



CBS NEWS
2020 M Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

FACE THE NATION

as broadcast over the

CBS Television Network

and the

CBS Radio Network

Sunday, June 27, 1976 -- 11:30 AM - 12:00 Noon, EDT

Origination: Washington, D. C.

GUEST: SEN. RICHARD S. SCHWEIKER (Rep., Pennsylvania)
Member of the John Kennedy Assassination Subcommittee
of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

REPORTERS:

George Herman, CBS News

George Crile III, Harper's Magazine

Fred Graham, CBS News

Producer: Mary O. Yates

Associate Producer: Joan Barone

EDITORS: All copyright and right to copyright in this transcript and in the broadcast are owned by CBS. Newspapers and periodicals are permitted to reprint up to 250 words of this transcript for the purpose of reference, discussion or review. For permission to reprint more than this, contact Director, CBS News Information Services, 524 W. 57th St., New York, N. Y. 10019 (212) 765-4321.

HERMAN: Senator Schweiker, when you began your investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy, you predicted that your findings would make the Warren Commission Report collapse like a house of cards. A lot of people think the Warren Commission's Report's basic premises are still in pretty good shape. How do you figure?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: I think that the Report, to those who have studied it closely, has collapsed like a house of cards, and I think the people who read it in the long-run future will see that. I frankly believe that we have shown that the John F. Kennedy assassination was snuffed out before it even began, and that the fatal mistake the Warren Commission made was not to use its own investigators, but instead, to rely on the CIA and FBI personnel, which played directly into hands of senior intelligence officials who directed the cover-up.

ANNOUNCER: From CBS News, Washington, a spontaneous and unrehearsed news interview on FACE THE NATION, with Senator Richard S. Schweiker, Republican of Pennsylvania, and a member of the John Kennedy Assassination Subcommittee of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Senator Schweiker will be questioned by CBS News Law Correspondent Fred Graham, by George Crile III, Washington Editor for Harper's Magazine, and by CBS News Correspondent George Herman.

HERMAN: Senator Schweiker, in your answer to the first question, you said that senior officials directed the cover-up. I refer you to the fact that your colleague on the subcommittee, Senator Gary Hart, said there was no cover-up because that would require planning, collusion or conspiracy, and he didn't find any of those. How do you define the cover-up that you found?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I think it's pretty obvious from the evi-

dence that we've outlined. For example, J. Edgar Hoover, in a telephone call to Walter Jenkins two days after the assassination, said, the thing I'm most concerned about, and so is Katzenbach, is having something issued so we can convince the public that Oswald is the real assassin. What kind of an investigation is this, when two days before it even began, we know who the killer is and we're going to nail him? And then a Katzenbach memo on--four days later, when it says, it is important that all facts surrounding President Kennedy's assassination be made public in a way that shows Oswald was the lone assassin and there was no conspiracy. I just can't imagine what kind of investigation this is--here is the person, we have him guilty, there was no conspiracy; and the Warren Commission and all that came after that seems rather superfluous.

CRILE: Senator, the first sentence in your report states that there are indications that there may have been connections between the efforts of the CIA to kill Fidel Castro and President Kennedy's assassination. Now none of these CIA attempts were made known to the Warren Commission, but your report spends quite a bit of time dealing with this matter. What indications do you feel now, there are, that there may have been connections between these two events?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I think there, circumstantial evidence is certainly very strong--the timing alone, the fact that AMLASH, or the person who was acting under our cooperation to possibly assassinate Castro--and that's who I mean by AMLASH--had met with our people just several days before Castro said that if you don't stop trying to kill me, we may take the same measures against the leaders of the United States. I think that timing was significant. I think the fact that

AMLASH, in essence, asked to know that some representative of the Kennedys meet with them, and that they give him some kind of a go signal--and in fact, Desmond Fitzgerald did meet with them, contrary to the advice of some senior intelligence officials, and did in fact give them a go-ahead signal--an awful lot of circumstantial evidence indicating that word was passed back to AMLASH that the highest areas of government were behind assassinating Castro.

GRAHAM: Senator, the other day you had a press conference, on the day this report was issued, and you said something that was intriguing to me--you said that more leads have come in, along the lines you were just discussing, since we even published the report. What leads can now be traced to further amplify this possibility that Castro was involved in the Kennedy assassination?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, Fred, the interesting thing thing is that the more coverage this gets in the media, the more people come forth and several people came forth who thought that this piece of evidence they had was known or had been followed up, and when they read our initial announcements about the lack of it, they volunteered it; and some of them, of course, 95 per cent of them, frankly, are not even worthwhile looking at, but we've studied them all, and we've come up with several leads that are still hot, and we're following. Some of them relate, I might say, to pro-Castro, and also to the anti-Castro side of the fence.

GRAHAM: Well, can you give us any idea as to the nature of these leads?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, one of them specifically would involve a pro-Castro conspiracy; another would involve anti-Castro Cubans. So

beyond that, frankly, we'd blow the leads if we did, but they're certainly not crank or crackpot things. They're from people who might have been close enough to be witnesses.

GRAHAM: So you're saying that you think there still are leads to be followed up which might implicate pro or anti-Castro groups in the assassination of John F. Kennedy?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Very definitely. And even I was surprised at the validity of some of the leads that come to our attention.

HERMAN: Let me just clarify this so I understand it in my own mind. When you say other groups may be involved in the assassination of President Kennedy, are you saying that you do not believe that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: I've never made a judgment on that, George. All our basic report says is how the investigation was not conducted, and the performance of the intelligence agencies. But when you see that at every conceivable step of the way, the Cuban connection was cut like a Gordian knot, you have to allow the possibility that live things really weren't followed up. For example, in response to yours and to George's question, I think it's significant that the investigation in the FBI was placed in the General Investigative Division. It was not placed in the Nationalities Intelligence Division, which was Cuba. So here we had a man who went to the Soviet Union, defected, came back here, re-defected, and then was organizing Fair Play for Cuba Committee and passing out literature; then he went to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City, the Cuban Embassy; he even met with a KGB agent, who we now believe was Department Thirteen, Assassinations; and in spite of all that, they didn't put the Cuban Division into the mainstream of the

FBI investigation. You went to the CIA and the same thing happened. We had a group called the Special Affairs Staff, that had immense Cuban assets--knowledge, informers, both in Miami and here--and we ignored them, and got somebody in that wasn't really associated with that kind of work. So the two main investigations completely locked out the Cuban community in any way. And I think that's very significant.

HERMAN: Why? What was the purpose of this cover-up by the FBI that you've referred to?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I don't think we really know, George. I think you can only speculate. That's phase two of our investigation. Our investigation ran out of time. I think, frankly, the real possibility exists that the White House was part of that cover-up. So I think that's certainly part of what we have to pursue in phase two.

GRAHAM: Well, couldn't it be that they believed that actions-- anti-Castro actions--assassination plots, et cetera--had in fact provoked the assassination of President Kennedy?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: I think that's certainly a real possibility, Fred. In fact, I've had several high officials tell me confidentially that that is in fact what they believe happened, and that because the White House feared a nuclear confrontation with Russia over that very issue, because they thought that if it became known at the time, people would clamor for an invasion of Cuba with Russia supporting Cuba; and that to avert nuclear war, their information says it was covered up. I do not know if that's true or not, but what disturbs me is that a cover-up did occur, and either fear of retaliation of Castro might have been the reason, or knowledge of Castro's retaliation. In either event, it snuffed out the investigation, so we don't really know what happened.

GRAHAM: Well, now, Senator Robert--the Kennedy family--the surviving Kennedy family--has said over and over again, they're satisfied with the Warren Commission Report and they want to let this thing die. Why not let it die?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I think the main area of concern that I have--if, in fact, it happened, as some knowledgeable people think it did, that we were trying to kill Castro and failed, and then Castro, in essence, had President Kennedy killed, then--I'm not saying it did happen that way--but if it did, we were very close at that point, if that knowledge had leaked out, to a possible nuclear confrontation. And I think it's time this government stopped playing deadly games with people's lives; 210 million lives were at stake in that kind of a confrontation. I think the public has a right to know. I think we ought to be forewarned about what some of our leaders and government groups do, and I think that's very much a matter of public business when 210 million people can be risked because somebody's playing deadly assassination games. That's the way World War I began. We certainly forget our lessons of history very quickly.

CRILE: Senator, your colleague, Senator Morgan of North Carolina, an old Attorney General of that state, has already said that based on the evidence presented to your committee, that he is convinced that the CIA's principal assassination agent against Castro--this man AMLASH--was in fact a double agent, working for Castro, and that the President's assassination was the result of a retaliatory act by Fidel Castro. Now how far are you willing to go in speculations on what may have caused President Kennedy's assassination?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I certainly think there's a lot of circum-

stantial evidence, George, that points in that direction. I'm not willing to state that as a conclusive fact; it seems to me that's where we should further investigate. But I think it's very interesting--I think there's a couple of interesting points along that same scenario. Number one, when AMLASH met in Paris, a poison pen was passed to him as an assassination weapon. It's interesting that three days--and that was on the day that President Kennedy was killed--three days after that, a report was written up by the CIA, and the report very specifically--contact report--omitted--omitted the fact that an assassination weapon was passed to AMLASH. Now that could have been the very start of the cover-up right there.

In addition, Dulles sat on the Warren Commission; he didn't tell--he didn't tell about plots to assassinate Castro to any of his fellow commissioners. Helms, when he called in his chief investigator to start the CIA investigation, didn't tell about the AMLASH plot--

CRILE: But where, right now, do you feel that the evidence is pointing? Where does the--if further inquiry is called for, where do you think the leading suspects are at the moment?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I think the further evidence should point to how high up the cover-up went, why it was invoked, and what they knew that we didn't know. And I think this is where we ought to be pursuing.

HERMAN: What do you make of the somewhat puzzling role of J. Edgar Hoover in this cover-up, in this investigation -- the document which you charge is swearing that there were three dates only in which there were contacts between the FBI and Oswald, and there turned out to be more, his disciplining seven agents and not telling anybody about it

and his sending / ^{for} derogatory information about the members of the Warren Commission itself?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I think that was the day where, of course, the--J. Edgar Hoover's heyday--and I think that there was a great concern about the Bureau's reputation and prestige. And I think that that scenario was written to protect--don't embarrass the Bureau, as the manual says, and I think that scenario was written. I think it is interesting that he was so concerned about the security aspects of the Oswald case that he did discipline seventeen agents, including an assistant director, and didn't tell the Warren Commission, and yet he felt so strongly about it that he put the discipline into effect even though it might have risked public exposure, which it never got till now. So he thought Oswald was a security risk, and he disciplined his own organization for not finding him; and yet, in spite of that, they didn't investigate the one logical security area in the FBI and CIA--Cuba--that they should have investigated. Now I think there is another evidence of cover-up.

(MORE)

CRILE: The report spells out very clearly that both the FBI and the CIA withheld all pertinent information dealing with Cuba which was critical. Do you think today that -- are you satisfied that both of these agencies are cooperating fully with the inquiry which has just ended and any one that might ensue?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: George, after eighteen months of investigating intelligence agencies, I could never answer yes to that question on any known subject. I don't really know. I'd have to say, in fairness to the CIA and the FBI, that any specific document that we've pinpointed and asked for, we got. But the problem is, we didn't know, as the Warren Commission didn't know, what documents to ask for, what minutes to look at. So in essence we don't know that we had the right files to ask for in the first place. So I'd have to say I don't know, but I have to be fair to the CIA and FBI and say that any specific information we asked for, they seem to have given us.

HERMAN: Well just let -- as a sort of a sidelight, to sort of test that, let me ask you about the report which emerged yesterday, the Socialist Workers' Party, which has been getting documents from the FBI by court discovery process, found documents from the FBI which showed that the FBI had been not only surveying them but had done some burglarizing of their property as late as last year, while you were still investigating this problem. Does that still give you confidence that the FBI is telling you what you need to know?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: That's why I qualified very heavily my answer. I'm disturbed by that report. I think this proves why we need a permanent oversight committee, and why this kind of a job is never done, and

I certainly feel the new Intelligence Committee should dig right into that and to find out why, for the reasons you mentioned. I really concur.

GRAHAM: Can I go back to the further investigation that I presume will now be made by the oversight committee of this Kennedy matter we're discussing. How are they going to follow leads so long after the fact?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, we have an awful lot of material now about Mr. Katzenbach, about Mr. Helms, and about some other people, that we didn't have when we first interviewed them. So just frankly giving Mr. Helms another crack at it and to find out exactly where it did go and who had knowledge is an obvious step. I think there are several people in Lyndon Johnson's White House circle that we probably should now question, that weren't questioned. I think these are very specific leads that are very current and very constructive that we didn't have time to follow up.

GRAHAM: Do you think any of these people violated the law and should now be prosecuted?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: I think we have to know all the circumstances surrounding this cover-up. I don't think a cover-up is ever justified, but I'd sure like to hear what really happened, and why they did it. I frankly think one mistake they made, Fred, was that somewhere along the way the last decade or two, the government leaders have always said the American people can't handle the truth. We would rise up with emotional bias of some kind. I believe we can handle the truth, and I believe our people are a lot smarter than our leaders, and I think if we tell them the truth, we'd be a lot better off, and I don't think we would react

in irrational, untoward ways, and yet that's predicated. We saw it in Vietnam, we saw it with the Cambodian bombings, I think you saw it as far as the Kennedy assassination was concerned.

CRILE: There are a couple of very provocative disclosures in your report dealing with the movement of a Cuban and a Cuban-American over the Mexican border from Texas the day of the Kennedy assassination and the day after. One in which the Cuban gets on a Cubana Airlines that's waited five hours for him, he avoids going through customs, gets into the cockpit, and disappears to Cuba without anybody knowing anything about him. The next one is an even more suspicious collection of events that precede his departure for Cuba. Do you -- is there more to these two incidents than you have given us in this report?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, there's a little bit more. One of these problems is this is awfully difficult to track down twelve years late. We had a report that possibly a twin-engine plane took off from one of the more remote fields in Dallas the day of the assassination which could or could not have been the twin-engine plane that landed in Mexico City at that Cubana Airline. Also, there is a possibility of a sighting of this Cuban-American in Dallas at the very spot of the assassination that we're still trying to run down. So these are very specific things that are still being pursued. But time takes a toll on following trails like that.

CRILE: Were these accounts based on solid sources, do you feel?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I think they're certainly solid enough to be worth investigating. I'd have to say that they are really just leads at this point, and we don't know, but they're certainly solid enough in

view of the other facts we know to warrant investigation. The amazing thing to me is that these things weren't pursued before. Some of the agencies did have this, these matters, and they didn't pursue it. It gets back to the fact they cut off the Cuban connection and didn't want people to follow it up.

GRAHAM: Senator, before we get off this and get perhaps into some general political matters, I'm curious as to whether you've had any contact at all from John Connally, who of course was a victim of the assassination. Is he interested in this? Has he contacted you?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: I really haven't had any contact from Mr. Connally. I just haven't had any.

GRAHAM: Well, that gets into the question about politics, and of course there's a knockdown, drag out struggle for the Republican nomination, and if Ronald Reagan comes out and is the Republican nominee, could you support him?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I have always followed the policy that I would support the winner at a Republican convention, and I happen to be a Ford delegate from Pennsylvania, very strongly for President Ford. But I'm going to accept the will of a Republican convention.

GRAHAM: And do you have any prediction as to how that's going to come out? Can you see already?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: I think that certainly President Ford has a lead, I think it's a close contest, but I still think that President Ford will win because of his ability and incumbency and edge at this point.

GRAHAM: But don't the polls indicate that you could have a debacle following that of the nature of the loss by Barry Goldwater in 1964?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, you can't always believe the polls, Fred. Right now things don't look too good for us in the fall, but I think that has to reverse itself somewhat, and I think the love and harmony stage that we're going through may well revert to us after the convention. But I don't know. I think we have some rough sailing ahead, I think that's true.

HERMAN: Let me just take you back for a moment, politics all very well, but I'm still curious about some of the, your personal views about the Warren Commission report and the whole question. How do you now, as Senator Richard Schweiker, evaluate Mr. Garrison's not terribly successful attempt to probe further into the assassination?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, if you go back to my thesis that the Cuban connection was cut off at the pass, right from the start, almost any kind of a scenario can be invoked from there, because if it was done because somebody knew something about Castro retaliation, or if it was done because we feared we might learn something about Castro retaliation, the effect would be the same. And the result is if there were some other groups, such as the underworld or anti-Castro groups, plotting this and setting up Oswald as some people say, if that happened, we still wouldn't know it. So I don't rule anything out, but I think that our evidence comes down very clearly on this cover-up and the lack of communication on the Cuban connection.

HERMAN: I'm not sure I exactly understand your answer. Do you think Mr. Garrison was on a wrong trail or a cold trail?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I think he raised some questions, and I think that the questions were unanswered, but I think in terms of his

specific approach and the way it was handled, it backfired on him. And I think I've tried to maintain credibility and to go only as far as we know in our investigation, and I think that should be our criteria.

HERMAN: One other loose end or wild thread in that, and that is the frequently heard assertion that so many/^{people}who were connected with the investigation died mysteriously. Do you know anything about that? Is it --

SEN. SCHWEIKER: We have seen no indication of that. I know I've heard that, and I've seen statistics on it, but I haven't seen any indication of that.

HERMAN: Okay, let me ask you one other thing that's kind of baffled me. I don't know whether this is something that you got into, but Lee Harvey Oswald and other assassination attempts that he made -- the abortive attempt to kill General Walker. Are you at all interested in that, or is Oswald as a person not in your frame of reference?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: No, I think that's certainly an area that is of interest too.

GRAHAM: Can I ask you this. Do you know yet -- first of all, the Intelligence Oversight Committee, under Senator Inouye, seems to be very reluctant to get into this. I gather that they believe this is a morass. First, do you know if they will get into it, and then what direction will that investigation take?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, there's no question, Fred, it's a sticky wicket, and a pretty dense jungle. I believe the public's right to know ought to be paramount here. I'm sure they're going to study and read the report, and I hope after they do they'll be stimulated to find the

truth as I have been. I think in the long run they probably will be, but until they read the report, it's pretty tough to make that judgment.

GRAHAM: Then you're saying that you think that it will be, if there is an investigation, really a replay of the Warren Commission investigation itself.

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Not necessarily a replay. I think we'll go down avenues that were shut and alleys we didn't know about and knowledge we didn't have. I wouldn't call that a replay. It could be a reopening, but not necessarily a replay.

GRAHAM: That's what I mean, I meant a reopening.

CRILE: Do the same conditions exist today that apparently did back in '64, that fear that if were to detect a foreign involvement in the assassination of the President of the United States, that we'd be put in a colossally difficult position?

SEN. SCHWEIKER: Well, I think the answer to that, George, is that the FBI and the CIA didn't protest this report being published. I'm sure they may not necessarily agree with the details, but nobody tried to suppress it. The White House didn't, the FBI didn't, the CIA didn't. I think that shows we're pretty mature to face up to this problem.

HERMAN: Thank you very much, Senator Schweiker, for being with us today on FACE THE NATION.

ANNOUNCER: Today on FACE THE NATION, Senator Richard S. Schweiker, Republican of Pennsylvania, and a member of the Joint Kennedy Assassination Subcommittee of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, was interviewed by CBS News Law Correspondent Fred Graham; by George Crile III, Washington Editor for Harper's Magazine; and by CBS News Correspon-

dent George Herman. FACE THE NATION will not be seen next week. CBS News will be on the air from 8:00 a.m. until midnight with a special program entitled, "In Celebration of Us." FACE THE NATION will return to its regularly scheduled time on Sunday, July 11.