

Thought you'd be interested in these pages from the paperback edition of The Assassination Tapes. They are from a new postscript which did not appear in the hardback.

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in December, 1963. A Secret Service report in the CD 320 file states:

... on December 12, 1963 ... Alonzo Heidt Hudkins III, reporter for the *Houston Post*, advised the writer confidentially that he had received information from Felton West, the *Houston Post* Washington Bureau representative, to the effect that citizens of the United States had entered into an agreement or plot to assassinate Premier Castro of Cuba and that Lee Harvey Oswald, who went to Mexico City on September 26 and allegedly returned about October 1-3, learned of this plot, which infuriated him.

Mr. Hudkins inferred that this was a possible reason for Oswald assassinating the President.

After running across this report in the National Archives in 1975, I called Felton West, then *Houston Post* bureau chief in Austin, Texas. West said, "I don't know where [Hudkins] got that idea. At the time the Secret Service called me and asked me about it, I couldn't explain it to them either." Freelance writer Ron Rosenbaum called Hudkins at his home near Baltimore to ask him about the report.

"Yeah," Hudkins replied, "I broke all that way back then, but nobody would listen to me. The CIA knows about it."

During the long telephone interview, Hudkins made several surprising disclosures to Rosenbaum, including the fact he had been involved in trying to smuggle a large shipment of arms into Cuba shortly before the Bay of Pigs invasion. But the most startling of Hudkins' disclosures was the fact that in addition to his career as newspaper reporter, he had two other sidelines: petroleum engineer and assassin.

Hudkins said he sometimes worked in engineering positions for oil companies, and that during one stint with the H.L. Hunt Oil Company he was recruited as a member of a CIA contract assassination team that was assigned two targets: Fidel Castro and Cheddi Jagan of Guyana. He said he and the other members of the assassination squad abandoned plans to kill Castro since

they didn't believe they could accomplish the killing and get out of Cuba alive. He said the White House got cold feet and called off the Jagan killing.

Hudkins refused to identify the source of his 1963 report to the Secret Service that Oswald had acted in retaliation for attempts on Castro, but he implied he knew the identity of several conspirators who participated in the assassination and hinted they were Castro agents. He frankly admitted promoting the theory of Castro's involvement in order to hinder recent diplomatic initiatives towards Cuba.

"In recent months I've been the one who's slowed them down a little bit with resuming relations with Cuba, until we find out. I and others raised the question, 'Should we go ahead and do this before we find out whether this guy knocked off one of our presidents, right or wrong?'"

Right or Wrong?

I am frankly at a loss to know what to make of Lonnie Hudkins. His stories cannot be completely accepted, but neither can they be totally rejected. Whether Hudkins has told everything he knows about the case, or perhaps more, is a question that probably only will be answered if he can be made to repeat some of his revelations under oath.

WAS FIDEL ON THE GRASSY KNOLL?

The theory that Castro was behind the assassination of President Kennedy has become increasingly popular in the last two years, not due to the efforts of Lonnie Hudkins, but as a result of revelations of the extent the Kennedy administration was involved in attempts to murder Castro, and disclosures that the CIA and the FBI kept evidence from the Warren Commission tending to implicate Castro in the assassination. The theory is attractive; like most Americans I would prefer to believe the assassination conspiracy was imported, rather than domestic. Unfortunately, the facts have not per-

sueded me that Castro was the ultimate author of the assassination.

Fidel Castro is certainly capable of having ordered the killing of an American president; he and his followers did not topple the vicious and repressive Batista regime by emulating Christ or Ghandi. And President Eisenhower, the Kennedy brothers and President Johnson, presiding over repeated CIA attempts (Castro says twenty-four, the Senate Intelligence Committee turned up eight) to murder Castro, provided him with the excuse, and perhaps even the moral justification, to reply in kind. But what they failed to give him was a rational motive.

Castro could not have hoped to bring the CIA assassination plots to a halt by killing Kennedy; in fact, they continued for years after Kennedy's death. Castro surely realized that, if a Cuban role in the assassination of an American president came to light, public feeling in the United States would probably precipitate a full-scale invasion of his country and ultimately his own death.

My own investigation, recounted in this book, has led me to the conclusion that Oswald was not the assassin of President Kennedy, and that he was framed for the crime. Whatever Oswald really was, on the surface he was a conspicuous follower of Fidel Castro. It would have been wholly illogical for Castro to arrange to have Kennedy killed, then pin the killing on one of his own followers, and thus direct suspicion at himself.

But the most practical problem with the Castro theory lies in those same fragments of evidence, withheld from the Warren Commission by the CIA and the FBI, which tend to link Castro to the killing. Any theory implicating Castro must also explain how he managed to obtain the cooperation of J. Edgar Hoover and the CIA to help him cover up his involvement. No one ever said Hoover was soft on Communists. As far as the CIA is concerned, one would think the authors of the Bay of Pigs operation would seize the opportunity to trigger a full-scale invasion of Cuba. Instead, both the CIA and the FBI withheld evidence of Cuban involvement in the

assassination from the Warren Commission, evidence former Commission counsel David Belin says would have prompted a "broader investigation." The fact that the intelligence agencies withheld that evidence suggests such a broader investigation would have revealed, not the involvement of Fidel Castro, but some sort of skeleton in one of their own closets. The most obvious interpretation is that the CIA discovered that people it had recruited for the Castro assassination attempts or related operations were involved in the Kennedy assassination.

It is not possible to undertake herein a full examination of the "Cuban" evidence thus far disclosed. The House Select Committee on Assassinations seems to be exploring this aspect of the case very carefully, and we can look forward to a full account of the subject in its final report. However, since publication of *The Assassination Tapes* I have on two occasions collaborated with other researchers to explain their findings regarding specific Cuban links.* There have recently been new developments in both of these investigative threads, and I take this opportunity to bring things up to date.

The first line of inquiry concerns the so-called "Sylvia Odio Affair." Sylvia Odio is a Cuban emigre who was living in Dallas, in September, 1963 — less than two months before the Kennedy assassination — when she received a visit one night from three men she had never met before. Two of the visitors seemed Hispanic — Cuban or perhaps Mexican. Mrs. Odio thought — and claimed to be members of the anti-Castro movement. They identified themselves only by their "war names" — Leopoldo and Angelo. The third man was an "Anglo," and was introduced as "Leon Oswald."

Leopoldo told Mrs. Odio, "We are good friends of your father." Mrs. Odio's father was a prisoner on Castro's Isle of Pines, and Leopoldo seemed to have detailed knowledge of

*The CIA and The Man Who Was Not Oswald," by Bernard Fensterwald, Jr. and George O'Toole, *The New York Review of Books*, April 3, 1975, and, "Dallas: The Cuban Connection," by George O'Toole and Paul Hoch, *The Saturday Evening Post*, March, 1976.

the man. The trio said they had come to Mrs. Odio to ask her help in translating into English a letter they planned to send to American businessmen asking financial aid for the anti-Castro guerrillas. The man identified as Oswald said little during the visit, and after about fifteen minutes the three left as abruptly as they had arrived.

The next day Mrs. Odio received a telephone call from Leopoldo, who immediately turned the conversation to the subject of Leon Oswald. He said Oswald was an ex-marine and an expert marksman.

"He told us we don't have any guns," Leopoldo said, "because President Kennedy should have been assassinated after the Bay of Pigs." But Leopoldo said the Cubans had decided not to have anything to do with Oswald because he was "loco." Mrs. Odio never heard any more from the trio, but when she saw Lee Harvey Oswald's picture after the Kennedy assassination, she collapsed and was taken to the hospital. She believed that Leon Oswald and Lee Harvey Oswald were the same man.

The Warren Commission and the FBI could not dismiss Mrs. Odio as a publicity-seeker; she had not come forward with her story, but confided it to a friend who informed the authorities. One Commission staffer, David Slawson, described Odio as "the most significant witness linking Oswald to the anti-Castro Cubans." In a Commission memorandum pro-Castro sentiments, might have encouraged him to kill President Kennedy. "The motive on this," Slawson wrote, "would of course be the expectation that after the President was killed Oswald would be caught or at least his identity ascertained, the law enforcement authorities and the public would then blame the assassination on the Castro government, and the call for its forceful overthrow would be irresistible. A second Bay of Pigs invasion would begin, this time, hopefully, to end successfully."

However, in the long run the Warren Commission decided to chalk up the Odio affair to coincidence. The Warren Report states that Oswald could not have visited Mrs. Odio on the

night she recalls as the date of the meeting because he was on a Trailways bus between New Orleans and Houston, bound for Mexico City. The Report also says that one Lorán Eugene Hall, an anti-Castro activist, had told the FBI that he, Lawrence Howard — a Mexican-American — and William Seymour of Arizona were the trio that visited Mrs. Odio. Hall said Seymour resembled Lee Harvey Oswald. However, after the Warren Report was published, the FBI located Seymour who told them he wasn't present at the meeting and had never met Mrs. Odio. But apparently the FBI and the Warren Commission never resolved.

In 1975, Dr. Paul Hoch, a Berkeley, California, researcher, shared with me an interesting discovery he had made regarding the Odio affair. Dr. Hoch had uncovered something the FBI apparently overlooked: the reason Mrs. Odio's father was in prison on the Isle of Pines. The senior Odio had been sent there for taking part in one of the CIA-sponsored attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro.

The assassination attempt was planned by two Cuban accountants who had been embezzling government funds to finance the anti-Castro underground. The two, Antonio Veciana and Reynaldo Gonzales, rented an apartment a block-and-a-half from the Presidential Palace. They planned to shoot Castro with a bazooka during one of his marathon speeches.

The Cuban secret police learned of the plot before it could be carried out. Veciana escaped to Miami and Gonzales fled to a farm outside of Havana. The farm, which had often been used by the anti-Castro underground, was owned by a businessman who had fought with Castro, but later turned against him. The businessman was Sylvia Odio's father.

The police tracked Gonzales to the farm and arrested him. Mrs. Odio's parents were implicated, arrested and sent to the Isle of Pines. The incident took place in 1961, two years before the Kennedy assassination.

Antonio Veciana, safe in the United States, became chief of Alpha 66, an anti-Castro guerrilla group with CIA sponsorship that conducted raids on Cuba from bases in the south-

eastern United States. The former accountant also worked to raise private money to support the guerrillas, and in 1962 claimed to have raised a \$100,000 war chest for Alpha 66. Veciana had visited Dallas in connection with his Alpha 66 activities, and a Dallas deputy sheriff's report suggested that Oswald may have met with some Cubans at the Dallas address where the local Alpha 66 group met.

Thus, Veciana and the two Cubans who visited Mrs. Odio had several things in common: they were anti-Castro activists, engaged in raising funds for the guerrillas, and knew Mrs. Odio's father. This falls far short of proving that Veciana was one of the two Cubans, but it suggests that possibility. Dr. Hoch and I prepared an article setting out these facts for publication in *The Saturday Evening Post*. At the same time, however, several months before publication in the *Post* was scheduled, we turned the information over to David Marston, a staff assistant to Senator Richard Schweiker (R-Pennsylvania), who was leading the Senate Intelligence Committee's investigation of the intelligence agencies' conduct of the JFK probe.

In furnishing this and other information to several senators and congressmen interested in the JFK assassination, Dr. Hoch and I neither expected nor received any disclosure of whatever follow-up was done. However, in this case we received an indication that some considerable interest had been taken in our lead when Dr. Hoch got a call from an investigator Senator Schweiker had sent to Florida to locate Antonio Veciana. Neither Hoch nor I could help him, however, having no idea where Veciana might be found. But a few months later I was able to tell Senator Schweiker's office where to find the man, thanks to the late television comedian, Freddie Prinze.

Few people know of Freddie Prinze's intense interest in the Kennedy Assassination, largely because Prinze wanted it that way. His manager advised him to avoid being identified with controversial issues, and Prinze recalled that humorist Mort Sahl's career was damaged after he allied himself with New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's investigation of the Kennedy case. Nonetheless Prinze was an avid reader of the assassination literature, and even occasionally dabbled

in research and investigation.

I first met Prinze in Chicago on the set of a television talk show. He had just finished reading *The Assassination Tapes*, and he spent an hour or two quizzing me about it over dinner. Afterwards I heard from Prinze every few months, when he would call to ask if I knew of any new developments in the case, and to inquire about the state of efforts to obtain a new investigation.*

On one such occasion in March 1976, Prinze called from the Fountainbleau Hotel in Miami Beach where he was appearing, and told me of a discussion he'd had with several local Cubans regarding the assassination. He said he was convinced the Odio incident was the key to the truth. I recounted to him the substance of the *Saturday Evening Post* article, which had not yet appeared, and told him of the difficulty Senator Schweiker's office seemed to be having in locating Antonio Veciana. A short time later Prinze called me back and gave me a Miami address where Veciana could be found. I relayed this information to Senator Schweiker's aide, David Marston. Veciana was located; he testified before Senator Schweiker's Subcommittee, and later before the House Select Committee on Assassinations. Whether he was able to solve the Sylvia Odio mystery or not hasn't been revealed, but it has been disclosed that Veciana made several astonishing revelations to the congressional investigators. Here, pieced together from several sources, is part of his story.

Sometime in 1960 or 1961, Veciana met a man in Havana who called himself "Morris Bishop." Bishop, who was traveling on a Belgian passport, was in his mid-forties, about six feet, two inches tall, with a stocky build, and spoke French and Spanish fluently. Bishop revealed he was a CIA operator and he became Antonio Veciana's case officer. He was behind both Veciana's embezzlement operation and his attempt to

*Before I am accused of saying otherwise, I want to state that I have no information indicating the tragic death of Freddie Prinze was mysterious or somehow connected to his interest in the Kennedy assassination.

kill Castro with a bazooka. After Veciana fled to the United States, Bishop contacted him again and arranged for him to form Alpha 66.

In August, 1963, Bishop summoned Veciana to Dallas, where he met him in a downtown office building. According to Veciana, Bishop had company when he arrived, a young man Veciana says he later realized was Lee Harvey Oswald. Apparently Bishop and Oswald had concluded a meeting, for Oswald was very quiet and left within fifteen minutes of Veciana's arrival.

After the Kennedy assassination, Bishop again contacted Veciana and asked him to induce his cousin, Guillermo Ruiz, an employee of the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City and a Cuban intelligence agent, to defect. Bishop wanted Veciana to bribe his cousin to say he had met Oswald in Mexico City, and that Oswald had been in contact with Castro agents. Veciana did not pursue the matter, and, six months later, when he brought it up to Bishop, the CIA man told him it was no longer necessary.

Veciana says he continued to work with Bishop until 1973, including taking part in an abortive assassination attempt against Fidel Castro when he visited Chile in 1971. On July 24, 1973, he was arrested on a drug dealing charge, was convicted, and served seventeen months in the Atlanta Penitentiary. Two days after his arrest, Veciana says, Bishop gave him a large amount of money — reports vary from \$150,000 to \$253,000 — as back pay for his work over the years, and broke off all further contact with him. He says he was innocent of the drug charges and believes they were deliberately trumped up in some kind of connection with his guerrilla activities.

Antonio Veciana's testimony has reportedly "cast new light" on the Sylvia Odio affair, but exactly what that new light revealed has not been disclosed. Certainly, his identification of his CIA case officer's associate as Lee Harvey Oswald, if correct, more than adequately explains the CIA's motive in trying to limit the Warren Commission's investigation, and provides an important new focus for the House Assassinations

Committee's investigation of the precise relationship between the CIA and the Kennedy assassination. But his most important disclosure may be the fact that a CIA operator attempted to bribe a Cuban official to say that Lee Harvey Oswald visited the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City and contacted Cuban intelligence there. Many researchers, including myself, have long suspected that it was not Oswald, but an impostor, who visited the Cuban Embassy in late September and early October 1963, and that the purpose of this charade was to implicate Cuba with the man who had been selected to take the blame for the Kennedy assassination.

On October 10, 1963 the CIA station in Mexico City sent a teletype message to the FBI and the Departments of State and the Navy reporting on the October 1st visit to the Soviet Embassy of someone identifying himself as Lee Oswald. The cable described the visitor as "approximately 35 years old, with an athletic build, about six feet tall, with a receding hairline." (Oswald, of course, was not thirty-five; he was twenty-three. And he was several inches less than six feet, and slender.) The CIA cable attributed the information to "a reliable and sensitive source," presumably either an informant or electronic surveillance of the Soviet Embassy. However the CIA station also had photographs of the man, taken with a hidden surveillance camera, probably as he left the Cuban Embassy. The man in the photographs was not Lee Harvey Oswald; he matched the description contained in the CIA cable.

Apparently the CIA station had some doubts about the man's identity, for it cabled the Navy on October 23rd and asked for a copy of the most recent photograph of Lee Harvey Oswald. (Since Oswald served in the Marine Corps, the Navy Department would have his military records, including photographs of him.) The station was still waiting for the pictures on November 22nd when news of President Kennedy's assassination arrived. The CIA had the photographs of the embassy visitor flown to Dallas and turned over to the FBI there. The agents interrogating Oswald could see the man in the pictures was not their prisoner, so they attempted to

establish his identity by showing them to Oswald's mother. Mrs. Oswald had never seen the individual, but two days later, when her son was shot in the basement of the Dallas police station, she told reporters that the man in the photographs the FBI had earlier shown her was Jack Ruby. (The mystery man bears a superficial resemblance to Jack Ruby, but certainly isn't Ruby.)

In order to answer Mrs. Oswald's charge, the Warren Commission published one of the CIA photographs, identifying it only as someone who was thought to have been an associate of Oswald. It was only after more than ten years had passed that enough was disclosed about the incident to make it apparent the mystery man may have impersonated Oswald.

According to the Warren Report, Oswald entered Mexico at the border town of Nuevo Laredo on September 26th, traveled by bus to Mexico City, arriving there at 10:00 A.M. on September 27th; he registered at the Hotel del Comercio and stayed there throughout his visit; while in Mexico City he made several visits to the Soviet and Cuban embassies, tried unsuccessfully to obtain visas to visit those two countries, and had a heated argument with a Cuban official; on October 2nd Oswald left Mexico City and returned to the United States, probably by bus. But in view of the mystery man incident, we are entitled to ask how much, if any, of this activity was actually performed by Lee Harvey Oswald?

Several credible witnesses say that Oswald shared the bus ride with them between Nuevo Laredo and Mexico City. However the testimony in support of the balance of Oswald's visit to Mexico is much thinner, and there is virtually only one witness who can place Oswald at the Cuban Embassy. She is Silvia Duran, a Mexican woman who was hired to fill a vacancy at the Cuban Embassy after the incumbent was suddenly killed in a traffic accident about a month before the alleged Oswald visit. Mrs. Duran, her husband, brother, and sister-in-law, and a mysterious pair of Americans, were arrested by the Mexican Federal Police and interrogated the day after the Kennedy assassination. The interrogation, which nearly caused an international incident between Cuba and

Mexico, was of such severity that Mrs. Duran reportedly suffered a nervous breakdown afterward. The deposition taken from her by the Mexican Federal Police was turned over to the Warren Commission. In it she stated that the Lee Harvey Oswald whose picture appeared in the newspapers after the assassination, and the visitor to the Cuban Embassy, were one and the same. No other credible witness gave evidence to the Commission or its investigators that Oswald visited the Embassy.

Unraveling the truth of the mystery man incident without the aid of subpoena power is almost impossible because the details are concealed behind a wall of CIA secrecy, a wall that the secretive agency would probably erect regardless of how sinister or innocent the affair actually was. What little we do know of the affair is the result of the painstaking piecing together of fragmentary information as it became available, by researchers such as Mark Lane, Dr. Paul Hoch, Robert Smith and Bernard Fensterwald, Jr. Fensterwald and I published a piece in *The New York Review of Books* detailing the general outlines of this process,* but it doesn't do justice to the work of Dr. Hoch, who has compiled, but not published, a detailed chronology and index of sources on the incident.

The *New York Review* piece was the first general exposition of the mystery man incident; the *Review* invited the CIA to explain or otherwise respond to the article, but a spokesman for the Agency declined. A few months later David Belin conveyed to me an unclassified summary of the explanation he received of the mystery man affair from the CIA when he inquired about it in his capacity as Executive Director of the Rockefeller Commission. The CIA's explanation, which Belin accepts, is that a CIA employee in Mexico mistakenly linked a report of Oswald's presence in Mexico City with a photograph of an unidentified individual, thought to be an American, who had been observed entering a foreign embassy. Belin asked the Agency to release its full explanation, but this was

*Fensterwald and O'Toole, op cit.

refused on the grounds that sensitive intelligence sources and methods would be compromised.

Without a more complete explanation, however, the CIA's story is almost impossible to accept. Had there been but one visit by Oswald to an embassy and one photograph of the mystery man, the "mix-up" explanation would be plausible. But the Warren Report alleges that Oswald visited the Cuban Embassy twice and the Soviet Embassy once on September 27th, his first day in Mexico City. It also describes him as having "embarked on a series of visits to the Soviet and Cuban Embassies, which occupied most of his time during the first two days of his visit." On the other hand, the mystery man was photographed on at least three separate occasions, October 1, 14 and 15, according to David Belin.

Of course, the matter could be settled quickly if the CIA could produce photographs of Oswald visiting the Cuban Embassy. However, Jack Anderson reports a CIA spokesman told the House Assassinations Committee that the camera the agency was using to photograph people coming and going at the Embassy was out of order on the days of Oswald's visits.

A few months after the *New York Review* piece was published, a story appeared in the *New York Times* which, if not settling the question of the mystery man, at least seemed to confirm that Oswald had contacted the Soviet and Cuban Embassies when he visited Mexico City. Citing "government sources familiar with the events," the *Times* reported that the CIA had taped two telephone conversations between Oswald and the two Communist embassies. The obvious implication was that voiceprinting or other means had been used to establish that the voice on the tapes was that of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Over a year later, however, a CIA spokesman told the newly formed House Assassinations Committee that the tapes had been transcribed, then routinely destroyed about a week after the conversations took place, or in other words almost two months before the assassination. Clearly, if this was so, the CIA had no evidence that the person it had wiretapped was really Oswald. However, the real "kicker" was still to come.

In March, 1977, Mark Lane obtained some previously withheld Secret Service documents under the Freedom of Information Act. One of these was an FBI report dated November 23, 1963 which contained the following paragraph:

The Central Intelligence Agency advised that on October 1, 1963, an extremely sensitive source had reported that an individual identifying himself as Lee Harvey Oswald had contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City, inquiring as to any messages. Special Agents of this Bureau who have conversed with Oswald in Dallas, Texas have observed photographs of the individual referred to above, and have listened to a recording of his voice. These Special Agents are of the opinion that the above referred to individual was not Lee Harvey Oswald. [Emphasis added.]

Regarding these conflicting reports, former Assassinations Committee General Counsel Richard A. Sprague recently said, "That raises some very serious questions, because if the tapes had existed after the assassination of President Kennedy and they were destroyed, why? And if, in fact these tapes showed that the voice on there was not Oswald's, what does that indicate?"

Perhaps it means that someone, by impersonating Oswald, tried to tie to the Castro government the man who had been selected to be framed as the Kennedy assassin. Perhaps it means the CIA discovered this, but tried to cover it up. Perhaps it means the CIA tried to bribe a Cuban official to defect and confirm that the embassy visitor was really Lee Harvey Oswald. Perhaps it means the Agency destroyed wire-tap tapes that would prove otherwise. Perhaps not.

We'll never know for certain unless Sprague's successors on the House Assassinations Committee demand answers to the questions he has already asked.