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Joachim Joesten's

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An Antidote to Official Mendacity and Newsfaking in the Press

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Editorial: Attica? - Attila ?

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The Kaplan Affair

The CIA Springs a Murderer from Jail - the FBI Can't Find Him

Seldom does the CIA advertise its exploits, and for good reason. It is a power of darkness and almost everything it does seems the light. In one recent case, however, the agency conspicuously departed from the rule and fairly boasted - in the oblique manner that is its very nature - of what it had accomplished and how it was done. I'm referring, of course, to what the newsmakers have labelled the Kaplan "Capex" or "adventure" or something like that. Actually it was a riskless, coolly planned operation, carried out in the style befitting a millionaire - which this particular jailbreaker is.

Let's recapitulate the essential facts of the case. Early in 1961, just as the last preparations for the Bay of Pigs were getting underway, two CIA agents, Joel S. Kaplan and Louis M. Vidal, set themselves up in Mexico City as business partners in one of those bogus commercial enterprises that serve the CIA by the thousands, all over the globe. Their mission was to channel arms and ammunition to the anti-Castro Cubans in Guatemala and other parts of the Caribbean area.

The two men were of widely different origin and background. Joel Kaplan came of a wealthy Jewish family in New York with extensive and even notorious CIA connections (as early as August 1964, the Kaplan Fund, set up by Joel's uncle, Jacob K. Kaplan, multi-millionaire former president of the Welch Grape Juice Co., was identified in Congressional hearings as a "conduit" for the CIA, a fact further borne out by the 1967 disclosures concerning CIA penetration and corruption of student and labor organizations). Louis Vidal was a Puerto Rican who had come to New York to live by his wife and found the CIA to be the best bet for what he thought would be the good and safe life. He couldn't have been more mistaken.

After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, there was much bickering between CIA agents and hirelings over who had supposedly betrayed whom. Kaplan, for one, found out, or thought so, that his partner Vidal was a double agent who also supplied arms and ammunition to a pro-Castro guerrilla organization; that was enough for Joel to take drastic action in approved style. One day in the summer of 1961 the body of Vidal was found on a highway near Mexico City; his partner had vanished.

Mexican authorities investigating the murder came up with solid proof that Kaplan was the assassin. A warrant was issued for his arrest and INTERPOL was put on the case. They found the fugitive in Spain, which he mistakenly had thought to be a foolproof haven for CIA murderers. Extradited to Mexico, he was brought to trial in 1963 and sentenced to 23 years in jail.

At Kaplan's trial, his Mexican lawyer, Victor Velazquez, tried to save his client with a typical cloak-and-dagger yarn. Vidal wasn't dead at all, he claimed, but had been seen crossing the border into Guatemala the day after his body supposedly had been found. The Puerto Rican, according to Velazquez, had faked his own death in order

to avoid returning \$ 140,000 in cash which he had received from pro-Castro agents for the purchase of arms, a deal that had been undercut by Kaplan on behalf of the CIA. The court didn't believe a word of it and convicted Kaplan of murder.

On August 17, 1971, as Kaplan and his cellmate, Carlos Contreras, a Venezuelan robber and counterfeiter, were sweating out another dreary day of their long sentences at the Santa Maria Acatitla Prison near Mexico City, they received visitors. Accompanied by the wives of both men, an unidentified American lawyer paid a call on them in their Cell No. 10 and then looked over the adjoining prison yard. It is self-evident, in retrospect, that this visit was but the final link in a series of preparations for the jail-break that must have gone on for some time before, with the collusion of prison authorities.

The next day, at dusk, a most unusual thing happened. Swooping in low over the unguarded prison walls, a hell four-seater helicopter painted in the blue and white colors of the Mexican Attorney-General's office, landed without incident in the courtyard. Conveniently, all but four of the 136 guards and most of the inmates were at that moment watching a movie - the first to be shown at the prison in two years. The four guards on duty, pretending to believe that the attorney-general in person had come to pay a visit, presented arms. No alarm was sounded, not a shot was fired as Kaplan and Contreras, who by that time were already out of their cell, emerged from a hiding-place nearby to board the 'copter as calmly and comfortably as if they were in an airport.

What happened next is also remarkable. Having taken off undisturbed from the prison yard and crossed the walls, the helicopter flew first to the small airport of Actopan, 100 miles north of the capital. Now, you would think that the four guards on duty, having recovered from their stupor at watching the "attorney-general" make off, under their noses, with two prisoners in an aircraft would immediately have alerted all airports in the country to watch out for that bird; for a helicopter cannot fly from Mexico City to the nearest border without refuelling. It had to come down somewhere within reach of Mexican authorities, before the fugitives could seek a haven abroad.

Actually, on the airfield of Actopan, a small plane, a Cessna-210, was already waiting for the arrival of the helicopter. Passengers and pilot transferred to the waiting plane, abandoning the expensive chopper like so much trash. Then the plane took off for La Pesca, a small fishing village 300 miles northeast of Mexico City, not far from the U.S. border. And here took place what is perhaps the most remarkable part of this wonderfully orchestrated escape. At La Pesca, the party split up, each of the two fugitives boarding one of two waiting planes which then flew off in opposite directions. The one carrying Kaplan, the millionaire-convict headed for Brownsville, Texas, and then, after perfunctory border formalities - in which Kaplan actually gave his correct name to the customs officials - flew on to Sausalito, California, a small town across the bay from San Francisco. The other one, carrying a supposedly penniless convict, headed for Guatemala, a sure sign that Contreras, too, had been taken under its wings by the CIA.

Although some of the newsmakers tried to make it appear that Kaplan and Contreras had been sprung by the Mafia - an all-Italian organization to which neither man belonged, - the CIA hardly even bothered to conceal its sponsorship. In Mexico City, Kaplan's lawyer Velazquez, after dining up once more the old cock-and-bull-story about Vidal being alive, flatly told reporters: "Kaplan was without doubt a member of the CIA and only the CIA could have freed him." which is obvious.

Three questions remain: 1 - why did the CIA wait so long to free a devoted agent? Frankly, I can't think of a plausible answer; 2 - why was Kaplan sprung at this particular time? Probably because some new mission is waiting for him, perhaps even another murder. 3) - why was Kaplan freed in such a needlessly ostentatious manner when it would have been so much easier and cheaper to bribe a few prison officials (seven of them were arrested, anyway, and charged with negligence and bribery)? I think it was done because the CIA wanted to demonstrate to the world its power to free its agents anywhere, anytime. Meanwhile the FBI is "hunting" for the escaped murderer, but can't find him. All they have to do is ask Melvin Belli, the "celebrated" San Francisco attorney, who has power of attorney over Joel's one-third share of the multimillion-dollar Kaplan fund. But then, of course, Belli is also CIA, as has been known for a long time.

The Panel Review (ctd. from TL III/24)

Going back to the text of the Review, it goes on to say: "The lower half of this circular wound is obscured by the surgically produced tracheotomy incision which transects it. The center of the circular wound is situated approximately 9 cm. below the transverse fold in the skin of the neck described in a preceding paragraph. This indicates that the bullet which produced the two wounds followed a course downward and to the left in its passage through the body."

In the first place, it has to be observed here that the panelists a priori assume to be an established fact what they are supposed to prove, to wit that one and the same bullet produced the two wounds, namely the one in the President's back and the one in his throat. This gratuitous assumption, which is not in any way substantiated, is designed to eliminate offhand one of the great moot questions of the assassination.

By omitting, purposely no doubt, a precise location for the "transverse fold in the skin of the neck" (see TL, III/21), saying only that the back wound lies "approximately 5.5 cm" below that ill-defined point of reference, and that the center of the circular wound in the front of the neck is situated approximately 9 cm. below it, they artificially construct a downward course which is belied by the photographic evidence (FBI Exhibits 59 and 60) reproduced in Edward J. Epstein's Inquest (pp. 56 and 57). These photographs prove, - and Epstein points this out, too, in detail - that the bullet hole in the President's back was lower than the throat wound. Accordingly, if one and the same bullet, fired from Oswald's position, had really produced the two wounds, as the Panelists assume, without even attempting to prove their case, it would have had to follow an upward course, which is clearly a physical impossibility. No wonder these tell-tale photographs, whose evidence is absolutely irrefutable, were omitted from the Warren Report (which substituted instead some ludicrously faked drawings) and the 26 volumes of Hearings and Exhibits. The Warren Commission, of course, thought it could get away with this fraud because the FBI photos were supposedly inaccessible to the public. Once they were published, however, in Inquest and elsewhere, it was utterly irresponsible for those four eminent doctors constituting the Panel to resort once again to the same old trickery that had been disproved long ago. But, then, they, of course, couldn't know that their super-secret review would also come under public scrutiny!

Of great interest and significance is the statement that the bullet which struck the President in the back followed a course "to the left" in its passage through the body. This means that said bullet, no matter where it emerged from Kennedy's body (assuming for the sake of argument that it did emerge from it) certainly would have missed Connally altogether, for he was in the jury seat directly in front of the President. Moreover, the wound of entry, in the Governor's body, was high on the right of the back, above the armpit and alongside the shoulderblade. The wound of exit, on the front of the chest, was just below and medial to the right nipple. How could a bullet, which had just traversed the body of the man straight behind him in a leftward direction, conceivably hit Connally on the right of the back and emerge from his chest below the right nipple? Impossible! The panelists, to be sure, didn't bother about this particular inconsistency in the Warren report because they weren't concerned with Connally at all. Their job was to seemingly validate the "findings" of the WC with regard to Kennedy alone, and they stuck to it.

So much has now been exposed of the deliberately false and fraudulent nature of the Panel review that I do not feel it necessary to devote much more precious space to this fabrication. I therefore intend to conclude this critique in a subsequent issue of TL by briefly discussing the highlights of the sections in the review entitled "Examination of X-ray film," "Examination of the Clothing," "Discussion" and "Summary." They do not contain much that is new, and very little that is truthful.

Note: As TRUTH LETTER now is limited to four pages per issue, TRILogy OF MURDER must be omitted in the present one; it will be resumed in TL IV/3 (next issue).

New Light on the Robert Kennedy Murder Fraud (ctd.) - What the Autopsy Report Reveals

Actually, the fatal bullet, which was most likely of a frangible type, as has been stated before, splintered in Kennedy's head into a multitude of fragments, the largest of which, in the words of Dr. Noguchi's autopsy report, "measures 12 mm in transverse dimension, 7 mm in vertical dimension, and approximately 12 mm in antero-posterior dimension." The presence of this fragment in the petrous ridge of the brain was discovered by pre-operative X-rays, while the mortally wounded Senator was being treated at the Good Samaritan Hospital; it was surgically removed by Dr. Nat D. Reid and turned over to the police. A fragment of that size and shape is not identifiable by ballistic methods. It is therefore an unmitigated fraud for Solfer to claim that the headshot bullet had been "recovered" and "booked as evidence." There was no such thing.

Before we proceed to discuss what else the autopsy report reveals that had been kept secret or distorted by the authorities, let us examine the principal findings. In a brief statement preceding the detailed medical findings and conclusions, Dr. Noguchi declares: "From the anatomic findings and pertinent history, I ascribe the death to: GUNSHOT WOUND OF RIGHT MASTOID, PENETRATING BRAIN."

The autopsy report states that Robert Kennedy was hit by three different bullets the course and effects of which are described in these terms:

GUNSHOT WOUND No. 1 (FATAL GUNSHOT WOUND)

ENTRY: Right mastoid region  
COURSE: Skin of right mastoid region, right mastoid, petrous portion of right temporal bone, right temporal lobe and right hemisphere of cerebellum.  
EXIT: None.  
DIRECTION: Right to left, slightly to front, upward.  
BULLET RECOVERY: Fragments (see text).

GUNSHOT WOUND No. 2. THROUGH-AND-THROUGH.

ENTRY: Right axillary region.  
COURSE: Soft tissue of right axilla and right infraclavicular region.  
ENTRY (sic) " Right infraclavicular region.  
DIRECTION: Right to left, back to front, upward.  
BULLET RECOVERY: None.

GUNSHOT WOUND No. 3

ENTRY: Right axillary region (just below gunshot wound No. 2 entry).  
COURSE: Soft tissue of right axilla, soft tissue of right upper back to the level of the 6th cervical vertebra just beneath the skin.  
EXIT: None.  
DIRECTION: Right to left, back to front, upward.  
BULLET RECOVERY: .22 caliber bullet from the soft tissue of paracervical region at level of 6th cervical vertebra at 8:40 A.M., June 6, 1968.

In his testimony before the Grand Jury (transcript, pp. 13-20), Dr. Noguchi made it quite clear that gunshot wounds 2 and 3 were non-fatal, i.e. that neither of them could have caused the Senator's death, bearing unforeseen complications.

(to be continued)

\* This is an obvious mistake in the original text. The item should read "EXIT."