

special report:

THE HOFFA WARS

*an investigation of the violence and corruption
surrounding the missing teamster leader whose influence extended
to nearly every corner of american public life*

including

HOW JIMMY HOFFA BECAME INVOLVED WITH ORGANIZED CRIME

HOW MOB MONEY WAS FUNNELED TO RICHARD NIXON

HOFFA'S SECRET ROLE AS THE CIA'S LINK TO THE MOB

THE HATRED BETWEEN HOFFA AND THE KENNEDY BROTHERS

WHY HOFFA WAS KILLED AND WHO DID IT

article

By DAN E. MOLDEA

At presstime, the U. S. House Assassinations Committee was about to reveal some surprising details regarding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Many of the same names that were to be discussed by the committee are also major characters in my book "The Hoffa Wars."

In October 1974, as a free-lance writer, I began investigating Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters. Ten months later, I was concentrating exclusively on the union's extortion schemes against trucking companies and terrorist activities against internal rank-and-file reform groups. Investigations of the Hoffa-Frank Fitzsimons power struggle and of Hoffa's disappearance were of only peripheral concern to me; and I had absolutely no inclination to investigate the alleged assassination plots against either Fidel Castro or John Kennedy. Ironically, however, my conclusions on labor terrorism, rebel movements and shakedown led me into these areas, which I had, at one time, considered distant and unrelated.

After a brief stint as a Teamsters researcher with NBC, I continued my independent investigations. Then, in late 1975 and early 1976, I received \$2100 from the Hoffa Reward Fund, which had been established in the wake

of the Hoffa murder. Hoffa's son, attorney James P. Hoffa, Jr., who was the administrator of the fund, simply told me to do whatever I had to do, no matter how embarrassing to him, his family or his father's memory, in order to help uncover the truth about Hoffa's execution.

Meanwhile, I was hired part time by The Detroit Free Press. We worked for the next eight months on the extortion plots I had uncovered, during which time I severed my financial relationship with young Hoffa. Soon after, I began receiving a series of grants from the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington, D.C., which continued after my story was published. Simultaneously, I was doing some work on the same subject for columnist Jack Anderson. With the help of money and contacts supplied by the F.I.J. and Anderson, my investigations snowballed, forcing me into those areas that I had thought to be unrelated to my work.

I was not completely new to the Teamsters union and its problems when I started my work on "The Hoffa Wars": I had worked on a loading platform and had even driven a small truck while in college. On a hot summer day in 1971, while I was en route to Columbus, Ohio,

the cargo I was hauling exploded and I was nearly killed. Eight truckers pulled over and probably saved my life. "The Hoffa Wars" is part payment on my debt to those eight men and to the dissident rank-and-file Teamsters who kept me alive during my four-year investigation.

JIMMY HOFFA's most valuable contribution to the American labor movement came at the moment he stopped breathing on July 30, 1975. The involuntary act occurred in the midst of his dramatic bid to recapture the general presidency of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which he had lost during five years in prison. Still popular among reporters with short memories who insisted upon portraying him as a working-class hero, and among rank-and-file admirers who had forgiven him for stealing from them, Hoffa nevertheless had a slim chance of a comeback. His release from prison in late 1971 led to a futile four-year struggle for power; his execution opened the floodgates for investigations into the Teamsters and the underworld, their illicit enterprises, their influence on the Nixon White House and their role in assassination plots against a foreign leader—as well as a possible involvement

141

in the assassination of an American President.

Convicted in two separate trials of jury tampering and of defrauding the union's pension fund, Hoffa had become an outsider to the Teamsters' high command when he entered Lewisburg Penitentiary in March 1967. His problems began less than a month later, when he and his successor, Frank Fitzsimmons, disagreed over a union appointment. The increasingly bitter war between the two old friends lasted until Hoffa died and was to be carried on by Hoffa's supporters even after he was gone. Many would think that this split with Fitzsimmons was the key factor in his death. But there is evidence that could lead to the possible conclusion that he was murdered for other reasons: specifically, his alleged role in the plots to murder Fidel Castro—plots that involve figures linked for the first time to events surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy.

ROOTS OF POWER

In 1967, Fitzsimmons suddenly inherited the uncontrollable monster Hoffa had created over the previous 25 years: an alliance between the union and organized crime. While this alliance has been

well documented by the McClellan committee hearings of 1957-1960, its roots have been unclear until now. Hoffa, I found, was introduced to Detroit mobsters Frank Coppola and Santo Perrone in or about 1934 by his lover, Sylvia Pagano. He asked for and received Mob muscle seven years later, when the local Teamsters in Detroit were being strongly challenged by a rival union. After the Teamsters-underworld alliance had driven the opposing labor organization out of the city, Hoffa reciprocated the Mob's strong-arm work by giving it access to union funds. With a new façade of legitimacy, the Detroit underworld became the center of the international narcotics traffic from 1947 to 1952, after Coppola was deported to Italy and became a lieutenant to Charles Luciano, the New York mobster who had been released from jail and deported. Because of his importance in that drug connection, Hoffa was introduced to other dope peddlers in Chicago, Florida, Louisiana and New York. Those associations were a major reason for his rise from a union organizer and business agent to president of the Detroit local in 1946 to I.B.T. vice-president in 1952 and to I.B.T. general president in 1957.

When Fitzsimmons took over ten years

later, he was unwilling and unable to battle the underworld. So, instead, he promptly decentralized the union autocracy Hoffa had used to build his empire, hoping to insulate himself from direct contact with organized crime. Among the immediate benefactors of Fitzsimmons' policies were local and regional Teamster leaders around the country, who acquired a considerable amount of new power in the 2,000,000-member I.B.T. Instead of clamoring for the attention of one man, such as Hoffa, mobsters merely had to call their area Teamster representatives for favors. Teamster bosses who cooperated became wealthy.

Without the daily burden of defending his professional relationship with organized-crime figures to the press and the rank and file—as Hoffa had spent much of his career doing—Fitzsimmons used his free time to back up his union subordinates and to make new friends in politics and big labor.

THE NIXON CONNECTION

Things were going well for the I.B.T. under Fitzsimmons. Its first- and second-level officials were happy, and so was the national crime syndicate. Then, in November 1968, Richard Nixon was elected President of the United States. Because the Teamsters had gone with the rest of organized labor and supported Hubert

A HOFFA SCRAPBOOK



Jimmy Hoffa (left) and Frank Fitzsimmons (right) rose through union ranks together, starting in Detroit in the Thirties. Years later, Fitzsimmons succeeded Hoffa as Teamster president. Their power struggle began a month after Hoffa went to jail in 1967, when Fitzsimmons began to undercut Hoffa's authority and support.

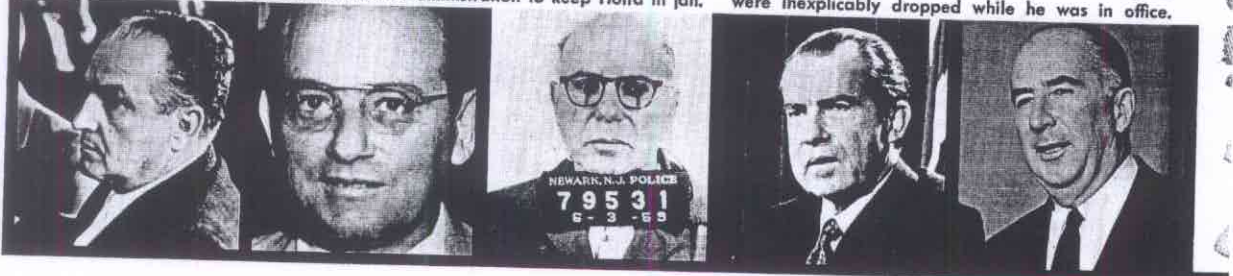
Attorney General Robert Kennedy led the Government investigation of the Teamsters. Hoffa hated Kennedy and their enmity made headlines for years.

By 1961, the CIA was recruiting powerful crime-syndicate figures to try to kill Castro. Hoffa may have been an early CIA-mobster go-between.

Chicago mobster Sam Giancana was recruited to help kill Castro. Before he could talk to the Senate in 1975, he was murdered in his home.

Carlos Marcello (left), Santos Trafficante (center) and Joseph Bonanno formed a powerful crime alliance in the Southern states. Bonanno underboss Carmine Galante (right) befriended Hoffa in prison in 1967. Those four became Hoffa's chief supporters when crime bosses in Northeastern states backed the newly appointed Fitzsimmons. Fitzsimmons' allies used the possibility of that split's erupting into a nationwide Mob war to persuade the Nixon Administration to keep Hoffa in jail.

Hoffa had supported Richard Nixon in 1960 and expected an early release from jail once Nixon was in the White House. Attorney General John Mitchell had pledged law and order for the country, but investigations of Teamster officials and underworld figures were inexplicably dropped while he was in office.



Humphrey that year, Nixon's election was bad news.

Nixon had formed a *quid pro quo* relationship with Hoffa during his 1960 Presidential campaign against John Kennedy, brother of Hoffa's archenemy. Until he resigned to manage his brother's campaign, Robert Kennedy was the chief counsel to the Senate Rackets Committee, which investigated the Teamsters in general and Hoffa in particular. Those wars between Hoffa and Robert Kennedy were headline news for three years. That, combined with rumors that Robert Kennedy would become Attorney General if his brother were elected, led Hoffa to put his union at Nixon's disposal.

According to new information, just before the first of the Nixon-Kennedy debates that began on September 26, 1960, Hoffa quietly made a trip to New Orleans to meet with Carlos Marcello, a Louisiana Mob figure whom he had met through Coppola. Hoffa associate Edward Partin, who was present at the meeting (and later provided the Government with the damning testimony that led to Hoffa's jury-tampering conviction), told me that Marcello passed Hoffa a suitcase stuffed with \$500,000 in cash. (Partin was considered by the Kennedy Justice Department an impeccable source of information in this matter.) The

money was half of a \$1,000,000 contribution being given to the Nixon campaign. The other half was coming from other Mob sources on the East Coast and in Miami. There is no proof that the money ever reached its destination, but on January 6, 1961, columnist Drew Pearson wrote that by the end of the previous September, Vice-President Nixon had successfully intervened with Attorney General William Rogers, convincing him not to indict Hoffa for a land-fraud scheme in Florida.

Knowing of that transaction, it was no surprise to Fitzsimmons and the rest of the Teamster leadership that Nixon, upon being elected in 1968, was considering an early release for Hoffa. Unlike Fitzsimmons, Hoffa had supported Nixon in 1968 through his influence with remaining friends in the union.

For Hoffa, however, problems remained, and they would prove to be his undoing. In Lewisburg, he had made an alliance with dope trafficker Carmine Galante, the underboss of the Joseph Bonanno crime family of New York, which was in internal conflict over the family's line of succession. Although other Mob families had at first been neutral in these "Banana Wars," which lasted from 1963 to 1969, their attitude quickly changed when they uncovered a plot to

murder two other New York crime-family bosses. Because Bonanno's elder son was implicated in the plot, a majority of the members of the national crime syndicate ordered Joseph Bonanno to respond to the charge. When he refused to cooperate and began raiding other underworld jurisdictions, Bonanno was expelled from the ruling council, which quietly began supporting the rebels in the Bonanno clan. Fearful of Mob reprisals and Government prosecution, Bonanno arranged for his own disappearance, which lasted from 1964 to 1966.

Although it was staged to appear as though Bonanno had been kidnaped, former New York police detective supervisor and organized-crime expert Ralph Salerno told me that Bonanno had been spotted after he had vanished and "was obviously moving independently. There didn't appear to be any restriction on his movements." While underground, Bonanno made a coalition with two other powerful organized-crime figures, Marcello of Louisiana and Florida's Santos Trafficante. Moving his New York operations to Arizona—where he already had considerable clout—Bonanno, with his new friends, formed a triumvirate that rivaled the New York underworld forces.

By making his prison pact with Galante, Hoffa was also allying himself



John Roselli did tell the Senate about the Castro plots. Four months later, his body was found in a 55-gallon drum floating in Miami's Biscayne Bay.

President Kennedy's murder sparked conspiracy rumors. Mobsters linked to the CIA Castro plots (and to Hoffa) are known to have threatened him.

"Bobby Kennedy is just another lawyer now," Hoffa told a reporter after the President was murdered. Jack Ruby (center) had much closer ties to Hoffa associates and the underworld than the Warren Commission claimed. David Ferrie (right) worked for New Orleans mobster Carlos Marcello and went to Cuban Revolutionary Council meetings in the same building where, at that time, Lee Harvey Oswald (left) headed the local Fair Play for Cuba committee.

During Nixon's final days, General Alexander Haig, White House Chief of Staff, conducted a secret investigation into Nixon's ties with the Mob.

William Bufalino (below left) was Hoffa's attorney. He shared an office with Chuck O'Brien (below right), Hoffa's "faster son," who was questioned about the murder. David Johnson (bottom, far left) and Rolland McMaster (bottom, far right), old friends, became key figures in Hoffa's war to regain Teamster leadership.

Government investigators believe that Russell Bufalino (left) and Anthony Provenzano (right) are key figures in the Hoffa disappearance. Bufalino, who is William Bufalino's cousin, has also been linked to the Castro plots. Provenzano is serving a life sentence for killing a rival New Jersey Teamster leader.



with Bonanno. It can be surmised that Hoffa became a key figure in this brewing North-South Mob power struggle. As president of the Teamsters, Hoffa controlled the multimillion-dollar Teamster pension funds and the loans that were coming out of them. The Mob, therefore, relied on him to help finance their illicit activities. Before going to prison, he had had a close working relationship with the New York crime families, as well as with Marcello and Trafficante, but his ties to the latter two mobsters were exceptionally close and personal.

THE CIA-MOBSTER LINK

After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Fidel Castro began throwing the American Mob off the island. Marcello and Trafficante were among the big losers who were exiled by the new government. Both had lost their best gambling and narcotics connections and were interested in ways to recoup their losses. At the same time that they were trying to recapture their lost territory, the CIA, which was in the process of planning the Bay of Pigs invasion, got wind of the losses suffered by Marcello and Trafficante and other underworld figures and tried to capitalize on them. Trafficante was among those mobsters solicited for the now-famous CIA plots to assassinate Castro. The offer came to him via a series of contacts that included Robert Maheu (an advisor to Howard Hughes with a complex background in the intelligence community), gangster John Roselli and Chicago Mob boss Sam Giancana.

But before those connections were established by the CIA, others were solicited to help subvert the Cuban government who had been approached before Maheu, Roselli and Giancana became active participants in the plots.

Hoffa's attorney, William Bufalino, a Detroit Teamster official, had a cousin, Russell Bufalino, who had had an interest in a large gambling casino and a race track near Havana during the Batista regime. Russell, a powerful Mob figure in the Northeast U. S., had been the cohost of the famous 1957 Apalachin mobster conference. Among his partners in New York were underworld figures Salvatore Granello and James Plumeri, two captains of the Thomas Lucchese crime family. Granello and Plumeri were also in business with Hoffa at the time, splitting kickbacks on loans from the Teamsters' Central States Pension Fund to enterprises in Florida, New Jersey and New York. According to Senate investigators, when Castro purged Batista and closed down the business interests of Bufalino and his associates, these organized-crime leaders left \$750,000 in cash behind in Cuba. When the CIA learned of that

during the planning of the Cuban invasion, the mobsters were approached by a middleman—his identity is still unconfirmed—who suggested that in return for their cooperation, the CIA might be able to help recover their money.

Although Maheu freely admitted to me that he was responsible for bringing Roselli, Giancana and Trafficante into the intelligence agency's strategy to overthrow the Cuban government, he denies having had any role in or any knowledge of the covert activities of Bufalino, Granello and Plumeri.

"Things were happening before I became involved," Maheu says. "Therefore, I might not know about them."

If Maheu did not contact Bufalino and his associates, who did? Charles Crimaldi, a Chicago underworld hit man and Giancana associate turned Government informant, says the "original liaison" between the CIA and the Mob was Jimmy Hoffa. (Crimaldi, who is considered "absolutely reliable" by several officials of the Bureau of Narcotics, was the subject of a biography titled *Contract Killer*.) Given knowledge of how the CIA operated at the time and of how deeply Hoffa was connected to the men the CIA was soliciting for its activities against Castro and the Cuban government, Crimaldi's information strongly implies that it was Hoffa who persuaded Bufalino, Granello and Plumeri to cooperate with the agency. During my investigation, I learned that Hoffa not only had been a direct participant in the gunrunning traffic to Batista before the revolution but also had tried to obtain loans from the Central States Pension Fund, prior to the Mob's expulsion from the island, for a fleet of airplanes to be delivered to the new Castro government.

When the murder of Castro became the secret trump card that would precede the invasion, the CIA would have decided to replace Hoffa with Maheu because of the mounting legal pressure being placed upon the Teamster leader by the Kennedy brothers, who were unaware of the Castro murder plots and of the fact that the CIA was cooperating with the Mob at the time.

Hoffa's relationship with those close to the American-Cuban crime community can be documented back to 1957. Hoffa had sent his number-one organizer, Roland McMaster of Detroit, to Miami to establish Local 320, which, according to the McClellan committee, ultimately served as a front for many of the Mob's gambling and narcotics activities. Trafficante—who, according to union officials, was also instrumental in setting up the local—occupied a small office in the union hall.

The key man in helping McMaster start Local 320 was an assassin for Giancana named David Yaras, once a pinball/slot-machine concessionaire under Al Capone. Yaras was among the first members of the Chicago underworld to "discover" Florida after Capone went to jail in 1931. He was second only to Trafficante with his number of Cuban contacts and was heavily involved in the gambling operations of the island before the fall of Batista.

A year after McMaster and Yaras set up Miami Local 320, McMaster, with Hoffa's approval, named a convicted New York extortionist, Harold Gross, to head it. Gross was a close friend of McMaster's and, according to the McClellan committee, a former associate of the Syndicate hit team Murder, Inc. His duties included passing out sweetheart contracts and shaking down taxicab companies, service stations and parking-lot attendants. McMaster also set up several other locals in the Miami area and packed each one with talent almost equal to that of Local 320. Eventually, many of the gangsters helping out with organizing activities in Miami would become involved with Russell Bufalino in the CIA plots against Castro that began with the planning of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

PLOTS AND THREATS

The fact of America's most secret Government agency teaming up with its most powerful criminals is sinister enough. Even more troubling, however, was my realization that ties between the plots to kill Castro and the murder of President Kennedy keep showing up once certain other relationships are fitted into the puzzle.

In February 1961, the CIA passed a set of poison pills, earmarked for Castro, to Maheu's liaison with Trafficante, John Roselli. The pills were then passed to a mystery man who until now was known only as a leader of Cuban exiles.

That man, whose identity was confirmed to me by three sources, was Antonio de Varona, the former president of the Cuban senate, who had been training the invasion forces in Guatemala. However, like the invasion, De Varona's attempts to murder Castro failed.

De Varona was a cofounder of the Cuban Revolutionary Council, the government in exile that had hoped to return to power had the assassination of Castro and the invasion succeeded. One member of the C.R.C. in New Orleans was anti-Castro activist David Ferrie, who was employed as an investigator-pilot for Carlos Marcello. Four days after the Kennedy assassination, Ferrie had been questioned by the FBI about his alleged

(continued on page 256)

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HOFFA WARS

(continued from page 144)

association with the President's assassin. Located in New Orleans in the same building as the C.R.C. was the Fair Play for Cuba committee, which was headed locally by Lee Harvey Oswald.

In September 1962, Marcello met with his top aides in a cottage near New Orleans. During the meeting, according to author Ed Reid in *The Grim Reapers*, Marcello was in a frenzy about Robert Kennedy, and especially about Marcello's own "kidnaping," which had been engineered by the Attorney General near the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Both Marcello and Russell Bufalino had received deportation orders and both were battling the Government. Federal agents sent by the Attorney General arrested and handcuffed Marcello as he walked down a New Orleans street. They drove him to a nearby airport, loaded him onto a private plane and flew him out of the country. Since he carried a Guatemalan birth certificate, it was assumed that he was a native. After two months in Latin America, Marcello illegally flew back into the United States aboard a private plane, piloted by Ferrie. Back in America, Marcello began his successful appeal to fight deportation, claiming that he had been sent away with no opportunity to call either his family or his lawyer.

Marcello reportedly worked himself up over the incident and finally shouted an ancient Sicilian death threat against the Kennedy brothers, "*Livarsi na petra di la scarpa!*" ("Take the stone out of my shoe!"). He then announced that John Kennedy was going to be assassinated and that a "nut" was going to be hired to handle the job.

That same month, Marcello's friend Trafficante, still involved with the CIA murder plots, was talking with José Aleman, a Cuban-exile financier, who was a respected FBI informant, about his hatred of the President.

Aleman told George Crile III, who was writing for *The Washington Post*, that Trafficante said, "Have you seen how his [the President's] brother is hitting Hoffa, a man who is a worker, who is not a millionaire, a friend of the blue collars? He doesn't know that this kind of encounter is very delicate. Mark my words, this man Kennedy is in trouble, and he will get what is coming to him."

Aleman, who was talking with the underworld leader about a \$1,500,000 Central States Pension Fund loan that Hoffa had personally cleared for Trafficante, responded that President Kennedy would probably be re-elected.

"No, José," Trafficante said firmly. "He is going to be hit."

When asked during the research for

my book *who* was making the arrangements for the President's assassination, Aleman replied that Trafficante had "made it clear" that it was Hoffa.

Also in September 1962, Ed Partin, deciding to turn on Hoffa, told investigators in Baton Rouge about a frightening conversation he had had with Hoffa the previous month in the Teamster leader's Washington office.

Partin says that Hoffa was discussing two possible ways of murdering the Attorney General: fire-bombing his Hickory Hill home or shooting him with a rifle while he was driving in his convertible. Opting for the former plan, Hoffa asked Partin to obtain some plastic explosives that could do the job. Skeptical at first of Partin's story, the investigators subjected him to a lie-detector test—which he passed—and then asked him to telephone Hoffa to continue the discussion, which would be taped by the Government, about the plastic explosives. Calling Hoffa, Partin told him that he had received the explosives and asked what he should do. Hoffa replied without hesitation, ordering him to take them to Nashville, where he was on trial for extortion. Partin adds that the man Hoffa had in mind for killing the Attorney General was Frank Chavez, head of the Teamsters local in Puerto Rico, who was credited with the fire-bombing of a rival union's offices earlier in 1962.

THE RUBY CONNECTION

The question remains: Did one assassination plot against the Attorney General evolve into another against his brother, the President?

Countless conspiracy theories have been proposed since November 22, 1963, but few of them have sought to link Hoffa and the Teamsters to Kennedy's murder. Having already seen how the CIA and organized crime worked together in the attempts to kill Castro, we might do well to examine the activities of one man who had ties to these groups: Jack Ruby.

Ruby had known many Chicago gangsters during the Thirties and Forties and by 1947, he was being questioned by Federal narcotics agents investigating his possible role with mobster Paul Roland Jones in drug trafficking into that city. Ruby also knew Paul Dorfman, a close Hoffa associate, head of the Chicago Waste Material Handlers' Union and a man described by the McClellan committee as a "major figure in the Chicago underworld." Ruby had helped organize the union with Leon Cook, whose murder left the vacancy that Paul Dorfman filled.

It is also known that in 1959, Ruby made two trips to Cuba, the second of

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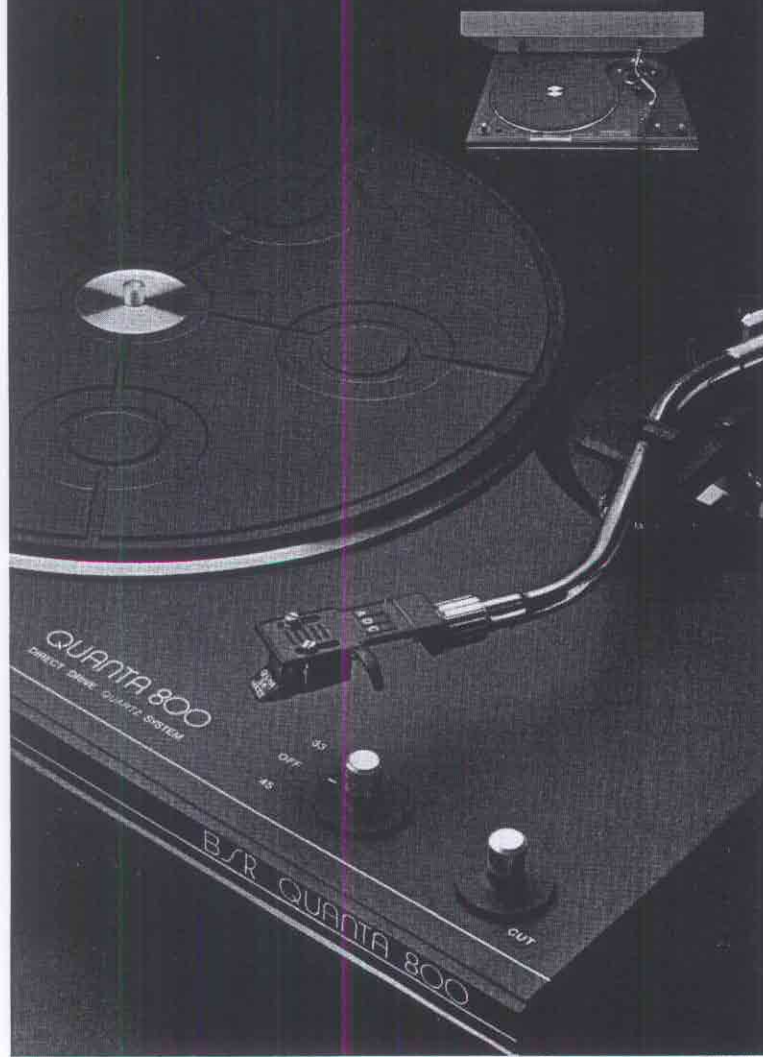
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which, according to FBI reports, involved his offering \$25,000 to one of Castro's arms suppliers in return for the release of three unnamed prisoners. A CIA report dated November 26, 1963, states that Ruby had gone to a Cuban prison where a certain "Santos" was being held and that the two "visited frequently." Santos Trafficante was being detained in Cuba during that period.

FBI records also disclose that in the month before Kennedy was shot, Ruby had phone conversations with Teamster bondsman Irwin S. Weiner, who confirmed to me that he and Ruby were "good friends"; longtime Hoffa henchman Barney Baker, who helped McMaster and Yaras establish the Miami locals; and Nofio Pecora, a close business associate of Marcello's in New Orleans. In addition, FBI reports—written within two weeks after the assassination—uncovered during the research for my book indicate that Ruby, prior to the assassination, had allegedly met with at least two powerful Teamster leaders: fire-bomb expert Chavez and I.B.T. vice-president (and mobster) Anthony Provenzano of New Jersey.

By late February 1964, the Warren Commission had compiled a long confidential memorandum on "Jack Ruby—Background, Friends and Other Pertinent Information." The memorandum noted—amid lengthy sections dealing with many Ruby associates—that "Ruby called Barney Baker, a Chicago hoodlum who was reputedly a muscle man for Jimmy Hoffa . . . to ask Baker to give him assistance" in a labor dispute. The memo also listed the Teamsters union as the first entry in a list of six groups that might have been interested in the assassination of President Kennedy.

A copy of the memorandum was sent to CIA director Richard Helms with a formal request for CIA assistance on the various areas outlined in the memo. The CIA never responded to the request for help in probing the backgrounds of Ruby and his associates. (More than six months later, Helms sent back a five-sentence note.) More important, the CIA never informed the commission of the agency's plans to assassinate Castro and subvert his government—in cooperation with Trafficante, Giancana, Bufalino, Roselli and, perhaps, Hoffa.

In March, a few more interesting connections came to light, and they brought Baker and his close relationship to Hoffa into investigative focus. In the second week of March, the Dallas office of the FBI obtained a complete compilation of Ruby's recent long-distance telephone records. During the same week, the Chicago FBI office was busy, too, with Baker's telephone records—a list of all long-distance telephone calls made on his home phone during the two months before the President's murder.

Those two sets of records provided at least two useful facts: First, Ruby had actually spoken with Baker twice, with Baker having received a second lengthy call from Ruby on November 11, 1963. Second, Baker had been in touch with another old friend of both Hoffa's and Ruby's on the day before the assassination, an acquaintance who happened to be a leading Mob executioner, David Yaras.

Although the FBI had access to that information and the references to Chavez and Provenzano, the Warren Commission never followed up on those investigations.

Ruby's longest testimony before the commission was given during a session in which attendance was substantially reduced. Of the seven commissioners, only Chief Justice Earl Warren and Congressman Gerald R. Ford were present, in addition to staff attorneys J. Lee Rankin, Joseph Ball and Arlen Specter, plus Leon Jaworski, who was there representing the state of Texas.

During a long day of testimony before the commission on June 7, 1964, Ruby discussed his numerous telephone calls in general terms. He did not mention names nor provide any specific information about what was discussed, though he rather defensively conceded that he had been in touch with a number of rather questionable individuals. And he told the commission that the calls were made "a long time prior to what has happened." Ruby maintained that the only purpose of the various phone calls was to get assistance with the labor problems he was having with his night-club competitors.

Why did Ruby think that Hoffa's men could help him with his smalltime night club? What was the purpose of the conversation with Marcello associate Nofio Pecora? Why did the calls occur at the times they did?

During the commission's investigation, Luis Kutner, a Chicago attorney and a former staff lawyer for the Kefauver committee, testified that Ruby had appeared before the Kefauver staff in 1950 and that it was thought that Ruby was "a Syndicate lieutenant who had been sent to Dallas to serve as a liaison for Chicago mobsters." Other commission witnesses stated that Ruby was known as "the payoff man for the Dallas Police Department."

If Ruby was a payoff contact for police officers in Dallas, fronting for the underworld, then, according to Kutner, that relationship had begun in the late Forties, the same period when two of Ruby's friends were reputed Chicago Mob executioners Leonard Patrick (David Yaras' partner) and Paul Roland Jones—both of whom Ruby had seen not long before the assassination.

Disconcertingly enough, however, the Warren Report referred to labor racketeer Paul Dorfman and Mob killers Patrick, Jones and Yaras as character witnesses for Ruby. The commission used Patrick's statement that his old friend was an honest man to corroborate its central conclusion about Ruby's "underworld ties"—that they weren't "significant": "Based on its evaluation of the record . . . the commission believes that the evidence does not establish a significant link between Ruby and organized crime."

One suggestion of a relationship between Hoffa and Ruby came in a conversation I had with Hoffa's son, James P. Hoffa, Jr., in Detroit on December 27, 1977. His law partner was also present. "I think my dad knew Jack Ruby, but from what I understand, he [Ruby] was the kind of guy everybody knew. So what?" Young Hoffa could not recall any specific information on which he based his opinion. In briefly discussing the possibility that his father might have been involved in President Kennedy's assassination, Hoffa said, "It doesn't make any sense. . . . If my dad had decided to kill Kennedy, he would have gotten a gun, walked right up to him and blew his brains out."

Regardless of Ruby's bizarre telephone calls, and regardless of this-guy-knows-that-guy-therefore theories, the subject of a possible connection of Hoffa and the underworld to President Kennedy's assassination is, of course, highly speculative. Ruby, after all, did not kill Kennedy. He killed Oswald. Many more links in the chain of conspiracy would need to be joined before such a claim could be proved. But it is a fact that the research into those links has so far been as poor in methodical investigative work as it has been rich in conspiracy-theory melodrama. While the new evidence being disclosed here does not prove that a conspiracy existed, it does prove that important facts were overlooked, ignored or hidden.

One aspect of the theories linking Hoffa and Kennedy, however, goes far beyond speculation: the cold statistics that represent the flaming heat that the Kennedy Administration brought to bear on Hoffa's criminal empire and on organized crime in general.

Robert Kennedy early established what became known as a hit list of underworld figures and their associates for investigation and prosecution. The list—which included Hoffa, Marcello, Russell Bufalino, Giancana and Trafficante—grew from 40 in early 1961 to more than 2300 by the time he left office in 1964. The number of racketeer indictments totaled 24 during the first six months of the last year of the Eisenhower Administration, 1960; during the first six months of 1963, the number

climbed more than 600 percent, to 171. Similarly, the number of actual convictions had risen more than 350 percent, from a total of 35 in 1960 to 160 in 1963.

Hoffa's own indictments were a tiny fraction of the sweeping Federal effort against I.B.T. corruption: 201 Teamster officials and coconspirators were indicted during the Kennedy period and more than 125 were convicted by the end of 1964.

One victim of Kennedy's wrath, Barney Baker, convicted of extortion and sent to prison, relaxes now in his office suite, provided by his latest employer, Allen Dorfman, Paul's stepson, and talks about the past investigations.

"It does something to you," Baker says. "It gets you sort of nerved up and sick. And you say, 'For what? Am I associated with somebody they don't like? Am I a fat man that looks like a tough man? You know what I mean? They made me a bad man. You know what I mean?'"

Chavez wrote Robert Kennedy the following letter:

Sir:
This is for your information. The undersigned is going to solicit from the membership of our union that each one donate whatever they can afford to maintain, clean, beautify and supply with flowers the grave of Lee Harvey Oswald. You can rest assured contributions will be unanimous.

Sincerely,
Frank Chavez,
Secretary-Treasurer
Teamsters Local 901

Ralph Salerno sums it up when he says, "There is no solid evidence yet that Carlos Marcello, Santos Trafficante, Jimmy Hoffa or any other criminal or criminal associate had been involved in a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy. But regardless of whether they knew or not, they should have built the largest statue in the world to Lee Harvey Oswald. No man has ever done as much damage to this country's war on the underworld as he did. Because the bullet that killed John Kennedy killed Bobby Kennedy's dream to destroy the organized-crime society."

Hoffa seemed to agree when he told a Nashville reporter on the day Ruby murdered Oswald, "Bobby Kennedy is just another lawyer now."

HOFFA LOSES SUPPORT

After Hoffa's two convictions for jury tampering and for pension fraud in 1964, his two biggest supporters remained Marcello and Trafficante; both are reported to have offered Partin \$1,000,000 in return for a signed affidavit recanting his testimony against Hoffa.

Meanwhile, in Detroit, the local underworld was staying neutral on Hoffa's legal problems, just as it had been neutral during the Mob wars in New York. Detroit crime boss Joseph Zerilli was rewarded with a seat on the nine-member commission of the national crime syndicate for the restraint he displayed over the problems on the East Coast.

However, Hoffa's undoing with the Detroit Mob resulted from an affair his wife had been having with Anthony

Cimini, a Detroit mobster. Law-enforcement officials claim that when Hoffa discovered that his wife and Cimini had been double-dating with Zerilli enforcer Anthony Giacalone and Hoffa's former lover Sylvia Pagano, he went directly to Zerilli, pleading for help to resolve his personal problem. Although Cimini was warned to stay away from Hoffa's wife, he continued to see her and so he was allegedly set up, holding several thousand dollars' worth of stolen securities. Cimini went to jail and Mrs. Hoffa went home.

With his loss of prestige for crawling to Zerilli to resolve his wife's affair with Cimini, Hoffa, according to one of his closest aides, was then expected to respond in kind to a wish of the Detroit underworld. That wish was to name Fitzsimmons his successor when he went to jail. Although Hoffa had two other union leaders in mind for the job, he agreed and named Fitzsimmons, who had been a loyal Hoffa supporter for 30 years. Hoffa went to jail and Fitzsimmons took over. The new acting president promptly began to display his independence from Hoffa, appointing Rolland McMaster, Hoffa's former link to Trafficante, the chief executive officer of the Detroit local. That upset Hoffa, who had selected David Johnson to run things in Detroit while he was gone. For the next three years, McMaster and Johnson battled for control, ostensibly for Fitzsimmons and Hoffa. McMaster was among the first Teamster leaders to split with Hoffa; others would follow.

In 1967, Joseph Bonanno was permanently established in Arizona. He had made alliances with both Marcello and Trafficante. Murders, illnesses and a concentrated investigation by Government agents had forced some leadership changes among the top five crime families in New York, including the Bonanno clan, which was hard pressed to find a permanent leader in the East as the Banana Wars continued. The most qualified man for that job was sitting in G Block at Lewisburg Penitentiary: Carmine Galante, who was still fiercely loyal to Bonanno and who enjoyed the prison friendship of Hoffa. Another inmate was the same Anthony Provenzano linked earlier by FBI reports to Ruby. A powerful New Jersey Teamster leader and a captain in the Vito Genovese crime family, Provenzano was a Bonanno enemy and had fistfights with both Galante and Hoffa while in prison. According to Ed Edwards, a prisoner who helped break up the Hoffa-Provenzano fight, Provenzano was shouting and pointing at Hoffa while guards converged on the pair in the prison dining hall: "Old man! Yours is coming! You know it's coming one of these days. . . ."



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In September 1967, a month after Hoffa and Provenzano had their brawl, William Bufalino, Hoffa's longtime ally and lawyer, also broke off his relationship with Hoffa and became a supporter of Fitzsimmons.

"I went to see Hoffa every week until we came to the point that every time he was dissatisfied with something, he had to have somebody to blame," Bufalino says today. "Whatever he had in his mind, if he wanted to squawk about something, he'd always pick on Bill Bufalino."

Hoffa's friendship with Galante and his changing attitude toward his old allies, especially Provenzano and William Bufalino, helped erode his support within the Teamsters union. Provenzano's brother Salvatore was an acting I.B.T. vice-president under Fitzsimmons, in his brother's absence, and thus Hoffa's undiplomatic move jeopardized much of his East Coast support, especially in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, where the Provenzanos wielded enormous power.

Word of Hoffa's relationship with Galante spread quickly, and it put Hoffa in deep trouble with the remnants of the other Mob families in the Northeast. Carlo Gambino, fully aware of Galante's harsh feelings toward him, was more and more relying on the support of Russell Bufalino, who was then a top advisor for the ailing Genovese family, of which Anthony Provenzano was a member. And since Anthony Provenzano and William Bufalino were related by marriage to the Giacalone and Meli Mob families in Detroit, Hoffa's gangster support in his own home town was also being neutralized.

By the end of 1967, Fitzsimmons, McMaster, Anthony Provenzano, William Bufalino and the people close to them had turned against Hoffa. Only a handful of underworld figures had remained loyal to him; Marcello and Trafficante were the most important. With Hoffa playing ball with Galante at Lewisburg, and Bonanno forming a Southern triumvirate with his two counterparts, Hoffa's support was centralized geographically. The crime families in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, forming a Northern coalition and influenced by Detroit's Zerilli, had begun supporting Fitzsimmons soon after Hoffa went to jail and had ceased trying to free him.

The problems of that situation were obvious. If Hoffa was released from prison and resumed his duties as I.B.T. general president, what would happen?

Theoretically, a nationwide Mob war could have exploded out of the Banana Wars, which were still going on in New York. The Northern Mob was willing to fight to keep its extensive interests

in the Teamsters union, and the Southern crime leaders, whose armies were bigger and stronger, were bound to retaliate, trying to claim portions of the union's funds for themselves.

At the center of this tense but quiet drama were Jimmy Hoffa and Richard Nixon.

NIXON STEPS IN

According to one of Hoffa's closest confidants, the Teamster leadership was well aware of the fact that in 1960, Vice-President Nixon had intervened on Hoffa's behalf to quash the land-fraud indictment; thus, it naturally suspected that if Nixon became President, he would arrange for Hoffa's release: "If Fitzsimmons and the other high Teamster officials had seriously wanted Jimmy out of jail in 1969, then their best bet was to elect Nixon President."

Instead, the I.B.T. general executive board—which by then was in almost total opposition to a Hoffa comeback—voted overwhelmingly to support Humphrey. The cozy relationship between Nixon and the Teamsters that had begun in 1960 was put aside, at least for the moment.

After his remarkable political comeback without the support of the I.B.T., the "new Nixon" quickly fulfilled one of his campaign promises: to restore "law and order" in America by appointing an Attorney General who could handle the job.

Having selected his Wall Street law partner, John Mitchell, as his crime-busting head of the Justice Department, Nixon balanced his Administration by taking aboard Murray Chotiner as a Presidential advisor. An astute political trickster, Chotiner had numerous known connections with the underworld, particularly in the South and among the Marcello clan. With Mitchell and Chotiner, Nixon began a short-lived "war" against the underworld.

Both Marcello and Trafficante survived Nixon's war against organized crime rather well. Trafficante came through the Nixon years with an unblemished record, while Marcello had serious legal problems only once. Indicted for assaulting an FBI agent two years before Nixon took office, Marcello, in 1969, was found guilty and sentenced to two years in prison. But the trial judge, citing the mobster's "poor health," reduced the sentence to six months in a prison hospital, after U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black intervened on Marcello's behalf.

Chotiner and Marcello's friend Irving Davidson, a Washington, D.C., public-relations specialist, had become friends, and both were active in the Free Hoffa movement. So when Nixon was elected,

(continued on page 266)

HOFFA WARS (continued from page 262)

"The stage was set for the restricted commutation of Hoffa's prison sentence five months later."

the chiefs of the Southern organized-crime alliance were confident that Hoffa would be released.

In 1969, the first year of the Nixon Administration, Chotiner told Davidson that Hoffa would be out of jail by Thanksgiving with a Presidential pardon and that approval had come "directly from the Oval Office."

Others got the word as well, and such talk so infuriated Federal investigator Walter Sheridan, the man most responsible for Hoffa's downfall, that he called his journalist friend Clark Mollenhoff, who had accepted a job as special assistant to Nixon.

"It's all set for the Nixon Administration to spring Jimmy Hoffa," Sheridan said angrily. "I'm told Murray Chotiner is handling it with the Las Vegas Mob. John Mitchell and John Ehrlichman [Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs] have something to do with it, and I'm told that it has been cleared with Nixon."

When Mollenhoff inquired around,

an Ehrlichman assistant told him, "Mr. Ehrlichman says you should not concern yourself with the Hoffa matter. He is handling it himself with John Mitchell."

Later, during a brief telephone conversation, Ehrlichman informed Mollenhoff, "The President does not want you in this. It is highly sensitive. John Mitchell and I have it under control."

But Thanksgiving came and went, and Hoffa was still in jail. What happened?

Davidson explains that Chotiner told him that the President's special counsel, Charles Colson, had persuaded Nixon to scuttle the idea. "Fitzsimmons was one of the few labor leaders supporting Nixon, and Colson wanted to keep that support," Davidson says.

That is not a very convincing reason.

A more likely explanation for Nixon's 11th-hour decision not to pardon Hoffa at that time was that Mitchell, not Colson, had persuaded him not to.

"It was generally known at the White House that Mitchell had been friends

with Frank Fitzsimmons for some time and had been meeting with him fairly regularly after Nixon was elected in November 1968," says a former member of Nixon's legal staff. "Mitchell had the kind of clout with the President that if he wanted Hoffa out of jail, he would have been out—no matter what Colson or anyone else said. . . ."

"There was no reason back then for anyone to have a lot of confidence in the fact that Fitzsimmons was going to be a firm supporter of the President. They never even met each other until late 1970. But whatever Fitzsimmons said to the Attorney General, you can bet that it was something big. Hoffa was supposed to be out in 1969."

It is quite possible that Fitzsimmons, during his sessions with Mitchell, openly discussed the dangerous situation brewing between the Northern and the Southern crime families. If that was the case, Mitchell must have clearly understood the implications of Hoffa's release: A nationwide full-scale war could break out within the criminal syndicate. That was something the Attorney General and the law-and-order Nixon Administration had to worry about.

Hoffa remained in prison and the decision to keep him there may well have averted the North-South crime



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war. Union funds again began flowing South in an effort to buy off Hoffa's support.

HOFFA'S EARLY RELEASE

On June 21, 1971, the White House persuaded Hoffa to resign all of his union offices in return for promises that he would receive an early release from prison. Apparently, the White House and the Teamsters felt that Hoffa's support had been neutralized. An indication of that occurred the following month, when, after Fitzsimmons was elected as the general president of the union at the I.B.T. convention in Miami, both Marcello and Trafficante were able to swing two vice-president slots for their associates. In addition, Salvatore Provenzano officially had replaced his brother in a third vice-presidency.

That set the stage for the restricted commutation of Hoffa's prison sentence five months later, which barred him from union office until 1980. Hoffa was simply no longer a threat.

Just as the Castro murder plots may have allied the Teamsters with organized crime and the CIA, the Hoffa issue had drawn the White House, the Teamsters and organized crime closer together. Although the Justice Department successfully prosecuted associates of Marcello's and Trafficante's—all for misusing Teamster funds—Mitchell was personally responsible for numerous aborted prosecutions of underworld figures during his four-year tenure. Several investigations of Teamster officials—including one of Fitzsimmons' son Richard—were dropped without explanation. Simultaneously, Nixon was authorizing the pardons of notorious organized-crime leaders, such as Angelo DeCarlo, for whose conviction the Justice Department had spent millions.

As a result, Fitzsimmons, the I.B.T.'s general executive board and the Mob gave Nixon their full support during his 1972 re-election campaign. The only I.B.T. board member who refused to back Nixon, Harold Gibbons, was named a White House "enemy" and had his income-tax return audited the following year.

Also during the 1972 campaign, columnist Jack Anderson reported that Teamster pension-fund advisor Allen Dorfman chipped in a \$100,000 contribution, which he gave illegally to Mitchell. Dorfman waved around the receipt signed by Mitchell at Dorfman's pension-fraud trial in 1972. And, to top things off, when the Watergate burglars began blackmailing the White House, by demanding cash for their silence, it was allegedly the Mob that provided the now-famous hush-money payments starting in January 1973, which Nixon said would be "no problem" to raise. Federal investigators later confirmed that they believe the deliveries had been arranged

by Fitzsimmons, Anthony Provenzano (out of prison since 1970) and Dorfman.

THE FINAL DAYS: ANOTHER VERSION

During the final months of the Nixon Administration, General Alexander Haig, White House Chief of Staff, conducted a secret investigation into whether or not Nixon had ever been mixed up with organized crime. A special investigator for the Army Criminal Investigation Command was assigned to the project. According to *The Washington Star*, two years later, on December 5, 1976:

Haig wanted some things checked out on the President.

It involved [John] Caulfield and [Anthony] Ulasewicz. . . . Haig wanted to know whether Caulfield and Ulasewicz had been to the Far East and carried back any money for Nixon. He also wanted to know whether Nixon had ever been mixed up with organized crime. . . .

"I never could find that Caulfield and Ulasewicz had gone to the Far East," said the Army investigator, "but in my verbal reports to [the CIC chief], I pointed out that in those days an American didn't need a passport to get into Vietnam. . . .

"I concluded that they probably had gone to Vietnam, and I considered there were strong indications of a history of Nixon connections with money from organized crime."

Having ordered the investigation, and presumably having received the investigator's report that "there were strong indications of a history of Nixon connections with money from organized crime," General Haig, as far as is known, pursued the matter no further. But it may have contributed to Haig's decision to literally take over the White House during Nixon's final days.

A former Nixon aide, not privy to the Haig investigation, says that one of his associates in the White House mentioned to him sometime "during the impeachment summer" that "someone high up, maybe Haig," was interested in Nixon's possible "organized-crime involvements."

"The whole goddamn thing is too frightening to think about," says a Justice Department official. "We're talking about the President of the United States . . . a man who pardoned organized-crime figures after millions were spent by the Government putting them away, a guy who's had these connections since he was a Congressman in the Forties. . . .

"I guess the real shame is that we'll never know the whole story; it'll never come out."

The House of Representatives had scheduled Nixon's impeachment trial for the third week of August, but the hearings never began. Instead, Haig

quietly orchestrated the release of the damning June 23, 1972, tape transcripts, in which Nixon was heard discussing the Watergate cover-up, and that forced the President to give in and resign on August 9, 1974.

THE STRUGGLE TO COME BACK

Like Nixon, Hoffa never operated as a loner—a description often applied to each of them by the press. The successes and failures of both men were in large part determined by who their friends were at each point in their lives. Besides Fitzsimmons, two other men were of special importance to Hoffa's rise to power: Johnson and McMaster, dissident truckers who joined and cleaned up their Detroit Local 299 in 1935. Along with Fitzsimmons, they were major reasons for the early organizing successes of Hoffa, who became president of the local in 1946.

When McMaster—by his appointment as head of Local 299 in April 1967—became the reason for the split between Hoffa and Fitzsimmons, the war between the two men had been fought by proxies McMaster and Johnson, who was still a strong Hoffa man and challenging for local control. However, after McMaster sent the then imprisoned Hoffa a letter, warning him to "stay out of union politics" and the affairs of Local 299, Hoffa began to orchestrate McMaster's ouster. The opportunity came after Johnson pretended that he had been beaten by a McMaster organizer. As a result, McMaster was purged.

"It was all caused by Jimmy's chopping me up behind the scenes," says McMaster.

Because McMaster had become Fitzsimmons' top enforcer in the Midwest, the I.B.T. general president selected him to head a special organizing task force to battle a rival union and to "watch Hoffa." Both problems were handled in a similar fashion. According to one of McMaster's former organizers, rebel owner-operator truckers, dissident Teamsters and Hoffa partisans alike had their homes and automobiles bombed allegedly by members of McMaster's task force. And during the two-year history of the organizing division, 1972-1974, employers targeted for campaigns became victims of terrorist raids and extortion schemes. In February 1974, McMaster's unit was disbanded after spending more than \$1,300,000 of union money while bringing in only 750 new members. It had merely served as a smoke screen to get employers to pay for labor peace, a charge of which McMaster previously had been convicted.

That same month, the owner-operators were shut down nationwide for the second time in three months, protesting fuel prices. The massive demonstration also became a protest against Fitzsimmons, especially in Detroit. The leaders

of the shutdown had aligned themselves with Hoffa, who was then promising them better conditions if he returned as I.B.T. president.

By then, Hoffa's alliance with the rebels, open attacks on Fitzsimmons and his appeal against the district court that had sustained Nixon's commutation restrictions (Hoffa had begun fighting the clauses that barred him from union elections soon after he was released) had alarmed both the Teamsters high command and the Mob.

In mid-1974, according to a former McMaster organizer, Fitzsimmons gave McMaster a "blank check" to make sure Hoffa did not return to power in Local 299, the necessary steppingstone to the I.B.T. presidency. No matter who was responsible, violence against Hoffa supporters soon increased. Johnson, who was in a position to turn his Local 299 presidency over to Hoffa, had his cabin cruiser blown out of the water. According to a Federal attorney in Detroit, the top suspect was one of McMaster's men. On July 10, 1975—20 days before Hoffa disappeared—Richard Fitzsimmons had his union car bombed.

Possibly the bombers were trying to stir up enough violence to give Frank Fitzsimmons justification for throwing Local 299 into trusteeship—where it had been long before the reformers, now rulers, had cleaned it up. Fitzsimmons could then bring in his own batch of officers and close Hoffa out forever. Or possibly the bombing was a theatrical device to set the stage—and confuse the audience—for Hoffa's disappearance. Whatever the motivation, FBI sources told me that two of McMaster's top organizers are the leading suspects in the car bombing.

A few weeks before the bombing, an interesting meeting was noticed at an airport near Detroit. According to an eyewitness, two men climbed out of a private plane and were greeted by McMaster, who drove them away and brought them back several hours later. One of the two men was identified as Anthony Provenzano. While the significance of that meeting could be somewhat better understood a few weeks later (on July 30, 1975), other events taking place at that time were quietly sealing the fate of Jimmy Hoffa.

THE CASTRO PLOTTERS ARE KILLED

In Washington, a Senate investigation of the CIA-underworld plots to kill Castro was moving ahead. Senator Frank Church was the chairman of the committee investigating those allegations.

The Church committee learned that the CIA had obtained the services of Robert Maheu and gangster John Roselli, whom Maheu had originally met through his friend attorney Edward Bennett Williams. Through Roselli, the CIA was introduced to Sam Giancana, who

persuaded the man with the Cuban contacts—Santos Trafficante—to join the conspiracy. According to a *Time* article, published on June 9, 1975, the committee had received information that Russell Bufalino and his associates were also involved with the CIA.

Committee pressure immediately fell upon Maheu, who refused to say anything unless he was granted immunity from prosecution: "I knew from the beginning that I was going to be the fall guy if this ever came out," Maheu told me, "and I was ready to deny everything Roselli and Giancana were going to tell the committee." There is a strong impli-

cation in Maheu's statement that he believed one or both of the mobsters would admit their involvement in the Castro plots—and perhaps more.

Although Roselli later testified, Giancana never had a chance to. On June 19, 1975, while cooking dinner in the kitchen of his suburban Chicago bungalow, he was shot six times in the face by an assailant who escaped without a trace. Roselli was found dismembered in a 55-gallon oil drum the following year. He had last been seen on a boat owned by an associate of Trafficante's. In 1970 and 1971, two of Russell Bufalino's partners who had also cooperated with the CIA in

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the plots, Salvatore Granello and James Plumeri, had been murdered.

Although Chicago investigators thought that the motive for Giancana's slaying was his demand for more of the Syndicate's slot-machine action in the Caribbean, former contract killer Charles Crimaldi and several Church committee staff people had other theories.

Claiming that the mobsters who had worked with the CIA were involved in Giancana's murder, Crimaldi told his biographer, John Kidner, an official of the Bureau of Narcotics, "Momo [Giancana] knew too much, and was ready to talk to the Senate investigating committee about the Chicago underworld's part in the CIA assassination plots against Fidel Castro."

"I told him [Crimaldi] that that would take some proving," Kidner wrote. "He didn't bother to prove it but replied: 'I don't need proof. I say he was hit by the CIA guy. He didn't pull the trigger himself. He used one of our guys [in the underworld]. An import.'"

Crimaldi, it will be recalled, is the same gunman turned informant whom Government officials characterized as absolutely reliable. It was Crimaldi, too, who strongly implied that Hoffa had been the "original liaison" between the CIA and the underworld and that Hoffa had first brought Russell Bufalino and his associates into the Castro plots.

Within a week of Giancana's death, Edward Partin, the key Government witness against Hoffa in his 1964 jury-tampering trial, flew to Washington and met with Senator John L. McClellan.

"Friends of mine suggested that I go," says Partin. "They wanted me to tell all I knew about Hoffa's involvement with the Mafia people who were trying to kill Castro. I thought that it was time the truth came out, and the Church committee wanted to hear it."

But for unknown reasons, Partin was never called to testify in either open or closed session. If Hoffa had intended to tell the committee what he knew, he never got a chance.

THE DEATH OF HOFFA

On the final day of Hoffa's life, Russell Bufalino was driven into Detroit early in the morning by Frank Sheeran, a Delaware Teamster boss who was a longtime friend of Hoffa's. Along with several other union rebels, Sheeran was a co-plaintiff in Hoffa's suit against the commutation restrictions, and thus had Hoffa's trust. According to Government investigators, later that day, Sheeran allegedly picked up three of Provenzano's men—Salvatore Briguglio, Gabriel Briguglio and Thomas Andretta—at a nearby airport and took them to the temporary residence of Hoffa's "foster son," I.B.T.

272 general organizer Chuck O'Brien.

O'Brien had been working across the street from Local 299, where he shared an office and a secretary with William Bufalino. By 11:30 that morning, both O'Brien and William Bufalino had left Teamster headquarters. O'Brien was running errands; Bufalino was making arrangements for his daughter's wedding.

At one o'clock, Hoffa left his cottage at Lake Orion, Michigan. He stopped to see a business associate, who had already gone to lunch. Talking with an employee in the office, Hoffa mentioned that he was going to a meeting where Provenzano and Provenzano's Mob associate Anthony Giacalone would be present. Arriving a half hour early for his 2:30 meeting—which he apparently thought was to be at two—Hoffa had to wait and must have thought he had been stood up.

While the ex-Teamster boss fretted, O'Brien was with Giacalone at a nearby athletic club. Earlier, according to O'Brien's attorney James Burdick, O'Brien had delivered a fish packed in dry ice to I.B.T. vice-president Robert Holmes. The fish was in a "leaky plastic container," according to Burdick. O'Brien was driving a car that belonged to Giacalone's son Joey. "Because the fish blood and slime got all over the back seat of young Giacalone's car, O'Brien then went to a nearby car wash to get the stains washed off," Burdick says.

The Government later seized Giacalone's car, charging that O'Brien "had used the car to lure Jimmy Hoffa into a meeting with his abductors." Tracking dogs detected Hoffa's scent in the car.

A Michigan law-enforcement official's theory is that "Hoffa was a sitting duck for O'Brien. He had plenty of time to pick up Hoffa and take him to the site where the meeting was supposed to be held with Provenzano and Giacalone. And Hoffa had no reason not to trust O'Brien."

It was alleged, and then refuted, that O'Brien met with Giacalone in the lobby of the Southfield Athletic Club about 2:15, just 15 minutes before Hoffa was picked up. Burdick recently confirmed to me that the meeting did, indeed, take place. "O'Brien's kids' birthdays were coming up, and Giacalone wanted to give them their presents," Burdick says. "During the three-minute meeting, Giacalone handed O'Brien an envelope with \$100 in it—\$50 for each kid. . . . Now, O'Brien volunteered this information to the FBI. If he was involved in some conspiracy to kill Hoffa with Giacalone, do you think he would have freely admitted getting money from him just minutes before Hoffa disappeared?"

The Government believes that O'Brien arrived at the Red Fox immediately afterward and drove Hoffa to the home of the friends with whom O'Brien was staying, a four-minute drive from the

restaurant. Did Giacalone accompany O'Brien when O'Brien picked up Hoffa? Government investigators think not. Giacalone's attorney claims he was with his client in his law offices—in the same building as the athletic club—from 2:30 to four that afternoon. However, the Government is investigating the possibility that Giacalone's brother was with O'Brien.

Although investigators do not agree as to whether or not O'Brien was alone when he picked up Hoffa, an eyewitness has told the FBI of seeing Hoffa climb into a maroon car driven by a man fitting O'Brien's description.

"I never did anything to hurt Jimmy Hoffa," O'Brien insists.

A Detroit government official says, "We think O'Brien should've amended that statement to say he wouldn't have knowingly done anything to hurt Hoffa. It's quite possible that O'Brien simply thought he was taking Hoffa to just another meeting."

Government investigators believe that the house in which O'Brien was staying was the site of Hoffa's murder—though O'Brien's hosts are under no suspicion—and that his killers had flown in earlier in the afternoon and had been taken to the house by Sheeran.

Within a few minutes of his arrival at that house, Hoffa was dead.

According to an inmate at Trenton State Prison—Ralph Picardo, who later told the Government that he had been given the details of the murder by one of the alleged killers and his brother, Stephen Andretta—four men were waiting for Hoffa inside the house: the Briguglio brothers, Andretta and Sheeran. All were associates of Bufalino's and Provenzano's. Two secret internal reports prepared by the Government, one in January 1976 and a 38-page document dated February 15, 1977—both based on Picardo's information—give the details as they are known to investigators.

Picardo made two other allegations: Sheeran had driven Russell Bufalino to Detroit on the day Hoffa was killed. And it was, according to Picardo's information, which has been accepted by Government sources I've interviewed, Russell Bufalino who authorized Hoffa's murder via Provenzano.

Earlier, Picardo had told investigators that after Hoffa was killed, he was stuffed into a 55-gallon oil drum and was taken on a Gateway Transportation truck to an unknown destination.

That same day, McMaster was in Gary, Indiana, meeting with Gateway executives. McMaster's brother-in-law is the head of Gateway's Detroit steel division, and he confirmed his alibi.

As to the final disposition of Hoffa's body, Government informant Crimaldi told Kidner, "Hoffa is now a goddamn

hubcap. His body was crushed and smelted."

O'Brien, oddly enough, made a similar remark several months after Hoffa's disappearance in front of several witnesses: "Hoffa is now just a fender, being driven around by someone."

If such a plan was made to dispose of Hoffa's body, the reason for the Government's inquiries about Gateway Transportation and oil drums in subsequent weeks becomes clearer. Gateway executives, including McMaster's brother-in-law, were out of town on the day of the murder—though Federal investigators do *not* imply that they took part in any conspiracy. McMaster, who has been linked to the company as well as to Trafficante, says, "If I was involved in that [Hoffa] thing in any way, shape or form, I'd be heading for the hills."

On September 8, 1975, Giacalone and Provenzano appeared before the Federal grand jury investigating the Hoffa murder. They pleaded the Fifth Amendment. On December fourth—after McMaster's brother-in-law and other Gateway executives testified—McMaster, Sheeran, the Briguglio brothers and Thomas Andretta appeared before the same grand jury. They, too, pleaded the Fifth. Those same five men were also represented by William Bufalino.

UNCOVERING HIS TRACKS

The notoriety of the Hoffa case unleashed a torrent of activity on the part of law-enforcement agencies. To the extent that the Hoffa investigation yielded no solid evidence, officials dug even harder for evidence of other crimes past and present. Provenzano was eventually convicted of extortion and later charged with the murder of union rebel Anthony Castellito in 1961. He has since been found guilty and is serving a life term. Giacalone was convicted of tax fraud and sentenced to ten years in prison. Sal Briguglio was indicted for the same murder as Provenzano but did not go to trial: Standing outside a New York restaurant 22 months later, he was approached by two men who pumped five bullets into his head and a sixth one into his chest. O'Brien has been convicted twice—once for extortion. He is appealing both convictions. Gabriel Briguglio and Thomas Andretta are under investigation for loan sharking and labor racketeering. Sheeran was charged with tax fraud because of a leased car that he had claimed as a business expense. (Interestingly, the Government believes that that "business expense" car was the same one Sheeran used to drive Russell Bufalino into Detroit the day Hoffa disappeared—and it may also have been the car used to pick up Hoffa's killers at the airport.)

Russell Bufalino did not escape prosecution, either. In August 1977, he was convicted of extortion and received a

four-year sentence, which he is now serving.

Until mid-1978, only McMaster had escaped prosecution. But, in a philosophical interview with me, he was not optimistic: "I've watched us [the Teamsters] for some 40 years now. At one time, we were the bosses here in Detroit and Michigan; and, truthfully, we got a lot of governors elected. We put in prosecutors, judges and everyone else. . . .

"You can't believe what's happened to us. Now we're getting chopped up again. It's just like an FBI agent told me. He said, 'Mac, until we get to the bottom of the Watergate thing, the Nixon deal and Hoffa's disappearance, we're going to hurt everybody.'"

Ironically, the impetus for union reform and a new concern about organized crime was the disappearance of Jimmy Hoffa.

SUMMING UP

So, then: Why does the Government believe that the Mob, in the person of one of its most powerful chieftains, Russell Bufalino, ordered the killing of Hoffa? What did Hoffa know or what was he going to do that made his elimination necessary?

Was it because, as many have theorized, Hoffa meant to recapture power in the Teamsters union and wreak havoc on the order imposed by the Mob—an ambition that seemed highly unlikely to be fulfilled, given Hoffa's estrangement from the centers of power at the end?

Or is an answer to be found in the consistent cast of characters that threaded its way through Hoffa's life—and through 15 years of American political violence? The men implicated in his murder were the same men whose names have appeared over and over again in the alleged plots to kill Castro and possibly John F. Kennedy: Trafficante, Russell Bufalino, Marcello and Provenzano. There is therefore considerable reason to assume that Hoffa was removed for reasons more complicated than that of mere ambition—especially if his murder is seen in the context of the murders of Giancana a month earlier and of Roselli 13 months later. Both were mobsters; both had been intimately involved with the Castro plots; both were summoned to testify before Congress on their roles in the plots.

Ironically enough, William Bufalino, with whom I spoke on October 25, 1976, may have inadvertently pointed a finger in the right direction. He was attempting to suggest that the Mob had nothing to do with Hoffa's murder, preferring to shift the blame onto the Government, but he put it this way: "Tell the FBI to look into the CIA. And tell the CIA to look into the FBI. *Then* you'll have the answer [to the Hoffa case]." Bufalino added that it was his belief that Hoffa's

murder was related to those of Giancana and Roselli.

An Ohio Syndicate figure, Leo Mocerri, who had given a Government agent information about Hoffa's fate, echoed Bufalino's thought: According to an internal FBI report, Mocerri said a few days after the disappearance that "Hoffa's death was the same thing that happened to a man named Giancana," that both were killed because of the Church committee's closed hearings on the CIA-underworld plots to murder Castro. Mocerri claimed he somehow learned that Hoffa had been involved. After his second meeting with the agent, and before the end of August 1975, Mocerri disappeared. His car was found at a motel in Fairlawn, Ohio.

"We've got this horrendous maze of information about what is probably the most sensitive and ominous thing we ever dredged up on the Church committee: the CIA's use of some of the nation's most dangerous Mafia leaders to plot the assassination of Fidel Castro," says a Senator on the Church committee investigating alleged assassination plots against foreign leaders. "This mysterious area of organized crime and intelligence activity was deliberately concealed from the Warren Commission."

A Congressman serving on the House Select Committee investigating the assassination of President John F. Kennedy says, "The greatest difficulty will remain [in] conceiving of someone or some group who could have pulled it off and gotten away with it for so long, if, in fact, Oswald did not do it alone. . . . It's a monstrous question: not just who the hell could have done such a thing but who the hell could have had the power and, beyond that, the ability to do it and not get caught? . . . Who, if anyone, in the early Sixties had that capability?"

A senior Justice Department official sums it up: "What you're talking about when you speak of a purported Kennedy conspiracy—beyond someone with both an absolutely murderous and consuming rage toward President Kennedy's being in the White House and a strong conviction that the Government could be effectively altered through killing J.F.K.—is a conspirator or conspirators who would have had an enormous ability, and no doubt considerable past experience, in not just evading but, more importantly, short-circuiting the standard investigative resources of the Federal Government. . . . You'd be talking about someone who knew Washington—Washington power, politics—awfully well; someone with money . . . and, of course, someone with some underlings who were awfully damned disciplined. Someone who thought his most threatening enemies had to be killed. . . ."

Welcome back, Jimmy Hoffa.