

THE CIA

Prying into Mail, Plotting Murder

"Let's get one thing clear right away," declared the angry chairwoman, flashing fiery eyes at the uncomfortable witness. "Opening the mail of a lawyer representing a client is clearly illegal."

CIA Director William Colby drummed his fingers on a table and fidgeted. He avoided the legal issue, but did not deny that CIA agents had frequently opened the mail of his accuser, New York's bellicose Congresswoman Bella Abzug. Nor could he if he had wanted to. Lawyer Abzug had demanded that the CIA turn over its file on her, and purged of what Colby considered sensitive items, it now lay at her elbow in a long, fat manila envelope.

Presiding over a House subcommittee hearing, Congresswoman Abzug drew admissions from Colby that the CIA had begun compiling a file on her 22 years ago when she represented a client before the House Un-American Activities Committee—long before her national prominence and election to Congress in 1970. What she termed the "rotten stuff" in the envelope also included copies of letters she had written to Soviet officials trying to locate heirs to an estate, a report on an anti-Viet Nam War speech she had made in New

York, details of her meeting with Vietnamese Communists in Paris in 1972. Colby conceded that some of this information gathering "may not be appropriate today." He said obscurely that the CIA would not keep a "continuing file" on her but would still collect material on U.S. citizens engaged in what he termed "questionable" political activities. Snapped Bella: "You say you're not going to do it any more, and yet you are going to do it."

Routine Denials. On another front, pressure on the CIA was accumulating. At a press conference, President Ford obliquely confirmed published reports that Colby had privately told him of CIA support of assassination plots against foreign political figures in the past. Almost any time an anti-U.S. leader anywhere is toppled or killed, of course, rumors of CIA involvement arise. The CIA routinely denies any connection with any political assassination, and Ford said that it would be "inappropriate" for him to comment on the subject.

That only meant the speculation was sure to continue. For example, one of the most persistent suspicions is that the CIA helped engineer the murder of South Viet Nam's President Ngo Dinh Diem when he was overthrown in a military uprising in 1963. No solid evidence of such a tie has been found, and indeed Watergate Criminals Charles Colson and E. Howard Hunt, a former CIA

THE NATION

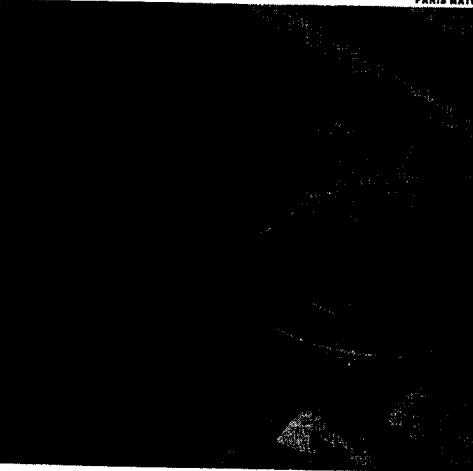
agent, tried to fabricate cables linking the death to orders of President Kennedy when files at their disposal turned up no such evidence. But TIME has found credible sources who insist that the CIA was involved in assassination plots against at least three figures:

RAFAEL TRUJILLO. After 31 years of harsh rule over the Dominican Republic, the dictator was gunned down by assassins in May of 1961. His chauffeur gamely fired back in a brief gun battle that riddled Trujillo's car with bullet holes. "Nobody wanted another Cuba in the Dominican Republic," said one TIME source, who claims that the CIA thought that Trujillo was getting too friendly with the Communists. The CIA thus backed the successful drive to overthrow Trujillo. Several sources insist that some of the guns used in the killing, apparently fast-firing M-1 carbines, were smuggled into the Caribbean island by CIA operatives.

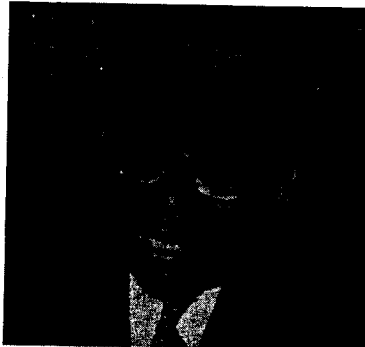
FIDEL CASTRO. Largely confirming earlier reports by Columnist Jack Anderson, TIME sources contend that the CIA enlisted the expert hired-gun help of U.S. Mafia figures in several unsuccessful attempts to kill Castro both before and shortly after the CIA-planned Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. The mobsters were cooperative, since Castro had seized some of their lucrative Havana gambling casinos. The CIA, according to these accounts, worked with Gangsters Sam Giancana and John Roselli in futile attempts to poison or shoot Castro or kill him with planted explosives. The FBI later inadvertently learned of the plot in investigating a burglary of Comedian Dan Rowan's Las Vegas hotel room. Agents learned that the arrested prowlers had been assigned by the CIA as a favor to Giancana, who sought information to break up a budding romance between Rowan and Giancana's girl friend, Singer Phyllis McGuire.

FRANÇOIS ("PAPA DOC") DUVALIER. The CIA collaborated with Haitian leaders of a group of at least 200 rebels, who had trained in the Dominican Republic in 1963; the rebels were stopped at the border by troops of the D.R. when they moved to attack Haiti. A lone pilot flew on over Papa Doc's palace and dropped a bomb that missed the building by 300 yards. "The guy got jittery and just tossed the bomb out of the window," says a TIME source.

PARIS MATCH



BODY OF SOUTH VIET NAM'S SLAIN DIEM, HAITI'S DUVALIER, CUBA'S CASTRO & DEATH CAR OF DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S TRUJILLO



REUTERS/PHOTOFEST

SVEN SIMON

