned whether it was related to his well publicized obsession with the race track. Organized crime has been mentioned, and will be mentioned again in this article, as a possible factor in the Kennedy assassination.

Yet, moving away from hypothesis, the evidence suggests no more than that the FBI was slovenly before the assassination in its dealings with Lee Harvey Oswald, an ex-defector to the Soviet Union known for political instability. Then it went to great lengths after the assassination to cover up its ineptitude.

*Milton Viorst is a Washington writer who first expressed skepticism about the Warren Commission in the February 1967 issue of The Washingtonian. Much of this article is based on the research of Michael Ewing, who began his study of the intelligence agencies while on the staff of former Senator Harold Hughes of Iowa. Assistance in the research was provided by the Committee for Public Justice.*

From what we know of J. Edgar Hoover's concern with the FBI's image, such a cover-up would be characteristic. But while the FBI is guilty of presenting real obstacles to the unraveling of the Kennedy assassination, there is no evidence that its motive was any more venal than excessive solicitude for its good-boy image. With all of the information that has since poured forth on FBI abuses, we have not heard of its involvement in—committing, rather than investigating—assassinations. The same cannot be said of the CIA.

The CIA, too, was covered within the Warren Commission. Its number one guardian was Allen Dulles, America's super-spy, director of the CIA from 1953 to 1961. In appointing Dulles to the Warren Commission, whether it crossed President Johnson's mind that Dulles might be something of a Trojan horse we have no way of knowing. But Dulles was not the only member with intelligence connections. John J. McCloy, the New York lawyer whom Richard Rovere once called the head of the American establishment, had been instrumental during World War II in setting up the OSS, which was the CIA's parent organization, and there are indications that he, too, retained ties to what is referred to as "the intelligence community."

Dulles certainly knew, and McCloy probably did too, that the CIA maintained important links with the Mafia. They dated back to Lucky Luciano during the period of McCloy's work in World War II, and they continued right up through the Bay of Pigs invasion, for which Dulles was responsible.

Half-heartedly, the Warren Commission explored the possibility of a Cuban relationship to the assassination, but Dulles said nothing about the Mafia's authorized attempts on the life of Fidel Castro or its involvement with Cuban emigré groups, both of which began when he was director. The Warren Commission report contains no information on CIA-Mafia ties, and, unless there are some surprises in its file of CIA documents, still classified Top Secret in the National Archives, it is unlikely that Commission members were in any way aware that the CIA might somehow be implicated in the murder.

Seymour Hersh of the *New York Times* broke the story of the CIA's involvement with the Mafia last March 10. His account of the liaison began with a contract on Castro's life in early 1961, one of many as it turned out. He then sketched in some history, going as far back as Luciano's putative assistance, provided from a prison cell, in planning the American invasion of Sicily in 1943. Ironically, Robert Kennedy had learned of the relationship when he was an investigator with the McClellan anti-crime committee back in the 1950s but did not pursue it. When he

became Attorney General some years later, he apparently tried to break up the alliance. As the story has since been elaborated by Hersh and other reporters, the Mafia was available to the CIA not only for such odd jobs as political murders but for such ongoing assignments as infiltrating the unions of French dockworkers to make sure their strikes did not interrupt the flow of war materials to Indochina.

In return for these services, the Mafia was amply rewarded. Luciano, his contributions swelling with the re-telling, was transformed into something of a folk hero, granted executive clemency by New York's Governor Thomas E. Dewey, and allowed to live out his remaining years in comfort as a senior racketeer. That seemed a small enough price to pay for the biggest island in the Mediterranean.

The subsequent benefits were more generous—or would have been if the CIA, the Mafia, the anti-Castro battalions, and the White House hadn't fumbled the Bay of Pigs. Had Cuba been delivered, the mob would have gotten back all of the casinos, hotels, and whores that Castro had confiscated after he took over the island in 1959. Castro cost the Mafia not only future profits, which was exasperating enough, but a very substantial sum of its own variously gotten gains that it had invested in Havana.

Needless to say, the racketeers were in no position to file law suits or complain to the press. But their cause, in effect, was served by the outraged Cuban emigrés who were convinced that Kennedy had betrayed them by abandoning the Bay of Pigs operation midway and allowing it to miscarry. With Castroites denouncing Kennedy for trying and anti-Castroites blaming him for failing, it was logical after the assassination for Americans, including the Warren Commission, to look for a Cuban connection. The Cuban connection that Americans did not look for was the Mafia, which took to violence even more readily than those whose ends were merely political.

Another benefit the mob received in payment for its services to the CIA was a lock on the heroin traffic in Southeast Asia. It is not a secret any longer that some of our favorite politicians and generals in South Vietnam did some moonlighting in hard drugs. In Laos, which was a special CIA preserve, the custom was even more widespread, to say nothing of the fact that some of our most faithful allies were the opium-growing tribesmen of the Laotian hills.

It made good sense for us to support our friends in Indochina, and the CIA, much like the commercial attache in any country, took steps to find willing buyers for the willing sellers. Well before Kennedy's death, it was clear that there was a huge amount of money to be made on heroin in Southeast Asia, and the CIA was quite

willing to let the Mafia make it.

If one were to chart a coziness quotient for the CIA and the Mafia, 1961 would probably have been its best year. In spite of the fiasco at the Bay of Pigs, the Kennedy Administration was keeping the pressure on Castro. Step by step, the US was intensifying its commitment in Indochina, with characters of the CIA's choice. By Kennedy's own admission, the CIA was growing increasingly powerful, and was threatening to become as much a law unto itself as the FBI had been for many years. J. Edgar Hoover may not have been a partner of the Mafia, but his neutrality toward organized crime was the next best thing, and he showed no inclination to extend his anti-Communist obsession into the CIA's domain. It was, for the agency and the brotherhood, a rosy year.

If there was a dark cloud, it was over at the Justice Department, where the President's brother, Robert Kennedy, ruled with autocratic determination. Kennedy was the first Attorney General anyone could remember who seemed earnest about challenging organized crime. He had restructured the divisions of the Justice Department to create special anti-Mafia task forces, and he had established a particular unit whose assignment was to lock up the president of the Teamsters, James R. Hoffa, a man whose association with organized crime particularly offended him.

Robert Kennedy had more influence on the President than anyone else in government and he did not approve of the CIA's indulgence of the Mafia, and it appears he tried to stop the CIA-Mafia attempts to assassinate Castro. Robert Kennedy even tried to exercise his lawful authority over Hoover, and for a while the battle was touch-and-go. At first, no one was quite sure what to make of the young Kennedy, but his persistence soon erased all doubts about his intentions.

By the third year of the Kennedy Administration, the rosiness had begun to fade for the Mafia and its friends. The drive against organized crime and the Teamsters—some called the latter a vendetta—grew more intense. According to Victor Navasky's *Kennedy Justice*, in contrast to the 19 syndicate indictments in Eisenhower's last year, there were 687 such indictments in Kennedy's last year. Under Robert Kennedy, the Justice Department also indicted 100 Teamster officials and 90 others said to be criminal associates, of whom 115 were convicted before RFK resigned. As for the feud with J. Edgar Hoover, Kennedy never did acquire mastery of the FBI bureaucracy, but in his crusades against Hoffa and the Mafia he did succeed in circumventing the FBI most of the time.

In the early fall of 1963, Robert Kennedy told the McClellan crime committee that he intended to expand his war against the

mob even further. The targets he singled out to the committee were Sam Giancana, Hoffa, and Carlos Marcello. Giancana, an old-time Mafia chief, was murdered gangland-style, while supposedly under surveillance by the FBI, just before he was to testify before the Church committee earlier this year on the CIA-Mafia relationship. Hoffa disappeared soon afterward, another presumed victim of the mob. When last seen, by contrast, Carlos Marcello was thriving.

Carlos Marcello is a New Orleans racketeer who has controlled much of the Mafia empire in the South and Southwest, including Dallas. Marcello, known as "The Little Man" in syndicate circles, long has been regarded by federal authorities as one of the two or three most powerful Mafia leaders in the nation. Maintaining unquestioned control over his important syndicate region, Marcello has exercised a leading role as a member of "The Commission," the syndicate's secret governing council.

For many years before the Kennedys, the Justice Department had been trying to deport Marcello, and, very briefly, Robert Kennedy succeeded by some dubious stretching of the law. After a few weeks in Guatemala, Marcello returned home in a state of outrage, determined upon revenge. In a meeting of Mafia chiefs at his plantation near New Orleans, there was some serious talk of killing the President, chiefly to dispose of the Attorney General. According to a report made to a government investigator by one of the participants in the meeting, Marcello's thinking had progressed so far that he already talked of finding a "nut" to do the job.

Jimmy Hoffa, although remorselessly pursued by the Justice Department's special task force, eluded prison as long as Jack Kennedy was alive. Helping him was the same Carlos Marcello, who had joined Hoffa on a number of occasions in raiding Teamster pension funds for investment in various syndicate business activities. At one point, Teamster and mob sources collected some \$2 million to beat Hoffa's conviction for jury tampering. They turned the money over to Marcello, presumably to spread around as bribes.

Like Marcello, Hoffa had long since acquired a reputation as a man willing to kill, although the only threat he is known to have made was directed not at Jack but at Bobby. That incident took place in the summer of 1962, and the source of the report was Ed Partin, the ex-Teamster official who gave the testimony which convicted Hoffa in the jury tampering case. Hoffa "asked my help in a scheme to kill Attorney General Robert Kennedy," Partin said in *Life* magazine, adding that Hoffa talked of using a high-powered rifle for the murder. Though Partin himself had a seamy police record, he

submitted to a lie-detector test on his *Life* assertions and passed.

Ben Bradlee of the *Washington Post*, in his recent book on John Kennedy, reports that on February 10, 1963, the President told him that "some hoodlum" had informed the Justice Department that he had been hired by the Teamsters, given a gun fitted with a silencer, and sent to Washington to kill the Attorney General. "I found this one hard to believe," Bradlee writes, "but the President was obviously serious."

It is not illogical that the enemies of Robert Kennedy should reason that the surest way to get rid of him was through his brother, the President. Hoffa and Marcello would have no trouble concluding that if Jack Kennedy were no longer in the White House, Robert Kennedy would not be Attorney General, and the Justice Department's hounds would be withdrawn from their pursuit. Besides, the wider range of Presidential enemies might make it easier to conceal a bigger murder—that of the President—than a smaller one.

## The Single-Bullet Theory

What is now regarded as the key area of the President Kennedy assassination investigation—the "single-bullet theory"—is the one issue on which the myriad critics of the Warren Commission appear united.

Simply put, the Warren Commission and the FBI concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald could have had enough time to fire his rifle and hit Kennedy twice and Connally once only if a single bullet passed through both men before the final fatal shot hit the President's head. This crucial conclusion—upon which the Warren Commission rested its lone-assassin findings—came to be known as the "single-bullet theory," or, as the critics call it, the "magic-bullet theory."

Scientific examination of the famous Zapruder film of the assassination made the single-bullet theory necessary. The film, recorded by a movie camera operating at 18.3 frames per second, showed that Kennedy and Connally both were first hit within 1.5 seconds, or 28 Zapruder frames. Yet scientific analysis of the Oswald rifle showed that it could not fire two shots in less than 2.3 seconds, or 42 Zapruder frames. Thus, either a single bullet passed through both men or there were two assassins firing. As a top Commission lawyer put it, "We had an either/or situation, with nothing in between."

The single-bullet hypothesis had some holes in it, and several Warren Commission members immediately looked upon it with something approaching incredulity. First of all, Connally and his wife both had testified that he was hit by a second, separate bullet after the first shot hit the President. Secondly, the alleged single bullet that supposedly hit both men was recovered in near-perfect condition on a stretcher after the cars bearing the wounded men rushed to Parkland Hospital. Twelve years of forensic and ballistic tests indicate it would be

Such reasoning proved sound, in that law enforcement agencies after President Kennedy's assassination didn't know whether to look to the left or to the right, to Americans or foreigners, to love or politics or revenge for suspects, and thus exonerated them all with the explanation that Lee Harvey Oswald was a homicidal nut. It proved sound, also, in that Robert Kennedy left the Justice Department soon after President Kennedy's assassination, and in short order the crusade against organized crime and Teamster corruption waned. The Hoffa prosecution, however, had by that time gone too far, and in March 1967, Hoffa went to prison, to be released later by Richard Nixon's clemency writ. In the heat of the Presidential campaign the year after Hoffa went to jail, Robert Kennedy was also murdered.

In this same fall of 1963 when the Teamsters and racketeers were feeling Bobby's hot breath on their necks, President Kennedy apparently was contemplating major changes in American foreign policy. Though the historical record re-

mains equivocal, there is indication that Kennedy was giving serious consideration both to repairing relations with Castro and to reversing the American commitment in Indochina. Having commitments of its own, the CIA would presumably have no use for such changes, and the Mafia certainly would interpret them in terms of the hundreds of millions of dollars that would go down the drain.

Nothing hereinafter suggests that the CIA had a direct involvement in the Kennedy assassination. Yet, any agency that was as ready to kill as we now know the CIA was may not have limited its targets to foreign heads of state. We have no evidence that the CIA paid the bills or delivered the guns connected with Kennedy's killing. On the other hand, evidence does exist which could lead reasonable people to conclude that those who killed for the CIA also may have killed John Kennedy. Certainly, whatever suspicions the CIA inevitably had of the culpability of organized crime were not transmitted to the Warren Commission and were, in fact, defiantly kept within its walls.

But if the CIA was itself innocent of conspiratorial entanglement, one might question why it remained silent about its suspicions of those who were not. If one is generous, one will dismiss out of hand the thought that the CIA would be an accomplice in the murder of a President simply because it disliked his policies or his treatment of its friends.

However, just as we know now that the FBI kept dossiers on Congressmen which it could use when needed, the Mafia had bulging dossiers on the CIA. The moment the CIA entered into its dirty partnership with organized crime, it was subject to blackmail at every turn. Once Kennedy was dead, silence may have seemed like a small price to pay for the CIA to keep intact the secrets of its ruthless conduct in countries all over the world.

next to impossible for a bullet to hit Kennedy's back, pass through his throat, enter Connally's back, glance off a rib, pass off his chest, enter and shatter his wrist, lodge in his thigh, and be recovered in near perfect condition. The mangled and shattered bullets that result from scientific simulations leave little doubt.

Thirdly, and here the issue comes full circle, the Zapruder film shows President Kennedy and Governor Connally were struck within a short time of each other—but not at the same time. To this last flaw, Warren Commission counsel Arlen Specter, who conceived the single-bullet theory, answered that a neurologically rare "delayed reaction" to the wound by Connally could explain the time lag shown in the film.

Senator John Sherman Cooper joined Senator Richard Russell and Representative Hale Boggs, the two members already suspicious about the FBI's other investigative work for the Commission, in voicing opposition to the controversial theory. Specter, however, found a willing proponent for his theory in Congressman Gerald Ford, who pointed out that failure to adopt the theory would prolong the Commission's work and open a hornet's nest of problems. Ford recommended an official Warren Commission conclusion that there was "compelling evidence" to support the single-bullet theory. Senator Russell, however, said he would publicly break with the Commission and refuse to sign its report if Ford's recommendation were followed. A final internal battle ensued, with former CIA Director Allen Dulles backing Ford.

Finally, the members agreed on a compromise wording—watering down Ford's "compelling evidence" to "persuasive evidence." Russell, Cooper, and Boggs then reluctantly signed the Warren Commission's report.

Let us start our re-examination of assassination day with Jack Ruby. The Warren Commission, after an intensive investigation, concluded that Oswald's celebrated killer was a small-time punk who had occasional passing contacts with unsavory characters but no status in any criminal organization. The Commission accepted Ruby's explanation that he shot Oswald in a fit of passion, to "spare Mrs. Kennedy" the ordeal of having to return to Dallas for a trial. Yet in the Warren Commission's behalf, one must acknowledge that it was conscientious about publishing much about Ruby's background, though items of testimony were scattered through the twenty-six volumes of its hearings. These items make clear that the Commission was, by a generous interpretation, naive about Ruby, and that he was far from the hot-blooded patriot he represented himself to be.

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Ruby came from Chicago, where he was secretary of the Scrap Iron and Junk Handlers Union at the time that its founder and chief mover, one Leon R. Cook, was shot to death. Ruby was picked up for questioning at the time, but was released when it was established that a third union official had committed the crime. Ruby's degree of involvement was never resolved, but the killing provided the opening for a takeover of the union by Paul Dorfman, a mobster with widespread underworld connections.

In short order, Dorfman entered into an alliance with Jimmy Hoffa, and an insurance company he formed was selected to underwrite the Teamster pension funds under Hoffa's jurisdiction. Dorfman later returned the favor by applying muscle that Hoffa needed to win the fight for succession to Dave Beck, the Teamsters' international president, who, ironically, had been driven from office by the McClellan committee's investigation under Robert Kennedy. Kennedy once jokingly acknowledged that he had made Hoffa what he was, and that he felt quite sheepish about it. Ruby subsequently wound up in Dallas, with plenty of money to set himself up in the nightclub business.

Various descriptions of Ruby appear in testimony published by the Warren Commission. Luis Kutner, a Chicago attorney who had worked for the Kefauver Crime Committee, said Ruby had appeared before Kefauver's staff in 1950, and in the course of subsequent investigation it was learned that Ruby was a syndicate lieutenant who had been sent to Dallas to serve as a liaison for Chicago mobsters. A former Dallas County sheriff also testified he knew Ruby had links to organized crime. According to other witnesses, Ruby was known as "the payoff man for the Dallas Police Department" and "had the fix with county authorities."

The Warren Commission hearings also disclosed testimony that in 1956 an informant for the Los Angeles Police Department described Ruby as the central figure in a "large narcotics setup between Mexico, Texas, and the East." At another point, the FBI cited one of its own informants who said Ruby was the contact man for various numbers operations in Dallas.

If this testimony was true, and it is extremely convincing, then Ruby was much more than a small-time punk. The Warren Commission tells us that shortly before Castro closed Havana's casinos in 1959, Ruby spent ten days there hobnobbing with major organized crime figures at the Mafia's Tropicana Hotel. More relevant to the assassination, however, is the fact that Ruby's narcotics and gambling connections would have had to make him a collaborator of Carlos Marcello, the Mafia's regional director in New Orleans and the man who vowed to get the

Kennedys.

Telephone logs published in the Warren Commission volumes show that on November 7, 1963, which was after the White House announcement of Kennedy's impending visit to Dallas, Ruby spoke to one Barney Baker in Chicago. Walter Sheridan, in an authoritative book on Hoffa, describes Baker as "a three-hundred-pound former prizefighter [who] had come up through the tough New York waterfront jungle, where he had been a strongarm man for a group of racketeers who had attempted to take over the piers and truck terminals in the late thirties and early forties." Over the years, Baker plied his craft in such locations as Hollywood, Florida, and Las Vegas before entering the permanent employ of Jimmy Hoffa. In his own book, *The Enemy*

*Within*, Robert Kennedy described Baker's assignment as "Mr. Hoffa's roving 'organizer' and ambassador of violence."

On November 20, 1963, according to the logs, Ruby placed another call to Chicago, to Irwin Weiner. Weiner was in the bonding business, in association with Dorfman's insurance company, which continued to rake in Teamster premiums on behalf of the Chicago mob. Sheridan says that Weiner was the recipient of millions of dollars more in bonding premiums from Teamster locals under Hoffa's jurisdiction. If Baker was one of Hoffa's enforcers, Weiner was one of his trusted advisers. Ruby's conversation with Weiner took place two days before Kennedy's killing. Ruby provided the Warren Commission with no adequate explanation

## The Assassination Critics

The Warren Commission has been under attack since it published its findings in 1964. Here are the more prominent critics:

**Sylvia Meagher**—Perhaps the most respected authority on the Warren Commission's 26 volumes of hearings and exhibits, Meagher, a New York librarian, compiled the privately printed "subject index" to the Commission's findings, which has become a basic tool of the critics. Meagher's 1967 book, *Accessories After the Fact: The Warren Commission, the Authorities, and the Report*, is considered the most comprehensive refutation of the Warren Commission's conclusions.

**Harold Weisberg**—A diligent researcher and veteran Senate investigator, Weisberg has written and privately printed four books, known as the *Whitewash* series, on aspects of the JFK assassination. He has taken Freedom of Information suits against the FBI as high as the US Court of Appeals before being defeated. New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison used Weisberg's book, *Oswald in New Orleans*, during his ill-fated investigation in 1967-69.

**Bernard Fensterwald Jr.**—A Washington attorney and former staff director for Senator Kefauver's Senate Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly, Fensterwald is director of the Washington-based Committee to Investigate Assassinations, a coordinating group formed in 1969 of various Warren Commission critics. Fensterwald has financed private investigations into President Kennedy's assassination and is assembling a central compendium of JFK conspiracy evidence. A specialist on Oswald's mysterious travels to Mexico City two months before the assassination, Fensterwald also has served as Harold Weisberg's attorney in court battles aimed at forcing Freedom of Information Act release of FBI "spectrographic analyses" of the bullets used in the shooting.

**Richard Sprague**—A computer specialist, Sprague has researched the possible role of intelligence agencies in the JFK murder. Author of frequent magazine articles relating to the assassination, Sprague also specializes in photographic evidence of the shooting and evaluations of media coverage

of the assassination controversy.

**Josiah Thompson**—A philosophy professor at Haverford College, Thompson's book, *Six Seconds in Dallas*, is, with Meagher's book, one of the most respected works on the subject. A specialist in ballistic and photographic evidence of the assassination, Thompson worked as a consultant for *Life* magazine in analyzing the Zapruder film in the mid-1960s—an analysis that led to the magazine's advocacy of a re-opening of the assassination investigation.

**Donald Freed**—Freed was co-author of the 1973 film *Executive Action*, which reenacted the JFK assassination with emphasis on official evidence suggesting a conspiracy. He has been active in California groups working to re-open both the JFK and RFK assassination investigations.

**Dr. Cyril H. Wecht**—A forensics expert and coroner of Allegheny County in Pennsylvania, Dr. Wecht is one of the few medical experts ever allowed to examine the JFK autopsy photographs and X-rays in the National Archives. Author of several articles attacking the single-bullet theory, Dr. Wecht maintains that at least one shot struck Kennedy from the front. He recently charged that the Rockefeller Commission deliberately "misrepresented" his testimony on the nature of the President's wounds and on the possibility of a second assassin.

**Mark Lane**—His early bestseller, *Rush to Judgment*, made Lane one of the best known Warren Commission critics. He continues his decade-long tour of the college campus circuit and has formed the Washington-based Citizens' Commission of Inquiry, which works toward a re-opening of the JFK case.

**Dick Gregory**—The humorist has been investigating the JFK assassination for the past year and has made frequent appearances on college campuses. He recently testified before the Rockefeller Commission and claims photographs show Watergate burglars E. Howard Hunt and Frank Sturgis present at the JFK assassination scene. Gregory's willingness to embrace nearly any conspiracy theory has damaged his credibility among more serious critics.

tion why he made either call.

That brings the story up to Jim Braden, a lesser known figure than Jack Ruby, a shadow who glides through the Warren Commission volumes. Braden was picked up by a suspicious Dallas policeman across the street from the Texas Book Depository just minutes after the fatal bullets were fired. Taken to the sheriff's office, he said he was an oil man from Beverly Hills who had been in Dallas for two days on business. He said that when the President's motorcade passed by he was looking for a taxi, and that after the shooting he had gone into a nearby building to make a phone call. In the confusion that followed the assassination, the police cursorily examined Braden's identification, found no reason to reject his alibi, and released him, without taking fingerprints or checking into a possible criminal record.

Two months later, the FBI routinely called on Braden at his Beverly Hills office in the course of its assignment for the Warren Commission. Braden repeated to the FBI the account he had given to the Dallas police on the day of the murder. The Warren Commission did not see fit to question the FBI's official report which stated, "Braden has no information concerning the assassination and both Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby are unknown to him."

There the matter rested until 1969, when a former FBI agent tipped off Peter Noyes, a producer for CBS television, about the existence of a mystery man named Braden in the assassination story. At the time, the former agent was working in New Orleans for District Attorney Jim Garrison, who was later to claim he had "solved" the Kennedy murder, only to have his suspects acquitted in one of the more bizarre, if not ludicrous, prosecutions of our time. Noyes followed up the clue, and his initial findings transformed him into one of the breed known as "assassination buffs." Noyes wrote a solid though scarcely noticed book on his findings called *Legacy of Doubt*. In it he demonstrates that Braden was actually Eugene Hale Brading, a frequently jailed racketeer with longstanding ties to organized crime. In September 1963, Eugene Hale Brading notified the California Department of Motor Vehicles that he had legally changed his name to Jim Braden, and was issued a new license under that name.

In November 1963, while still on probation for an embezzlement conviction, Braden received permission from the Parole Board in Los Angeles to make a trip to Texas. On November 21, he checked in with Roger Carroll, the chief parole officer in Dallas, who reported that Braden informed him "he planned to see Lamar Hunt and other oil speculators while here." Lamar Hunt is a son of the

late billionaire oilman, H. L. Hunt, who long was active in rightwing politics. Paul Rothermel, a former FBI agent then serving as chief of security for the Hunt Oil Company, has confirmed that on the afternoon of November 21, twenty-four hours before the assassination, Braden visited the Hunt offices with a group of men, at least one of whom was known to Los Angeles police to be a member of the Mafia.

That same afternoon, according to a statement he made to the Warren Commission himself, Jack Ruby visited the same offices of H. L. Hunt. The Commission, however, asked him nothing about Braden, nor at any point did it seem to occur to the drafters of the Warren report that there might be a Ruby-Braden connection.

Having fixed the likelihood of this connection, turn now to another mysterious figure named David Ferrie. The FBI and the Secret Service both scrutinized Ferrie for possible involvement in the assassination but neither reported anything incriminating to the Warren Commission. Ferrie subsequently achieved a certain renown when Garrison—whom assassination "revisionists" recently have begun taking more seriously—pointed to him publicly as one of the targets of his murder case. Six days after Garrison's announcement, Ferrie was found dead in his apartment in New Orleans. The death was ruled a suicide, though some of the evidence suggested murder.

Curiously, the FBI and Secret Service reports on Ferrie were not among the documents published by the Warren Commission. They were released by the Justice Department years later, as part of what was said to be a campaign to discredit Garrison's prosecution.

Ferrie was an ex-airline pilot who was employed by Carlos Marcello at a variety of odd jobs, including transporting his boss around in a private airplane. Ferrie is said to have flown the gangster back into the country after Marcello's contested deportation by Robert Kennedy. In the weeks before the assassination, Ferrie worked with Marcello's attorney on an investigation to defeat perjury charges which Kennedy had brought against his boss. The office in which Ferrie was based was Room 1707 of the Pere Marquette Building in New Orleans. At the same time, Jim Braden was working, ostensibly on matters related to the oil business, either in Room 1706, the adjacent office, or in Room 1701, just down the hall.

Evidence now exists to confirm that Ferrie, in addition to being a pilot, was a homosexual, a narcotics addict, a hypnotist of some talent, and a gun enthusiast. On November 23, the day following the assassination, an informant told the Secret Service that Ferrie was acquainted with

Lee Harvey Oswald, in fact had trained him in the use of a rifle with a telescopic sight and had visited him in Dallas earlier that month. A suggestion also was made that Ferrie did, or was to, pilot a getaway plane from Dallas after Kennedy was killed.

It was not until November 25 that the FBI and the Secret Service caught up with Ferrie—his whereabouts during the previous few days still are not fully accounted for—and confronted him with the charges. Ferrie denied them all, and when he told his interrogators whom he suspected to be their informant, they did not contradict him. When the informant heard over the radio that Ferrie had been questioned, he immediately retracted his accusations, as any prudent man who knew of Ferrie's relations with the Mafia might do. From this retraction the Warren Commission concluded that the informant's assertions were without validity, and proceeded to drop Ferrie not only from their deliberations but, save for one obscure reference, from their twenty-six volumes of supportive material.

Thus the chain was broken. It might have been possible, with investigative work, to establish links from field operators Ferrie, Ruby, and Braden to planners Marcello and Hoffa to grand strategists at the highest levels of the Mafia. But with its investigations aborted at the bottom, the Warren Commission had no way of getting to the top.

One might wonder what role Oswald played onstage if the behind-the-scenes drama resembled what is conjectured here. The obvious answer is that he was silenced by Ruby, under orders, because he knew too much. But what did Oswald know?

According to the testimony of a KGB defector in a recently declassified Warren Commission document disclosed by CBS's Daniel Schorr, the Russians were so convinced that Oswald was a CIA agent that they refused to let him re-enter the country after his first trip there. But then the Warren Commission told us that a man whose associations were with Communists, Cubans, and right-wing extremists, who had a Russian wife and traveled widely abroad without visible source of income, acted out of motives that were wholly psychopathic. The most one can say for the Warren Commission is that it conscientiously collected information, then proceeded to make a travesty of it.

As for the murder of Robert Kennedy, there is far less information to deal with. The political and criminal forces that found John Kennedy's death congenial to their purposes would have had the same motives for seeing Robert Kennedy dead too. The threats to Bobby have been plentifully documented. It is no surprise that he was left alone from the time he left the

Justice Department in 1964 until June 5, 1968. The night he was killed was the night that, having just won the Democratic primary in California, he was celebrating the momentum that seemed might propel him to the Presidency.

Even when it was universally accepted that Sirhan Sirhan murdered Robert Kennedy in a fit of anti-Israeli madness, there was testimony on his unexplained con-

tacts with dubious characters in California prior to the shooting. In April 1974, Bernard Barker, the Watergate burglar and CIA liaison to the Cuban battalions during the Bay of Pigs, hinted in an NBC interview of CIA knowledge of some strange connection between Cuban politics and Robert Kennedy's death. Now that the case has been reopened, almost any new theory is fair game.

Perhaps Senator Church is correct when he says that in its investigation into activities of American intelligence agencies "this committee already has enough on its plate" and can't take on Kennedy assassinations too. But if the Church committee has no appetite, then there ought to be another committee, with a clean plate, prepared to dig into the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy.

## The Assassination Theories

A plot to secretly control who will be, or will not be, the next President of the United States; sets of footprints that lead to shadowy ex-CIA/ex-FBI characters; a cast of assorted Cuban exile operatives; intrigues in Mexico to finance the plot; the director of the FBI helping to cover up the conspiracy; death threats, large cash bundles, official stonewalls.

All are elements in the assassination of President Kennedy as well as in the crimes collectively known as Watergate. And despite three years of intensive investigation, we still do not know for sure, as Sam Ervin has said, who ordered the Watergate break-in. No one has been indicted for initiating the Watergate act. Was it Mitchell? Magruder? Colson? Nixon? We may never know. Is it any wonder then that speculation persists about who killed John Kennedy, a much greater crime about which much less is known?

A rundown of some of the JFK assassination theories:

**The Russians**—Soon after the JFK shooting some observers theorized that the Russians, under Nikita Khrushchev, were the real conspirators behind the assassination, even though Kennedy and Khrushchev had established a personal detente of sorts. Though Lee Harvey Oswald had been to Russia, no evidence to support this theory was uncovered. The thought that the Russians would risk world nuclear war by assassinating the American President (who would be succeeded by a more conservative President) soon faded into obscurity.

**Fidel Castro**—The Cuban dictator soon became a more likely suspect in the alleged conspiracy. Oswald, of course, was identified as a pro-Castro Marxist, and Castro was a fiery militant. However, here again, evidence was lacking. Recent revelations of repeated CIA attempts to kill Castro—several during the Kennedy years—have refueled the "Castro scenario," the theory that the assassination was retaliation. The late President Lyndon Johnson once voiced suspicions along these lines.

**Anti-Castro Cuban Exiles**—Unfortunately for those critics who had eyed Castro as the real force behind the shooting, Oswald had also had repeated contact with anti-Castro groups, both in New Orleans and elsewhere. In addition, Oswald and his wife were closely acquainted with several Russian refugees in Dallas opposed to the Soviet government. Oswald also had reported ties to people on the right of the political spectrum, including militants involved in the anti-Castro Bay of Pigs invasion, which the CIA coordinated and Kennedy aborted. Additionally, federal agencies had received reports as late as two

weeks before the assassination alleging that an anti-Castro group of Kennedy-hating Cubans was planning to assassinate the President.

**The Dallas Police**—With Jack Ruby's murder of Oswald in front of a phalanx of Dallas policemen in the police department basement, the conservative-dominated Dallas police force came under suspicion. Ruby had somehow gained entrance to the basement just seconds before the killing. Ruby was a personal friend of several dozen Dallas cops, and his stripjoint nightclub was a gathering place for many on the force. In addition, many people viewed the mysterious shooting of Dallas patrolman J. D. Tippit shortly after the assassination as part of the alleged conspiracy. Oswald was charged with the Tippit slaying but reports surfaced of possible contact between Ruby and Tippit at Ruby's nightclub. Right-wing financing of the assassination—perhaps from the Texas oil empires of various Kennedy-haters—also usually is tossed into the Dallas police scenario.

**The Mafia**—That other legion of Kennedy haters, the Mafia, also has been a suspect behind the ultimate act of organized crime, killing the chief of state. Again the key was Jack Ruby. A sinister, pistol-packing hoodlum from Chicago, Ruby was shady and his friends were shady. The idea of this hardbiten character throwing his life away to kill Oswald for no apparent reason just doesn't wash with many people. Thus Ruby and his reported connections to organized crime became areas of suspicion.

**The CIA and FBI**—Some regarded as the more "radical" critics of the Warren Commission came to suspect the nation's top intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Rumors that Oswald once had been in the employ of the FBI were rampant in Texas following the assassination. The Attorney General of Texas himself transmitted similar allegations to the Warren Commission. Suspicions also were fueled by Oswald's reported contact with people allegedly connected with the CIA and by the careless way the CIA and FBI conducted their supposedly thorough investigations of the President's murder. Secret classified files on both Oswald and Ruby were quietly transferred from the CIA and FBI to a locked vault in the National Archives—legally restricted from disclosure until the year 2039.

**The Military**—The old *Seven Days in May* scenario has an enraged anti-Kennedy Pentagon plotting his assassination in the interests of "national security." President Kennedy, as some of the critics were quick to point out, once had mused that General Curtis Lemay of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was the kind of man who might want "to get rid

of" a President. Kennedy's gestures towards rapprochement with Russia and his Test Ban Treaty of late 1963, which some top Pentagon brass viewed with alarm, have been cited as motivation for his elimination. **The Others**—Groups and individuals spanning the conspiracy-laden horizon from left to right and back again have been suggested as the real conspirators behind the assassination. The Chinese planned it all. The John Birch Society. Western European intelligence operatives. The Reverend Carl McIntire. Madame Nhu. The Minutemen. Charles McGarry in his recent novel, *The Tears of Autumn*, presents a clever case that members of Ngo Dinh Diem's family had Kennedy killed in retaliation for the assassination of the South Vietnamese premier. Richard Condon, in another recent novel, *Winter Kills*, saw the conspirators as a cabal of disgruntled right-wing businessmen headed by none other than Joseph P. Kennedy.

It's impossible to say now who any conspirators were, but all leading Warren Commission critics believe the following parties either carried out the assassination or were involved in concealing the identity of those who did: Cuban refugee conspirators with close CIA and/or Mafia ties; elements of the Dallas police force; elements of the FBI; extreme right-wing financiers; and organized crime figures.

Some of the more studious Warren Commission critics believe that Victor Marchetti, the former CIA executive and author of *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, recently supplied an important piece of the puzzle in confirming information he originally disclosed to several people in the late 1960s.

Marchetti, who once was executive assistant to the deputy director of the CIA, said that during one of several high-level CIA meetings he attended in early 1969, then-CIA Director Richard Helms admitted that Clay Shaw, the man New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison alleged to have been a key assassination conspirator, was in fact a CIA contact man. Marchetti reports that Helms went on to say that "the Agency" might have to "give some help" to Shaw during Garrison's controversial prosecution of him. Marchetti says Director Helms also spoke of helping David Ferrie, the mysterious airline pilot who was subsequently found dead shortly after Garrison announced that Ferrie also was a target of his investigation.

Marchetti also reports that there were other high-level CIA discussions, some of which he did not attend, regarding Garrison's investigation. Marchetti is preparing a detailed account of this information. □