

This Man Is a Missing Link



WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

WASHINGTON: The House Select Committee on Assassinations has released this composite drawing in hope that citizen recognition might shed additional light on the assassinations of Pres. John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sketch shows a man who reportedly represented himself as a member of the U.S. intelligence community in the 1960's and who on occasion used the name Maurice Bishop.

By Dick Russell

Early last week, the House Select Committee on Assassinations released photographs of four men, one a man named "Maurice Bishop." The committee, which is about to begin open hearings into the possibility that President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., were victims of conspiracies, asked if anyone could identify either Bishop or the other three mystery figures it sought for questioning in the probe. I do not know Maurice Bishop, but I know someone who does.

Though the committee gave no public details about its interest in these men, sources close to the investigation reveal the following:

- The photo of a man identified as "Ralph" originated with an Atlanta resident named Claude Powell. Powell and his brother have reportedly claimed that "Ralph" met them in a bar in 1967 and offered them \$25,000 to kill King. When Powell refused to provide additional details, the House committee cited him for contempt.

- Two photographs of a young man with blond hair, allegedly taken in Mexico City in 1963, have been identified to the committee as being the same fellow who entered the Cuban embassy that fall, claiming to be Lee Harvey Oswald. Eusebio Azcue, the former Cuban consul in Mexico City, is said to have provided this startling information last spring in Havana to a team of visiting investigators. (Continued on page 22)

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agents to say Oswald was working for them was a cover for Bishop himself," adds Veciana. "I always believed Bishop was working with Oswald during the assassination. About five months later, I brought up the topic about giving money to my cousin. Bishop said there was no need to talk about that plan any longer. He never brought up the topic again, and I never asked."

Over a year passed. With Kennedy's death, the anti-Castro commando raids began to wind down too. Veciana worked to slowly infiltrate some of his people into Cuba and set up internal guerrilla warfare. He was in Los Angeles when Bishop asked for a rendezvous in Las Vegas.

Veciana then moved to Puerto Rico where, using the cover of a sports promoter, he worked for Bishop training people to infiltrate the local Communist movement. In 1968, he went on to Bolivia as a \$30,000-a-year banking specialist for the State Department. His other job was to destroy the image of the recently murdered Cuban leader Che Guevara. According to Veciana, three Cuban CIA agents had been involved in Guevara's murder.

While in Bolivia, Veciana also sought to undermine the Leftist government of Juan Torres. "I secretly started a campaign to inform the public that the coins would be devalued. There turned out to be a military coup (Aug. 21, 1971). Torres fled to Argentina and was killed." Veciana also maintains that Bishop twice tried to kill Bolivia's Minister of the Interior, a Communist, but the man fled to Cuba.

Veciana's next project centered around Castro's 1971 visit to the Marxist Allende government in Chile. "Once Allende was voted in, we knew Castro would go to Chile. A lot of the officers of the Chilean Army were very cooperative with me and Bishop. They knew everything when Castro would arrive and where he was going to be. The plan was to have TV cameras with machine guns inside them. We had two agents ID'd as pressmen. All this was planned directly by Bishop."

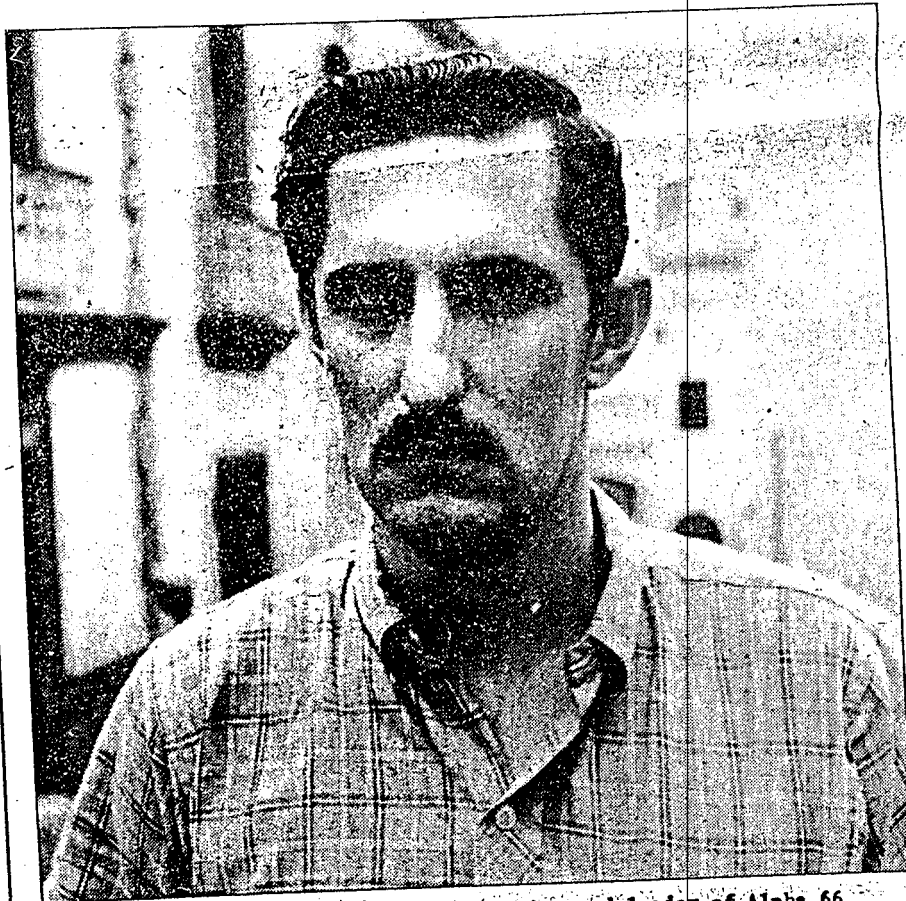
"Perhaps it was very similar to the Kennedy assassination. Because the person that get planted with papers to make it appear that he was a Moscow Castro agent and then he would himself be killed. So he would have been seen to be a traitor to Castro."

"It never got off the ground. One of the agents had an appendicitis attack, and had to be rushed to a hospital. The other said he wouldn't do it alone. We had all gone to Chile as diplomats, by car through Peru."

After this, says Veciana, "A lot of differences began to come up. I was tired of waiting so long. So many lives being lost, and Castro still alive. On July 24, 1973, the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) arrested me and accused me of trafficking in cocaine. Two days after the accusation, I was given my money. At the end of 15 years, they paid me. All Bishop had ever paid was traveling expenses; he said this was cumulative salary. Before I went to the Atlanta prison, I told Bishop what my family needed. After that, Bishop never contacted me again. I do not know where he is now. But I am sure the trial was a set-up because of my previous activities. I was sentenced to seven years, paroled in 17 months—out very, very quickly. Then the Senate started its investigating."

A few months after our meeting, Schweikert's people brought Veciana to Washington. He was taken secretly to a monthly meeting of the CIA's Association of Retired Intelligence Officers, where it was hoped he might provide a positive identification of Maurice Bishop. Apparently, the House has now ruled out that possibility. Curiously, sources close to the committee say that Veciana is not expected to be called to testify when the JFK hearings begin on September 6. It is rumored that, despite the committee's show of earnestness, its intent to once again depict collusion on the planning.

At last report, Antonio Veciana still lives in Miami. Although I originally agreed not to use his name, he has since appeared on a TV documentary with a portion of his story. If Maurice Bishop can be found, perhaps the tangled web that still surrounds the Kennedy assassination and related events of the '60s may yet find its way into the history books.



Antonio Veciana, associate of Maurice Bishop and leader of Alpha 66, the extremist Cuban exile group dedicated to the overthrow of the Castro regime. Has been questioned by the House Select Committee.

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wouldn't talk to me.

Nonetheless, I found Veciana's name in the telephone book and called him. He spoke halting English but agreed to meet me downtown across from the Trailways bus station. He was a stocky Cuban, about six feet tall, and he looked to be about 40. After an hour of small talk in a nearby grill, we drove to one of the big hotels along Miami Beach and found an isolated corner in the lobby. There, I learned that Schweiker's staff was protecting him as its key witness. There, I learned too about Maurice Bishop.

Veciana had been president of a Havana accounting firm when Castro took over Cuba. Embittered by Castro's turn toward Communism, he began to secretly raise funds for an anti-Castro uprising. Shortly thereafter, in 1960, he received a visit from the gentleman who called himself Maurice Bishop. It was to be the first of more than 100 meetings, in a relationship that would last 12 years.

Bishop, who stood about 6'2" and appeared about 45, dressed expensively and had sunspots below his eyes. He told Veciana he was part of an American intelligence service, but instructed him not to ask which one. He wanted to train Veciana to lead a group of anti-Castro Cubans in sabotage and psychological warfare inside Cuba. Another American, whom Veciana knew only as "Melton," assisted with his instruction.

The initial strategy was to spread false rumors among the population about the economic instability of Castro's regime—a CIA tactic later used against Salvador Allende in Chile. When this failed to create a stir, Bishop used Veciana to coordinate an assassination attempt. The first was scheduled as Castro prepared to introduce the Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, but was cancelled when Bishop feared a violent Soviet reaction.

The next was planned for October 1961 during a Castro speech, using a bazooka fired from a nearby rooftop. But Castro got wind of the plot and Veciana was forced to flee Cuba by boat. Bishop, who spoke French and possessed a fake passport from Belgium, stayed on undetected.

A month later in Miami, Bishop contacted Veciana again. Together they laid plans to form the group Alpha 66. Veciana traveled to New York, where he worked on another plan to eliminate Castro should he come to speak at the United Nations. Then, after the Cuban Missile Crisis, Veciana says that Bishop organized a series of commando attacks on Russian merchant ships in Cuban harbors. Bishop's plan, he adds, was to force another confrontation.

"Bishop kept saying Kennedy would have to be forced to make a decision," he remembers. "The only way was to put him up against the wall. Three ships were attacked in different ports of Cuba. The first one was a mistake in identity; it was a British ship. The other two were Russian. To further make Kennedy reach a point, we held a press conference in Washington to let him know about the commando groups. That was when Kennedy ordered that I be confined to Dade County, Florida."

In response to the terrorist raids, the Justice Department restricted a number of Cuban exiles to Dade County in the spring of 1963. But that summer, Veciana's meetings with Bishop resumed. In August, Bishop had him fly to Dallas.

"When I arrived there," says Veciana, "Bishop had given me the address to a building, a bank or insurance company. Bishop was waiting there with a young guy, an American, and the three of us walked to a cafeteria. The young guy did not say one word. He was very quiet, very strange. When I take a cup of coffee, Bishop says to him: 'I'll meet you in two or three hours.' Bishop and I then talked about the movement and our plans, but not when this guy was there. This was Lee Oswald. I didn't know until November when I saw his picture. But this means Oswald was working with Bishop."

"After the Kennedy assassination," Veciana continues, "the FBI contacted me to ask several questions. At first I was worried but the agent who interviewed me said that it was a matter of routine, nothing important. I didn't tell the agent anything, because I thought it would harm the movement."

After the assassination, Veciana says he waited a year before going back to Dallas. "I never asked Bishop about Oswald," he says, "because Bishop always told me that in this type of work, you just do things, you don't ask." Then, early in 1964, Bishop himself raised the subject. Veciana's cousin was then a leading official in Castro's intelligence service. Many times, Bishop had beseeched Veciana to try to glean information from the cousin.

"Now Bishop asked me if I thought that by getting my cousin a considerable amount of money, would he say he'd talked to Oswald to make it appear that Oswald was working for Castro? Because of this, I asked Bishop if it was true that Oswald had been talking with Castro agents. Bishop said it did not matter if it was true, what was important

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