

Who killed Kennedy and why?

By RALPH SCHOENMAN

Oliver Stone's new film about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (J.F.K.) has precipitated a firestorm of criticism in the establishment press and on television. The tenor and tone of the onslaught indicate that this film, like the investigation by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, on whose inquiry J.F.K. is based, has touched a very raw nerve.

The Warren Commission (named for its chairperson, Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court) was established in 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson to "investigate" the assassination. It was composed of such figures as Alan Dulles, the director of the C.I.A. who was fired by Kennedy after the failure of the invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs; John J. McCloy, major banker of the arms industry who toured European capitals instructing U.S. client regimes to "shut down" press speculation about conspiracy; and Congressman Gerald R. Ford, known as J. Edgar Hoover's man on Capitol Hill.

The Warren Commission had no investigative staff and relied exclusively on the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. to provide data and witnesses. Long before the Warren Commission ended its nominal inquiry and published its 26 volumes of testimony and documents, its unpublished conclusions that a "demented loner" had done the deed had been orchestrated by the established press. Despite this, 81% of the public disbelieved the official fiction about who killed John F. Kennedy and why.

Oswald's connections to C.I.A.

Alone among public officials, the District Attorney of New Orleans, Jim Garrison, upon learning that Lee Harvey Oswald had been living and working in New Orleans shortly before going to Dallas, began an investigation. It led him to indict a prominent society figure and international businessman, Clay Shaw, who was known as the director of the International Trade Mart in New Orleans.

Garrison charged him with conspiracy to assassinate the president, maintaining that Shaw was part of a high-level governmental plot involving the C.I.A., leaders of the military and corporate rulers in a *coup d'etat*. Serious investigation of the assassination has led many to this inexorable conclusion.

In December 1963, shortly after the assassination of Kennedy and of his alleged assailant, Lee Harvey Oswald, the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, of which I was then Executive Director, formed the "Who Killed Kennedy Committee" in London. Members of the Committee included Bertrand Russell, Arnold Toynbee, Lord Boyd-Orr and Hugh Trevor-Roper.

The official fiction in the United States concerning the assassination of John F. Kennedy was that the lone assassin who killed the president was a Marxist who had "defected" to the Soviet Union immediately after leaving the Marine Corps. Upon returning to the United States from the Soviet Union, Oswald had organized a "branch" of the Fair Play For Cuba Committee. His alleged murderous act was supposed to reflect these sympathies.

In the course of our own investigation, we obtained 19 secret files from the offices of the Dallas District Attorney, along with other governmental documents which revealed a rather different story. If deeply involved with the operational organizers of the Kennedy assassination, Oswald himself

Ralph Schoenman is the former Executive Director of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. In December 1963, shortly after the Kennedy assassination, the Russell Foundation formed the "Who Killed Kennedy Committee," whose extensive investigation produced key information that was made available to New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison.



had no part in its execution.

He was, we established, an intelligence agent of the U.S. government who, during his arranged "defection" to the Soviet Union, maintained top-security ranking and weekly contact with State Department Intelligence. Lee Harvey Oswald was, in fact, a contract employee of the Central Intelligence Agency and an informant of the F.B.I.

Our committee was able to obtain Secret Service Report 767, which contained Oswald's F.B.I. number — S172 — and his C.I.A. number — 110669. Oswald had, as well, a "crypto-security clearance," consistent with his assignment at Atsugi Air Force base in Japan where he monitored top-secret U2 spy overflights of China and the Soviet Union.

In 1959 he coordinated electronic communications in a major C.I.A. undertaking — the covert operation against the Sukarno government in Indonesia, which centered on the Mohammad Hatta armed insurrection in the Celebes islands.

Jack Ruby: undercover operative

Oswald, however, was not the only intelligence operative in the assassination scenario. His own killer, Jack Ruby, had an equally intriguing past. Ruby had organized the murder of Leon Cook, the secretary of the Scrap Iron and Junk Handlers' local of the Teamsters union in Chicago in 1939. (Chicago Tribune, Dec. 9, 1939). It was part of the takeover of militant teamster locals by the Mafia, an operation conducted under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover.

Jack Ruby was an undercover F.B.I. operative. During the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947, then Congressman Richard Nixon stated

Ruby's role in supplying him and the Committee with information on "subversives" in the trade union movement.

Upon his transfer to Dallas, Texas, he continued to work for the Meyer Lansky component of the Mafia — and for J. Edgar Hoover, notably in Cuba. F.B.I. memo 105-3193 revealed another assignment. As opposition to Batista grew, the U.S. intelligence services began to hedge their bets, supporting both the brutal Batista regime and its potential replacement.

"Ruby," F.B.I. directive 105-3193 states, "arranged illegal flights of weapons from Miami to the Castro organization in Cuba." Gun-running to the July 26 movement was also an important C.I.A. operation, involving the "Chief of Police of Hialeah, Fla., Leslie Lewis, the sheriff of Dade County and former Cuban Prime Minister Carlos Prío." (*ibid.*)

Ruby's associate in gun running to the Fidelistas in Cuba was another C.I.A. operative, Frank Fiorini, also known as Frank Sturgis of later Watergate fame. So successful was Sturgis in organizing arms transfers to the July 26 Movement that after victory Fidel Castro named Frank "Fiorini" Sturgis head of gaming and gambling in Havana and director of air force intelligence for the new revolutionary government. Sturgis placed Jack Ruby in charge of two of the largest gambling houses in Cuba.

The Cuban revolution shifted left after Fidel Castro failed to obtain financial undertakings and an increase in the sugar quota from the Eisenhower administration. Sturgis and Ruby, along with Mafiosi Meyer Lansky, Santos Trafficante and Louis McWillie left Havana to prepare Alpha 66 — the C.I.A.-sponsored covert operation to assassinate Castro and

restore the old order.

These were the units which began what became the Bay of Pigs invasion. It was an operation coordinated by the National Security Councils of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations. The military command officer was deputy head of the C.I.A., Major General Charles Cabell, and the political officer in charge was then Vice President Richard Nixon.

Jack Ruby and Lee Harvey Oswald, whose postal boxes were side by side in the New Orleans post office near Camp street, associated with both E. Howard Hunt and Clay Shaw. E. Howard Hunt, who was the director of the top secret (and technically illegal) Domestic Operations Division of the C.I.A., was given the task of preparing a replacement government in Havana. Hunt set up the "Cuban Revolutionary Council."

Role of Clay Shaw

The operational center of the C.I.A.'s Cuban government-to-be was 544 Camp Street in New Orleans. It was to become a famous address, the lynch pin of Jim Garrison's investigation and the point of convergence between Clay Shaw, Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby.

The "Who Killed Kennedy Committee" investigation into the assassination uncovered, in particular, the activity of two organizations. They shared members of their respective boards of directors and they were called Centro Mondiale Commerciale or C.M.C. (World Trade Center) and Permanent Industrial Expositions or "Permindex."

C.M.C. was founded in Montreal in 1958 and centered in Rome. Its board of directors included three C.I.A. operations officers: former Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy, Major L.M. Bloomfield of Montreal and Clay L. Shaw. Bloomfield was a major stockholder. He was also a former officer of the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.), a ranking officer of the little-known Division Five of the F.B.I. and a personal confidante of J. Edgar Hoover.

Clay Shaw of New Orleans listed his directorship of Permindex in *Who's Who In The Southwest* (1962). Shaw had been a top officer of the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.), the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency, assigned to the headquarters of Winston Churchill. It was while in the O.S.S. that Shaw became director of the International House-World Trade Center in New Orleans.

The "trade" activity of Shaw's organizations included facilitating the banking of Meyer Lansky and his holdings in the Bahamas — and Batista's Cuba. It was part of the network of the World Trade Center Association, which encompassed over 50 world trade fairs.

The Hong Kong World Trade Center served as a satellite computer clearing house for the international drug cartel, a transnational tracking system for drug trade routes, carriers, inventories and rates. It was the point of convergence of the drug empire of the Mafia and C.I.A.

The World Trade Center in New Orleans was transmuted to the International Trade Mart after Shaw's effective expulsion from Italy by the Italian government, *persona non grata*. The reasons for Shaw's departure from Italy are instructive.

In 1962, French intelligence services determined that a principal conduit for the arms and funds of the Organization of the Secret Army (O.A.S.) in Algeria was C.M.C. and Permindex. The O.A.S. had been organized by leading French generals and governmental officials opposed to a neocolonial solution in Algeria, which French President Charles de Gaulle and a major section of the French ruling class felt compelled to undertake.

It was a strategy much opposed by U.S. ruling circles, notably within the military and intelligence. Our committee document-

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ed that the O.A.S. had undertaken to assassinate Charles de Gaulle. The arms and funds deployed in three attempts to kill de Gaulle were traced to Permindex. A specific fund of \$200,000 was provided for the assassination.

The data assembled regarding the role of both C.M.C. and Permindex in this murderous assignment led de Gaulle publicly to accuse Permindex of coordinating the attempts at his assassination. De Gaulle labelled these C.I.A. fronts.

During this same period, C.M.C. and Permindex funded and aided the military *coup d'etat* in Greece and were involved in high level military attempts to take over the Italian government.

The investigation of these activities led the Italian government to expel C.M.C. and Permindex from Italy "for espionage and fomenting a plot against the State." The evidence was published in *Paese Sera* of Rome and *Le Devoir* of Montreal. C.M.C. and Permindex transferred their headquarters to Johannesburg, South Africa. Ferenc Nagy, of whom *Le Devoir* concluded "has close ties to the C.I.A. and the Miami Cuban colony," set up offices in Dallas. Clay Shaw returned to the International Trade Mart in New Orleans. Our committee supplied this information to New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison.

New Orleans: center of operations

In New Orleans, Clay Shaw worked closely with Guy Banister, who had set up offices at 544 Camp Street as a private detective. It was this address which was stamped on Lee Harvey Oswald's one-person Fair Play For Cuba Committee leaflets.

In fact, Guy Banister was the former director of the F.B.I. office in Chicago before his transfer to New Orleans. He was, as well, a ranking official in the Office of Naval Intelligence, whose New Orleans headquarters was across the street. In 1962, \$200,000 were channeled in a cash delivery to the accounts of Shaw's C.M.C. in Paris by the legal counsel of The Anti-Communist League of the Caribbean — founded by "detective" Banister. It was this transaction that was cited by the French intelligence services in relation to the attempts on the life of de Gaulle.

District Attorney Jim Garrison was disturbed to learn that the presumptive killer of John F. Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald, operated out of the offices of Guy Banister at 544 Camp Street.

These concerns became alarm when Garrison discovered Guy Banister's role in the intelligence services and his collaboration with E. Howard Hunt.

Garrison's investigation determined that it was from these offices that Banister and Hunt had prepared the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954, acknowledged by the C.I.A. Hunt and Banister continued such operations from 544 Camp Street, including the coordination of gun running and the deployment of a military arsenal at Houma, La., for armed intervention into Cuba, long after the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

The pilot who coordinated E. Howard Hunt's and Guy Banister's air-runs into Cuba was a C.I.A. operative named David Ferrie. He had also been Lee Harvey Oswald's instructor in the Civil Air Patrol and the personal pilot to Carlos Marcello, head of the Mafia in New Orleans. Ferrie

was a constant companion of Clay Shaw and a frequent occupant of 544 Camp Street.

Clay Shaw had another associate — Major General Charles Cabell. Cabell, as deputy director of the C.I.A. and ranking member of the National Security Council, was military commander of the Bay of Pigs operation. In May 1961, Shaw presented Cabell to the Foreign Policy Association in New Orleans to report on the failed Bay of Pigs invasion.

JFK fears exposing U.S. role

Twenty-four hours prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion, C.I.A. Director Allen Dulles and Deputy Director Cabell demanded U.S. air cover and troop involvement. John F. Kennedy refused. He did not want to expose the U.S. role in what had been touted as an indigenous Cuban uprising. Above all, he feared the consequences of a two-front war — having just increased U.S. troops from 500 to 25,000 in Indochina — for if the Cuban exiles and their C.I.A. commanders could not succeed in triggering an uprising in Cuba, U.S. rulers faced a protracted war of occupation. When the invasion failed ignominiously, Kennedy fired Dulles, Cabell and Hunt.

On Nov. 22, 1963 John F. Kennedy visited Dallas. Cabell's brother, Earle, was mayor and arranged the motorcade route. Their father and grandfather had been mayor and sheriff of Dallas before them. Dallas was Cabell territory.

John F. Kennedy was en route to lunch at the International Trade Mart in Dallas when he was assassinated, a destination which provided a pretext for the routing of his

motorcade through Dealey Plaza.

It was this assemblage of a cast of characters integral to the Kennedy assassination and to high-level National Security Council undertakings that compelled Jim Garrison to charge Clay Shaw with being part of a conspiracy to kill President John F. Kennedy.

Clay Shaw was identified to Jim Garrison by 10 witnesses as the man to whom Banister reported. They included four C.I.A. operatives: David Ferrie, Eladio del Valle, Gordon Novel, and Richard Nagel. Ferrie was found dead in his apartment the same day that del Valle came up with a severe case of hatcher in the head in Miami, victim of a torture slaying.

Others were kidnapped and several dropped from sight. Over 150 material witnesses to the Kennedy execution would die, people with nothing in common but their relation to that official slaying. These events made a considerable impression on other witnesses who, understandably, decided that discretion was the better part of valor.

If, however, critical evidence was kept from the jury trying Clay Shaw for his role in a conspiracy to assassinate President John F. Kennedy, newspapers and television today have no comparable impediment.

Upon his resignation from the C.I.A. as Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director, Victor Marchetti disclosed that the head of clandestine services of the C.I.A., Thomas Karamessines, acknowledged Clay Shaw as one of his top operatives. Marchetti, the author of *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, confirmed that C.I.A. Director Richard Helms instructed him to "do all we

can to help Shaw." A C.I.A. memo dated Sept. 28, 1967, refers to 30 top secret reports by Clay Shaw to his director.

Kennedy romanticized

Many of those who uncovered the role of the murder apparatus of the capitalist state in the Kennedy executions have romanticized the role of the Kennedy brothers (both their national and international policies). They have attributed to the Kennedys a desire for "reform" and to end the war in Indochina which their opponents in the military and intelligence agencies resisted through a *coup d'etat*.

Jim Garrison, and Oliver Stone in his film about the Garrison investigation, cite Kennedy declarations that he would wind down the Indochinese war by 1965. In fact, Kennedy had stated on Sept. 2, 1963, "I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw. ... We have to participate — we may not like it — in the defense of Asia." On Sept. 9, 1963, he repeated, "We should stay. We should use our influence in as effective a way as we can, but we should not withdraw." A week before the assassination, he declared, "What helps to win the war, we support; what interferes with the war effort, we oppose."

Kennedy had already shown what he sought for all of Indochina through the 1962 agreements on Laos. A cross-class coalition of the right-wing army, "neutrals" and the Communists (all members of the royal family!) had formed a common regime. As minor land reform was undertaken, U.S. special forces began a program of systematic murder of village leaders, trade unionists and students that would claim thousands of lives and become enshrined in the Phoenix program.

This was the formula of Eastern capital in the United States, its alternative to massive U.S. military intervention. It required, as well, the physical elimination of the old oligarchy if they did not go along — as the Diem brothers found when they were assassinated with U.S. collusion three weeks before Kennedy's execution in Dallas.

It was in 1965, nearly two years after the murder of his brother, that Robert Kennedy, at the behest of President Lyndon Johnson, coordinated in Washington, D.C., an Indonesian Council of Generals, who would carry off a *coup d'etat* in Jakarta, overthrowing the coalition government of Sukarno between the nationalists, Communists and right-wing army. Nearly 1 million people were killed in a space of three months in that U.S.-choreographed *coup*.

The Kennedy brothers, like de Gaulle, themselves presided over such operations and differed from their opponents within ruling circles primarily over how best to suppress insurgent movements among the poor and dispossessed. Paradoxically, the Kennedys, as did Eastern banking capital (whom they represented), preferred covert operations — employing Green Berets, Phoenix programs and Rangers for this purpose to the massive use of U.S. troops, with its attendant deficit financing and ensuing, "destabilizing" domestic opposition.

How best to exploit for profit and which murderous means to employ on a global scale are tactical disputes over how effectively to service the powerful few. It is the basis of a struggle within sectors of the ruling class for control over state power, and the material root for *coups d'etat* and the assassination of heads of state. The Kennedy's, in life as in death, reflect this equation.

The uncovering of their murder, thus, has always been in the realm of "Who Killed Caesar" rather than the crucifixion, the latter more analogous to the fate of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. It does not require romanticizing John and Robert Kennedy to understand the dynamics of their executions nor who rules America.

Oliver Stone, nonetheless, has made not merely a film remarkable for its honest daring — a rare event which has earned him the antagonism of the hired hands in the mass media, many of whom are intelligence "assets." His film, *J.F.K.*, challenges Americans to confront a reality, the massive evidence of which speaks more eloquently than the hurried hysteria of official apolo-

gia. But pointing people to a fallen King and his legendary Camelot belongs to the era of King Arthur. The American people will have to rely on themselves and their own political instruments to wrest power from a system which is not above devouring its own.

Held over until our next issue:

A series on

"The Struggle for Black Majority Rule in S. Africa"

by Miguel Cristobal and Alan Benjamin

For reasons of space, and in order to update the series with the analysis by the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) of the Dec. 21 constitutional talks, our special report on South Africa has been held over till next month. Also in our next issue we will publish the promised articles on Haiti (by Mya Shone) and Canada (by Colette Lebeuf), as well as a report on the Brazilian Workers Party Congress and a book review by Lee Heller.