Aides Say Robert Kennedy Told of C.I.A. Castro Plot

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

WASHINGTON, March 9 — Two former key aides to the late Robert F. Kennedy say that he told them in 1967 that agents of the Central Intelligence Agency had contracted with the Mafia in an aborted plot to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba before the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

Adam Walinsky and Peter B. Edelman, who were assistants to Mr. Kennedy when he was Attorney General and a Senator, said in interviews last week that Mr. Kennedy told them that he had played an active role in stopping the assassination attempt.

A high official of the C.I.A. informed of the Walinsky-Edelman account, said the agency would have "no comment."

Mr. Walinsky, now a lawyer in private practice in New York, said that Mr. Kennedy disclosed that he had received "assurances in writing" from the C.I.A. that the attempted assassination had been aborted. Those assurances came after Mr. Kennedy discussed the issue with high officials of the agency, Mr. Walinsky recalled, and led to the discussion of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia assassination attempt.

"I remember him saying, "He told us that he had discovered that the C.I.A. had made a contract with the Mafia to hit Castro," Mr. Walinsky said.

The Walinsky-Edelman account was initially provided to The New York Times in separate off-the-record discussions in 1973 and restated Friday for direct attribution.

On March 3, 1967, Jack Anderson, the syndicated columnist, reported that the C.I.A. may have plotted Mr. Castro's assassination and depicted Mr. Kennedy as the official who may have approved the operation. Mr. Anderson also cited what he termed persistent "rumors" to the effect that Mr. Castro may have become aware of the American plot and decided to retaliate by having President Kennedy assassinated in 1963. Because of that possibility, the columnist suggested, Senator Kennedy may have been blaming himself for the death of his brother.

The column, published at a time of strained relations between Senator Kennedy and President Johnson, "outraged" the Senator, Mr. Walinsky recalled, and led to the discussion of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia assassination attempt.

"I remember him saying," Mr. Walinsky said. Continued on Page 49, Column 2
6 DEMOCRATS HERE CRITICAL OF C.I.A.

Representatives Draw 800 to East, Side Meeting

By PAUL L. MONTGOMERY

Six Democratic Representatives attracted an audience of 800 on the East Side yesterday for a town meeting on the controversy over the Central Intelligence Agency.

The representatives, all of whom took anti-C.I.A. positions of varying severity, were peppered with questions from the audience about the current congressional investigations of the agency, possible links between the C.I.A. and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the 6.5-billion in Federal funds spent annually for foreign intelligence gathering.

Representative Bella S. Abzug, who found at a hearing last week in Washington that the C.I.A. had been keeping her in the dark, was asked if the intelligence agency ought to be abolished.

"Government into itself"

"The C.I.A. has become a government unto itself," the Manhattan Congresswoman replied, "a form of government above the executive branch, the judicial branch, the legislative branch, the Constitution. That is the question—whether the C.I.A. in its present form should exist at all."

The gathering at Julia Rich mond High School, 67th Street and Second Avenue, was sponsored by the Committee for Public Justice, the Brooklyn Civic American Civil Liberties Union Foundation. It was founded in 1940 by Hyde Hellman, the playwright, to look into acts of the Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in domestic intelligence, secrecy in government and political trials.

Members of the audience paid $10 for reserved seats or $2 for general admission to the meeting. Warren Beatty, the actor, who is a member of the Committee for Public Justice, introduced the participants and apologized to Elizabeth Holtzman, the Brooklyn Congresswoman, for saying that she represented Richmond.

Questions on Assassination

Several questions from the audience concerned the assassination of President Kennedy. John Ehrlichman of "The C.I.A. and the Cult of Intelligence," said Mr. Ehrlichman didn't think there's anybody in this room who believes that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. He said he had a "visceral feeling" that some figures in the murder had C.I.A. connections.

The Representatives on hand continued from Page 1, Col. 7

Aides Say Robert Kennedy Told of Plot

"blame myself?" Mr. Edelman recalled. "I didn't start it [the Castro assassination attempt], I stopped it."

Mr. Edelman, now a vice president for policy at the University of Massachusetts, further quoted Mr. Kennedy as saying, "I found out that some people were going to try an attempt on Castro's life and I turned it off."

Mr. Edelman said that Mr. Kennedy had "mentioned the Mafia." Mr. Edelman said that the inference he had then drawn from the conversation was that someone associated with the C.I.A. had done this, but not necessarily that it had been officially sanctioned by the agency, whatever that means."

"Clue Found in Las Vegas"

Mr. Walinsky also recalled Mr. Kennedy as explaining in 1967 that he had learned of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia link while working as an organized crime investigator for a Senate committee in the late fifties.

"He was out in Las Vegas," Mr. Walinsky recalled, "Mr. Kennedy as saying, 'and a mobster told him, you can't touch me, I've got immunity.' he said 'who are you and where do you get your immunity' and the mobster said C.I.A."

"He went back and he checked and sure enough it was true," Mr. Wallinsky said, "They had made a deal with this guy."

Mr. Wallinsky said that Mr. Kennedy did not say in his conversation in 1967, who had informed him of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia ties. He also said that Mr. Kennedy apparently learned more about that relationship while serving at President Kennedy's request, on a panel in 1961 that reviewed the C.I.A.'s planning and preparations for the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion.

"Asking why Senator Kennedy didn't try to make that information public, Mr. Wallinsky said he could only speculate, but that he believed the Senator, who was assassinated while seeking the Democratic Presidential nomination, in 1968, planned to take some corrective action toward the C.I.A. if elected to the White House.

"Briefing of Ford Reported"

A number of news organizations have reported that President Ford was briefed late last year on C.I.A.-connected assassinations and attempted assassinations of Markos, co-actor of the assassination attempts. The White House has refused to comment.

"Asked at a news conference last Thursday night what Wilbur E. Cohen, director of the Central Intelligence had told him about the allegations of assassination or assassination attempts on foreign leaders, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said "I don't know." Mr. Kissinger said his understanding was that the agency was "not able to identify the individuals involved."
Mafia leaders have been linked to American intelligence efforts since World War II, when Charles Luciano allegedly aided the planning for the Allied invasion of Sicily.

A number of Mafia leaders had extensive gambling and syndicate holdings in Cuba dating to the late nineteen-thirties when Meyer Lansky opened his first casino in Havana. The Mafia also reportedly enjoyed a close relationship with Fulgencio Batista, the Cuban dictator whom Mr. Castro deposed.

After the Castro revolution in 1958, the gambling casinos and other activities were shut down by the Cuban government and the Mafia allegedly worked closely with C.I.A. operatives in providing intelligence, planning and other help for the Bay of Pigs invasion, according to a number of Federal investigators.

In a book called "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia," Alfred McCoy, then a Yale student, charged in 1972 that Corsican and American syndicate gangsters had become involved in the heroin trade from Laos, Burma and Thailand. He also wrote that such information was well known to many officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and that they had done nothing to stop such activities.

High officials of the intelligence agency, including Mr. Colby and Cord Meyer, now the station chief in London, York City alleged that he and other agents "had some dealings" with the Mafia.