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Inside Church's Bunker

By William Safire

WASHINGTON, March 3—The atmosphere in Senator Frank Church's intelligence subcommittee is that of a bunker under siege. Senators and staffers furtively dart about, clutching parts of the forthcoming three-volume report to their palpitating bosoms, worried lest leaks make the Senate appear as unable to keep secrets as the House.

Since you cannot tell the heroes from the villains in a Senate report without a program, here are some items to look for:

The committee will not recommend a special prosecutor to prosecute C.I.A.-F.B.I. abuses; Senator Church has called for this, secure in the knowledge that it has no chance. Senators Tower and Goldwater oppose it, and Senator Gary Hart—explaining why he, too, sees nothing wrong in having the F.B.I. investigate itself—informed me: "We intend to address the question of how to deal with illegal activities, including those that occurred in the past, in our report."

That Church report will open with some zingy rhetoric about preserving civil liberty while preserving national security, then go into long and separate sections on foreign and domestic intelligence. The reason Republican Senator Tower has made a doormat out of himself, acquiescing in the most flagrant cover-ups of the Democratic abuses of power, will become apparent: Mr. Tower has traded this to Senators Church and Hart in return for their support of a strong executive C.I.A. [illegible] culpability in the future.

A [illegible] part of the report [illegible] with Senator Richard [illegible] "[illegible] on Intelligence" this [illegible] Cuban, targeted at [illegible] [illegible] efforts of Castro [illegible] Giancana and friends to assassinate him, had a hand in the assassination of one or more Kennedys.

Then come the eleven "appendices" to the report:

¶Operation CHAOS, the C.I.A.'s illegal domestic intelligence operation first exposed by Seymour Hersh in The New York Times.

¶The C.I.A. mail covers; the C.I.A. drug tests;

¶Defense intelligence practices and abuses, as seen by Robert McNamara's former son-in-law;

¶The Internal Revenue Service's intelligence activity; this is a subject not previously investigated by the Rockefeller Commission or House Intelligence Committee, and is a section that Senator Church may have reason to be proud of.

¶One appendix on the F.B.I.'s use of informers, another on wiretaps and electronic surveillance, and another on the F.B.I.'s COINTELPRO.

¶The 1967 Doar Plan to spy on dissidents, which Ramsey Clark put into effect, will be glossed over, while the 1970 Huston Plan, which J. Edgar Hoover blocked, will be examined at length.

¶The section about the wiretapping of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—the worst abuse of police power in our time, which was ordered by Robert Kennedy and continued by Nicholas Katzenbach—was written by Michael T. Epstein, a hatchetman on Attorney General Kennedy's "get-Hoffa" squad in those days, and lately a staffer for Ted Kennedy. Not surprisingly, the Epstein version heaps all the blame on the F.B.I. and pictures Messrs. Kennedy and Katzenbach as babes in the wood.

Mr Epstein was also used by Senator Church to inveigle Jaycees into giving the impression that the murder of Sam Giancana had nothing to do with his impending testimony.

"Shortly after Mr. Giancana's death," Senator Church wrote Attorney General Levi on Jan. 20 of this year, Mr. Epstein met with Justice Department officials to determine "whether there was any relationship between this committee's desire to examine Mr. Giancana and his murder."

"Shortly," my foot: According to William Lynch, chief of the Organized Crime Section, the Church staffer did not show up at Justice until 21 days after the mob had wiped out Giancana. Mr. Epstein, in that strange meeting, did *not* ask Justice to investigate a possible obstruction of justice. Without a request, not one F.B.I. agent could be assigned to the case.

To accommodate the Senator's need for the appearance of diligence, Criminal Division chief Richard Thornburgh (a Pittsburgh protégé of Senator Hugh Scott) sent the requested reply saying "all the information" at Justice indicated that the murderous shooting was merely "intended to settle problems within the syndicate." The artful Mr. Thornburgh could say that with a straight face because "all the information" was sparse and second-hand, the result of no Federal investigation; and thus is a criminal division politicized to save a Senate face.

*Why can the Church report claim "no indication" of a connection? Because there was no Federal investigation of a connection. Why was the F.B.I. not put on the case? Because Mr. Church and Mr. Epstein decided not to put them on the case. Why not? Because Frank Church did not want to know anything more about the first murder of a Senate witness and the Mafia penetration of the Kennedy White House.

In protest, this [illegible] leave Lyle from anybody [illegible] Church Senate Leader [illegible] is issued, to the Duke of [illegible] words: "Publish and be damned!"

SHADES OF STURGIS AND DUARTE! DOES THIS THEORY IMPROVE WITH AGE?

* GREAT TO KNOW THERE WAS "NO CONNECTION" GANG THE MURDERER.