

started work on this thing while the Assassination Committee was still at work, and before they had that conclusion. The reason that I felt a reporter had to sit down and do a book was that I found when I was doing my documentary that when I went down the road and started wearing out the shoe leather, as it were, as a reporter, I found that time after time witnesses hadn't been interviewed by the press before. And that in a way there'd been, if you like, another conspiracy, a conspiracy of apathy in this case. And it seemed to me time, not least because of the coming report of the committee, that a reporter did do a comprehensive job. And that's what I've tried to do.

HUNTER-GAULT: All right. Let's deal with the primary conspiracy here. Who was involved in it?

SUMMERS: We don't have the names and addresses of the gunmen on the grassy knoll, for indeed that, of course — the infamous grassy knoll — is where the second gunman has now been placed by the scientists. And what we do have, is the direction of the conspiracy. The House Assassinations Committee said that the hard clues and the main leads in the case — and there are a mass of them, very complex, too complex to talk about in proper detail on this show — pointed to the Mafia, to organized crime and to the anti-Castro movement. Now, both Ruby and Oswald appear to have crossed paths in their lives, and specifically in the weeks and months before the assassination, with people who were involved with both those forces. Now, when you see that Oswald had a public posture of being an avowed leftist, a supporter of Fidel Castro in the months before the assassination, and when you suddenly have a firm knowledge of two gunmen, you have to decide how leftist Oswald fits into an assassination conspiracy coming from such opposite forces.

HUNTER-GAULT: Well, what kind of conclusions did you come up with about why organized crime and the anti-Castro forces would want to kill Kennedy?

SUMMERS: Many people had reasons for seeing President Kennedy out of the way. I think the clearest-cut motive is in the case of the Mafia. The fact is that the Kennedy administration, especially with Robert Kennedy as attorney general, was pursuing the mob as never before or since. In the year before the Kennedy administration began, there were 33 organized crime convictions across the United States, a paltry figure. In the last year, that's the last six months of the president's life and the six months which followed, the carry-on cases, there were more than 600. Specifically, Robert Kennedy as attorney general was pursuing named Mafia bosses, including Sam Giancana in Chicago, Santos Trafficante in Florida, and Carlos Marcello in New Orleans, Louisiana. And there were certainly a number of them who felt, at the middle level of organized crime certainly, that literally it was time to go back to Italy. We have them on phone taps, FBI surveillance, talking about this.

HUNTER-GAULT: And what about the anti-Castro people? What would their purpose be?

SUMMERS: The anti-Castro exile movement had felt ambivalent about President Kennedy's policies and about him personally ever since the Bay of Pigs, when it was perceived by them that he had declined to give them the air support that they thought would have made their invasion work. And then again, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis — and we should remember, you know, we have to get back into the temper of the times — the Cuban missile crisis was just a year before the assassination. And what most of us thought was a heroic president facing up to the Russians over the missiles was seen by many of the Cuban exiles once again as a betrayal because he assured Khrushchev that there would be no U.S. invasion of Cuba. And finally, it's little known, but I've pointed it up in my book, that in the eight weeks before the assassination, President Kennedy had secretly, behind the backs of U.S. intelligence and the State Department, had given the go-ahead to a secret

isn't as simple and perhaps — it isn't as simple as Professor Blakey was suggesting just now, and I don't think he would suggest that. The fact is, that I think there are many areas that need more looking into, and this is one of them.

MACNEIL: Well, we're not going to solve that one, and you and Mr. Phillips have been arguing that one on a number of television programs around the country, and no doubt will continue. Let's go down to some of the more concrete aspects of this. Do you believe that Oswald pulled the trigger, any trigger?

SUMMERS: On balance, on the evidence, the committee came to the conclusion last year, that yes, he was one of the two gunmen. I have a problem with that, as I indicated earlier in this program, that if you say 'two gunmen' and then if you say that the direction of the conspiracy came from the Mafia and from the anti-Castro movement, how does Oswald, an avowed leftist, a pro-Castro figure, fit into that? So, I have looked at the hard evidence for Oswald's whereabouts in the building that day. I was struck by various things. Oswald claimed under interrogation that he'd been in the lunchroom during the assassination. Now, I find it odd that a man like Oswald would not have been out there watching the motorcade. On the other hand, one finds that the Warren Commission didn't look seriously enough at comments by the foreman in the Texas School Book Depository and several others, that he had in fact been downstairs at noon or after 12 o'clock. And I did, for my part, for what it's worth, track down a witness who I thought was a credible woman, who was assistant to the vice president of the Book Depository at that time. She says that just before she left the Book Depository to watch the motorcade, she went into the lunchroom for a glass of water, and there was Oswald sitting quietly having some lunch. She knew him well. She looked after the cash in the building, knew him well. Now, the thing is, and it's important to understand this, that she told the FBI at the time that she left the building at 12:25. The president was due to go past at 12:25, and I don't think that — it seems odd to me that an alleged assassin would be sitting downstairs eating his lunch, even to establish an alibi, just a couple of minutes before the president was due to go past.

MACNEIL: Do you still believe that Oswald did pull the trigger?

BLAKEY: Mr. MacNeil, I have been a prosecutor and an investigator for 20 years. I have reviewed all of the evidence and talked to the witnesses. Lee Harvey Oswald is guilty beyond all reasonable doubt.

MACNEIL: But not alone, in your view?

BLAKEY: But not alone. And the important thing is that he did have help.

MACNEIL: Can this case still be solved after so much time has gone by, so many witnesses have died?

BLAKEY: Let me sum it up for you very quickly. Give me five lawyers and 25 FBI agents and six months in the fields, using the techniques available to me as a criminal investigator, and I will tell you whether I can indict additional people. I do, in fact, believe that people who had a hand in the assassination are alive and are at large. Whether it could be solved with an indictment requires more investigation. On the other hand, I think I know the truth of what happened, and I don't think additional investigation would substantially change that picture.

MACNEIL: Do you think it can still be solved?

SUMMERS: I — In this I absolutely agree with what Professor Blakey has said. You know, if, 40 years on, we still think it's right to pursue Nazi war criminals to the ends of the earth, and apparently we do — I've seen cases in the newspapers since I've been here, talking about extraditing people from California to go and face war crimes trials in Europe.

at Jack Ruby, as we did, you get a wholly new view of who he was and what he was doing. All kinds of things that were not made available to the Warren Commission in 1964 come out and that leads you to say that the key to the assassination is in Jack Ruby's personality, not in Lee Harvey Oswald's.

MacNEILL: Well, where does that lead in your own conspiracy theory?

BLAKEY: My judgment is that elements of organized crime killed the president, and that there was no—

MacNEILL: Alone?

BLAKEY: Alone, that there was no intelligence involved in it.

MacNEILL: And there was no anti-Castro element involved?

BLAKEY: Well, there is not always a difference between an anti-Castro group of people and organized crime. For example, Lee Harvey Oswald knew as a youth a man named David Ferrie. David Ferrie was a detective for a man named J. Ray Gittel, who was the lawyer for Carlos Marcello. David Ferrie was not only an investigator for Carlos Marcello, he also was a very active anti-Castro activist himself. So that they kind of meld in some way in the personalities of some people.

MacNEILL: So, is the only place you part company with Mr. Summers, that you see a conspiracy, as he does, involving the Mafia, involving some anti-Castro elements, but not in any way connected with American intelligence?

BLAKEY: Well, no, actually I think there are other and more deep divisions between Tony and I. His examination of the intelligence community, for example, is primarily domestic intelligence community. I think that a fair examination of the evidence we developed against either the KGB, the Soviet secret police, or the DGI, the Cuban secret police, is in fact far more compelling than either the Russians or the Cubans were actually involved in the president's death. And I'm perfectly willing to concede that I could have been wrong — I can be wrong — that maybe the Mafia didn't do it, that maybe it was either the Soviets or the Cubans. So that I'm open to the possibility of foreign intelligence, although on the bottom line is I don't think they did it.

MacNEILL: Well, thank you. Charlayne?

Charlayne Walker: Part of the evidence Mr. Summers gathered in linking Oswald to elements within the American intelligence community is a filmed interview he did with Antonio Veciana, a Cuban exile who in the '60s led an anti-Castro terrorist group known as Alpha 66. Here is part of that interview.

(on film)

SUMMERS: Before the Kennedy assassination, did you meet Lee Harvey Oswald?

ANTONIO VECIANA (as interpreted from Spanish): Yes, I had encountered Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas at the end of August, or in the first days of September of 1963, a few weeks before the president was assassinated. I was asked to go to Dallas at the request of my contacts with the intelligence service in this country, Maurice Bishop. We fixed a meeting downtown in Dallas in a bank or insurance company building. I don't remember which it was. Maurice came with a young man. He seemed to be very quiet, very strange, preoccupied person. Shortly afterwards, I recognized him from his photographs in the newspapers. He was without any doubt the Kennedy assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. I have no doubt that the person with Maurice Bishop was Lee Harvey Oswald because I have been trained to identify individuals I met by noting their physical characteristics.

SUMMERS: Do you think that later, in 1963, that Maurice Bishop was sufficiently against Kennedy to be a physical threat to him?

VECIANA: Look, Maurice was at odds with Kennedy. He believed that Kennedy was a man without experience surrounded by unqualified advisers and that they were leading his country into trouble. Following the Bay of Pigs fiasco and after the missile crisis, Bishop considered it was a tremendous mistake for the United States to make the agreement which Kennedy concluded with Khrushchev. It has been suggested here that there was a conspiracy against Kennedy. Maurice Bishop had many opportunities to take part in such a conspiracy because he was an operative whose professional business regularly involved dirty work activities, and he believed that the best thing for this country was to depose Kennedy and his advisers.

HUNTER-GAULT: Mr. Summers, what is the significance of that?

SUMMERS: I think you have to see it as one piece of evidence. I find it a troubling interview because I think that some parts of what Antonio Veciana, who was the leader, the well-known leader of a major anti-Castro guerrilla group, [said] have stood up. I'm doing some work at the moment for the *London Observer* and indeed there's an investigation going on for a national newspaper in this country, and the fact is that the existence of the case officer, Maurice Bishop, appears to be corroborated. I found a witness who used to pass on messages between a man called Bishop and between Veciana. And while one has corroboration of the notion that Veciana was in touch with a man called Maurice Bishop, and one begins to develop leads like that, I feel that one can't leave the kind of allegation that he makes alone. Now, saying that there was a connection between Oswald and an element in U.S. intelligence, one officer even in U.S. intelligence, is very far from saying that U.S. intelligence was involved in the assassination. But taking together the various bits of the allegation, which is that earlier in 1963, at a time when President Kennedy was attempting to reach some sort of detente with the Russians over Cuba, that one senior officer was allegedly attempting to subvert that national policy. When you take a specific allegation about having seen this case officer with Oswald, and that after the assassination, that case officer attempted to fabricate, to falsify evidence linking Oswald with the Communist Cubans, then one has a worrying picture suggesting in levels of gravity, a) a connection between Oswald and an element of U.S. intelligence. Secondly, the possibility that that same element in U.S. intelligence tried to use the assassination for its black propaganda advantage. And certainly, after the assassination, a mass of material did come in out of Mexico City, which Oswald had visited before the assassination, indicating an involvement between him and the Communist Cubans. And finally, if you take it with the suggestion that that officer was already involved in deliberately trying to provoke national policy, then you must certainly consider whether a renegade element — and I stress, *not* the CIA as an agency — but a renegade element of U.S. intelligence was not perhaps involved in the conspiracy. I don't say this is conclusive, but I don't think it's been sufficiently run down yet. And that's all I've said in my book.

HUNTER-GAULT: All right. You're not at all concerned that Veciana only came forward with these accusations after spending two years in federal prison on a narcotics conviction, in which he said that the CIA set him up?

SUMMERS: I'm not concerned. I didn't mention that in my book, incidentally, because it was not mentioned in the final report volume of the Assassinations Committee report, and I felt if they didn't deem it right to mention that in public, that I would not. On second thoughts, I wish I had put it in the book. However, it's interesting that he came up with the allegation not as it were to protect himself — he was already from going to jail, he was already out of jail on parole — and so he didn't help himself any by coming up with it

when he did. And the fact is, that this man we're talking about, who claims he's framed, and I don't know whether he was or not, is a man who in other respects has a very good record. He's known to all the people I've talked to, and I believe to the people the committee talked to, as a man of integrity. And the crime people in Florida where he lives certainly have no record on him at all, apart from this major event, that he was involved in a narcotic case.

HUNTER-GAULT: Can you just tell me the name, if you know it, of Maurice Bishop?

SUMMERS: I certainly don't know it, and the search for the real identity of Maurice Bishop must continue. The assassinations committee and Congress did publicly consider the possibility that he was perhaps identical with a former senior CIA officer named David Phillips. David Phillips has denied it, but the committee said in its report, and I stress, the committee said as a body that it suspected Veciana was lying when he said that Bishop was not Phillips, and that for his part, Phillips aroused the committee's suspicion when he said he didn't recognize Veciana because as an officer in his senior position in anti-Castro operations, that Veciana was surely somebody he would have known, and known of pretty well. Veciana was publicly well-known. I certainly do not know that anybody was Maurice Bishop, and I think it's important that some of the leads that weren't finally followed through by the assassinations committee, for whatever reason, — I think they were straggled for time and money at the end, as all investigations are at some point — but I do think if the investigation is reopened in any area, it should take another hard long look at this one.

HUNTER-GAULT: All right. Let me just ask you briefly, Mr. Blakey, did you — the committee believe Mr. Veciana's story?

BLAKEY: No. We felt he really was not worthy of belief, both as a person in the position to observe the events — Lee Harvey Oswald was in fact living in New Orleans, not in Dallas, at the time — and second, we made every effort to determine whether there was a Maurice Bishop in American intelligence, and there simply was no substantial corroboration of it. We openly asked ourselves a simple question, Veciana says that he remembers Oswald. How could he remember Oswald? He couldn't even remember the building the event occurred in.

HUNTER-GAULT: And therefore you also rule out David Phillips being Bishop, if Bishop doesn't exist.

BLAKEY: We looked very carefully in — Mr. Phillips appeared before the committee twice in executive session. We thoroughly reviewed his files, all of his confidential files without any redaction. We interviewed all of the people around him, and we are satisfied that David Phillips is not Maurice Bishop.

SUMMERS: I'd like to come in there, if I may, for a moment.

HUNTER-GAULT: Just briefly.

SUMMERS: Yes. The fact is that there is a gap at that particular point of the allegation about Oswald meeting Bishop. There's a gap in Oswald's chronology. It's quite unusual. He's very well documented, and he could in fact at that point have been in Dallas. Also, you know, I think it's very important that the committee found a case officer in the CIA who was in the Miami station at that time, and he said he was certain that the name Bishop was used by an officer from headquarters in —

BLAKEY: He said 'almost certain.'

SUMMERS: No. He said, 'certain' that the name Bishop was used, and he was almost positive, is the quote, that Bishop was the name used by David Phillips. So, you know, it

dialogue with Fidel Castro with a view to reaching a peaceful accommodation. Now, that to the Cuban anti-Castro movement in this country was anathema. It would have meant the end of all their hopes and dreams of toppling Castro and returning to Cuba. So, perhaps at that point — and I'm supported by people like Arthur Schlesinger, the historian, who was also in the Kennedy administration, on this — perhaps at that point, the Cuban exile movement, or some in it, felt that instead of just resentment of the president, they had an actual reason to stop him. Perhaps that was the trigger for the conspiracy. But that's all speculation. It does indicate motive in both organized crime and the anti-Castro area, but it's speculation, and my book is basically about evidence.

HUNTER-GAULT: You've also suggested in your book, though, that there was an element of intelligence activity involved in this.

SUMMERS: I have felt — I have not said that I think firmly that U.S. intelligence, or even a renegade element of the U.S. intelligence, was definitely involved in the assassination. What I have said is that from the record, as we see it at the moment, that there may well have been a connection of some kind between Lee Oswald, the alleged assassin, and elements of U.S. intelligence during his brief adult life. And that in those last vital months, from the evidentiary point of view, there is some disquieting evidence, which if credible and if in the end it turns out to be credited, does suggest that there was a connection between Oswald and a senior officer in U.S. intelligence, which is certainly disquieting.

HUNTER-GAULT: All right. Thank you, Robin?

MACNEILL: A year ago, the House Select Committee on Assassinations ended a 28-month investigation with the conclusion that there had been a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy. The chief counsel and staff director of that committee was Robert Blakey, who is now writing his own book on the committee's findings. It will be published in November. In the 1960s, Mr. Blakey was special racketeer prosecutor in the organized crime section of Robert Kennedy's Justice Department. After seven years at Cornell, Mr. Blakey has just been appointed professor of law at Notre Dame. Mr. Blakey, how far do you go with Mr. Summers' theories?

BLAKEY: Well, I think Tony's book really says three things. First, that the hard physical, the scientific evidence says there were two shooters in Dealey Plaza, and this requires a re-examination of all the evidence in the case. He then makes a second point that I'll come back to, and then he makes a third point. And that third point is that the Department of Justice, as the Department of Justice, really must reopen this case. Even if it fails, it must finish the investigation that was not done in 1964. I agree with Tony's first point, and I agree with his [third] point. I am somewhat troubled by his second point. That is, that there is an indication, as he put it, of disquieting evidence that elements of the American intelligence community may have had a hand in the president's death. That suspicion, which is real, growing out of the Church Committee's findings in 1977, largely led to the creation of our committee. And no other single area occupied my time or our staff more time. And we've just gone down that road and looked, and as a professional, I can say that there's very little that can be done to pursue that area more. And that there are other more attractive areas that ought to be pursued.

MACNEILL: What are the more attractive areas?

BLAKEY: Well, the assassination is a fascinating subject, and like a lot of subjects, how you go in depends on how you come out. If you go in looking at Lee Harvey Oswald, you tend to push in the direction that Tony has. To look to his relationship to governments, our own or foreign governments. I'm inclined to think that we've focused too long on Lee Harvey Oswald, that the key to the assassination is Jack Ruby. That is, what happened to Lee Harvey Oswald within 48 hours of the president's death. And when you begin looking

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And if we believe that if you or I are murdered in the next couple of weeks, and in the years to come, in five years, or ten years, evidence comes forward to show that there has been a miscarriage of justice, as there has in this case, hard evidence, then it's the job of the Justice Department — or locally, of the DA — to reopen the case. And I think that in this case, the Justice Department must respond to what Professor Blakey has suggested, and what the assassinations committee has recommended.

MacNEIL: Do you agree with that, in a word, that the Justice Department needs to respond?

BLAKEY: I couldn't agree more with Tony's comment—

MacNEIL: I'm afraid we have to leave it there. Awfully sorry. Thank you both for coming this evening. Good night, Charlayne.

HUNTER-GAULT: Good night, Robin.

MacNEIL: That's all for tonight. We will be back tomorrow night. I'm Robert MacNeil. Good night.

THE MacNEIL/LEHRER REPORT

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JFK Conspiracy

[Tease]

ROBERT MacNEIL: Seventeen years after President Kennedy was assassinated, some people still feel the truth is hidden. Why do they continue to pursue a case that the nation has consigned to history?

G. ROBERT BLAKEY: Well, for 17 years, we've been living an official lie, that Lee Harvey Oswald acting alone assassinated the president. That's not true. It is demonstrably not true. And it's terribly important that we tell ourselves the truth about an event as important as the death of a president.

ANTHONY SUMMERS: You know, in the end it's still a matter of justice. The fact is that a congressional committee, after much deliberation, has found that there was a conspiracy, and it has passed on hard leads and named suspects to the Justice Department. Justice must be seen to be done. There is no statute of limitations on murder.

[Titles]

MacNEIL: Good evening. Everyone knows where he was when John F. Kennedy was killed on November 22, 1963. I have a particularly vivid memory because I was in Dallas, in the presidential motorcade as a reporter. I heard the shots and scrambled to make sense of them and of what followed. But like many people, after the shock wore off, I didn't want to make a career out of the assassination, and I found many of the assassination theories too tedious to wade through. As political scientist Andrew Hacker wrote recently, 'The question of who killed Kennedy puts off a lot of people. It's easy to see why. For one thing, cranks and eccentrics have dominated much of the debate, so it's hard to know which theories ought to be taken seriously.' He wrote that in reviewing a new book about the assassination by an English journalist, Anthony Summers, called *Conspiracy*, a book Hacker thought should be taken seriously. And I felt so, too, when I read it before publication, not because I was convinced by everything in it, but because it made me believe for the first time in 17 years, that there must have been a conspiracy. Tonight, we examine that case. Jim Lehrer is off, Charlayne Hunter-Gault is in Washington. Charlayne?

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT: Robin, it's a fairly unusual progression, but the book *Conspiracy* is an outgrowth of the work Anthony Summers did for a television documentary, shown first on the BBC in January, 1978, and later syndicated on television in this country. Mr. Summers borrows heavily from the House Assassinations Committee report completed last year, and to a lesser extent from the scores of assassination books written in this country. But he decided to go ahead with his own book, because he says that many of the witnesses he interviewed, as well as the materials he researched, had not been examined by other journalists. The book was published first in England, then in this country last week. As Robin said earlier, Mr. Summers is with us tonight. Mr. Summers, why did you conclude that still another book was needed on the Kennedy assassination?

UMMERS: I call the book flatly *Conspiracy* because I think there is a new bottom line to this thing which the public in general have not understood. And that is that the House Assassinations Committee, which was a sober-sided, careful, I think rather cautious body, concluded and told us last year in 10,000 pages of evidence, which was passed on to the Justice Department, that they felt that there were two gunmen in Dealey Plaza. Now, once you have two gunmen in Dealey Plaza, then you have to look at all the evidence again. I