

There is a familiar odor once again emanating from the White House—the unmistakable stench of another cover-up. This time it's an attempt to conceal Presidential involvement in an intricate assassination conspiracy that promises to make Nixon's peccadillos pale by comparison. Genesis offers its readers the first in a series of behind-the-scenes reports on what may be the scandal of the century. The author, Tony Scaduto, is no stranger to this type of expose. In an impressive career of over 20 years of investigative journalism, Scaduto has taken on the high and mighty in national politics and organized crime, from the White House down through the echelons of the Mafia.

# BLOOD MONEY SCANDAL: PRESIDENT FORD'S ASSASSINATION COVER-UP

Once upon an assassination nightmare, Gerald Ford—then a Congressman—hired himself a writer and coined a few bucks out of a book he published. He called his first and only literary effort *Portrait of the Assassin*—an insider's story about the Warren Commission's so-called investigation.

The book didn't do very well. In fact, it's not likely too many people have ever heard of it because by the time it was published in late 1965, the polls were showing that a majority of Americans believed the Warren Commission had suppressed the truth about John Kennedy's murder. *Portrait* was no more than a rehash of the official verdict, that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed the President. The book was a whitewash of the whitewash, most naturally, because as we shall see Jerry Ford was instrumental in the assassination cover-up.

But Mr. Ford is President now. And he's negotiating to sell rights to the book to a production company backed by MGM, which in turn is trying to peddle it to CBS-TV as a three-hour documentary. No figures have been mentioned at this writing, but based on past experience it's at least a million-dollar property.

Does that news leave you with the feeling that the honorable Mr. Ford is going to get rich on Jack Kennedy's blood? Well, you're entitled.

Frankly, that's my gut reaction. Sitting in my workshop, the bookshelves behind me straining under the load of 26 volumes of the Warren Commission hearings and its Final Report, plus a dozen books by Mark Lane and Edward Jay Epstein and others who've demolished the cover-up, I alternate between intense anger and the need to vomit.

Most especially since, as I write, President Ford has just engineered another

whitewash, the suppression of evidence that the CIA had plotted and probably attempted the assassination of Fidel Castro and the possibility that John Kennedy was murdered as a direct result of these schemes. Take your choice:

Possibility number one: Kennedy was murdered by CIA honchos who were enraged that American support of the Bay of Pigs invasion was pulled back by Kennedy at the last moment and who were doubly enraged that Kennedy and younger brother Bobby had ordered an end to all attempts on Castro's life.

Possibility number two: Kennedy was murdered by Castro agents in retaliation for CIA attempts to kill Fidelista.

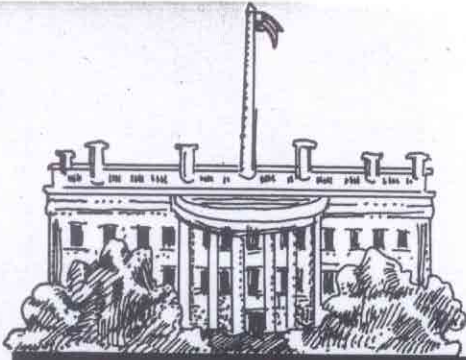
There is a direct relationship, a decade-long bridge of deception, stretching between the Warren Commission and the Rockefeller Commission. And Jerry Ford is the guy trying to prop up the supports at each end, trying to keep the bridge from crumbling down and revealing to us all that murder, even of a President, is an official policy of the intelligence government that secretly rules American politics and foreign policy. (In the past only the paranoiacs and the vultures—Ford has used both words to describe them—seriously questioned the Warren Commission's conclusions, but now it's difficult to find too many people who believe the official verdict.)

Ford seems anxious to suppress evidence of CIA assassination plots because he may be afraid that full disclosure would prove the CIA is so completely out of control that it played some role in the murder of President Kennedy. And if such evidence came to light then the Warren Commission's web of lies and distortions and suppression of evidence would unravel. And Jerry Ford, as chief architect of the Commission's conclusions, might be destroyed.

By Tony Scaduto

HE GIVES ANSON A RUN FOR "RIP OFF" KING AND CREDITS EVEN FEWER SOURCES.

... President Ford has just engineered another whitewash, the suppression of evidence that the CIA plotted the assassination of Fidel Castro and that John Kennedy was murdered as a direct result . . . "



Nixon, remember, was dumped because of the cover-up of Watergate crimes, not the crimes themselves; Ford may fear the same fate.

A number of details must be ironed out before Ford signs a contract for the dramatization of his book. One, of course, is the amount of loot he will be paid. Another point is whether Ford will have the right to "approve" the script (meaning protect the cover-up?). And, most vital is whether the production will be broadcast before or after the 1976 Presidential election.

So far, Ford hasn't shown himself to be the master manipulator that his self-impeached predecessor had been. Nixon and his storm troopers had so completely turned the American public into puppets dancing to the Presidential pull of the strings that he was reelected with the largest majority in history even as he was attempting to destroy the American political process and civil liberties. "The public," as one writer put it, "had become entranced, in politics as in entertainment, with the processes of its own deception."

But Ford has been unable or unwilling to try and pull off the same sort of coup. Ford's political bumbling, his insensitivity, shows strongly in a remark he made to novelist John Hersey, who spent a week with the President for a long magazine article. Briefly discussing the offers from MGM, Ford said his book was now a very saleable property because of "all these charges of assassination plots against Castro and everything . . ."

Ford may very well push ahead for a pre-election airdate on the theory that his membership on the Warren Commission will add a positive factor to his image and bring him a lot more votes. But reviving the book may (I hope) jerk down the bridge and expose the worms scurrying for cover under the rocks on

the White House lawn. It may be wise for Gerald Ford to start looking for his own protective rock because the TV production and a projected reprinting of the book is certain to subject him to a rigorous examination of his role in the Kennedy assassination investigation, of his attitudes and his complicity in the cover-up and, yes, his lies.

One lie, first. When he was being questioned at his confirmation hearings for Vice President before the Senate Judiciary Committee on November 5, 1973, Ford was asked why he had published his book and had provided material for a *Life* magazine article on the Warren Commission even though he and all the members of the Commission had agreed not to publish or release any of the proceedings. Ford, under oath, replied that he "did not use in that book any material other than the material that was in the 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits that were made public."

In truth, the opening chapter of Ford's book was a dramatization of the transcript of a secret executive session of the Commission which was not declassified by the National Archives until June, 1974—seven months after Ford lied about it and eight years after he printed it in his book.

Ford's use of that transcript reveals, as well as anything else, his one aim as a member of the Commission: to dispel damaging rumors that Oswald was working for the FBI or CIA, to insure that the American people would not learn anything that would make them doubt the sanctity of American institutions. Ford told Edward Jay Epstein, author of *Inquest*, that the most vital function of the Commission was not to get at the truth but to put the lie to all the rumors that were bringing discredit to government agencies.

In reprinting the secret transcript of

that session Ford carefully edited all the parts of it that could have embarrassed Commission members. The actual transcript reveals that the meeting was called to discuss what Ford later called "an astounding problem"—strong evidence from the Attorney General of Texas, the DA and several other officials of Dallas, that Oswald was an FBI informant known as S-172 and was paid \$200 a month. According to Ford's blue-penciled version of the transcript, the Commission met to discuss how to handle these "rumors." Ford claimed that after a long discussion of how best to approach J. Edgar Hoover without giving him the idea that the Commission really believed the "dirty rumor," as Commission Counsel Lee Rankin called it, the members decided to investigate the evidence independently of Hoover. That is, to dig thoroughly into the evidence no matter who got hurt. That's precisely what was done, Ford claimed in his book. "Never has a crime been so thoroughly investigated," he wrote.

Actually, the section of transcript Ford edited reveals that Rankin was afraid of Hoover and said so. "What I was fearful of was the mere process (of an independent investigation) will cause him to think we were really investigating him." Earl Warren then said, "If we are investigating him, we are investigating the rumor against him." And he added, "We are investigating him, that is true."

The audacity behind such a move deeply troubled the Commission members and they ran off into a discussion of whether FBI agents could have hired Oswald without informing Hoover—creating a defense for Hoover should it turn out that Oswald was indeed on the FBI payroll. Ford never printed any of this.

Eventually, John J. McCloy, former CIA director, complained about the situation. "The time is almost overdue

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for us to have a better perspective of the FBI investigation than we now have," he commented. Rankin apologized for not having carried the investigation beyond the FBI reports and explained the difficulties he'd had with the FBI: "They have no problem. They have decided that it is Oswald who committed the assassination, they have decided that no one else was involved . . . ." Ford never printed that.

In his book Ford flatly lies when he writes that "where doubts were cast on any United States agency, independent experts would be hired and the investigation conducted in such a way as to avoid reliance on a questioned authority." That was certainly not done, although Ford would have us believe it was. The possibility that Oswald was an FBI employee was dismissed with a simple statement from Hoover that it was a lie; the possibility that Oswald was a CIA agent was dismissed by a disclaimer from the CIA.

The Warren Commission, instead of conducting the most thorough investigation in history, actually relied most heavily for its expert sleuths on the FBI and the CIA—the two agencies under constant suspicion in secret sessions. Those agencies investigated themselves. And got a clean bill of health in the Warren Commission report. The FBI's snap decision that Oswald killed Kennedy and acted alone was bought by Ford and every other Commission member, all of whom knew they had no hard evidence on which to base that conclusion.

But that's all right, apparently, because Ford's concern about the possible damage to American institutions like the FBI and CIA was dispelled, along with the "rumors" that have been growing into harder evidence as the years go by and as more suppressed documents are pried out of the National Arc-

hives.

One of those recently released documents concerns the testimony of Jacqueline Kennedy. Reading through Ford's book, you'd never know the widow had been called before the Commission; there isn't a single mention of her testimony. Even the published transcript of her testimony is deficient; at the point where Mrs. Kennedy testified about the bullet that struck the President in the head, the transcript intrudes with the phrase "Reference to wounds deleted." Ford, of course, went along with that suppression and didn't refer to it in his book because it would have raised serious doubts about the official political verdict that Kennedy had been shot from behind. Jacqueline Kennedy's deleted testimony is significant:

"I was trying to hold his hair on. But from the front there was nothing. I suppose there must have been. But from the back you could see, you know, you were trying to hold his hair on and his skull on."

Her words were highly significant because the film of the shooting shows quite clearly that the bullet which took off the top of Kennedy's head came from the front, as Jackie Kennedy seemed to be saying. That shot splattered two trailing police motorcycles; the Presidential car was traveling too slowly for Kennedy's blood to have hit those cops unless he'd been shot from in front. But Ford, and the full Commission, suppressed that evidence.

What worked in the Kennedy investigation in 1964, Ford may have thought from his insider's work on the cover-up, would be effective in the CIA investigation in 1975. Like President Johnson, who admitted appointing a special commission to investigate JFK's death in order to "protect the credibility of American institutions," Ford no doubt

believed that by appointing the Rockefeller Commission he could more easily contain and suppress evidence that the CIA had been and was still engaged in an enormous number of illegal acts. One clue that Ford intended a glossing over of the CIA lies in the character of his choice for executive director of the Rockefeller Commission, David W. Belin. A lawyer for the Warren Commission who worked closely with Ford, later chairman of Lawyers for Nixon-Agnew in 1968, Belin has been accused of suborning the perjury of an important witness against Oswald because that perjured testimony fit perfectly with the Commission's preconceived verdict.

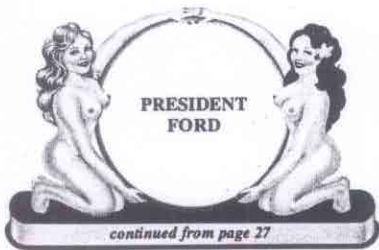
The witness was Charles Givens, who had told the FBI only hours after the assassination that he had seen Oswald on the first floor of the Texas Book Depository about 30 minutes before the shooting and that was the last time he saw him. Under repeated questioning, in the following weeks, Givens gradually changed his story (in one FBI document pried out of the National Archives a Dallas cop is quoted as saying Givens would change his testimony for money).

By the time Givens testified before the Warren Commission and was questioned by Belin, Givens claimed he last saw Oswald on the sixth floor of the building, not the first. To a Commission straining to place Oswald on the sixth floor, Givens was a God-send; he provided the only evidence that Oswald was on the sixth floor just before the shooting.

While questioning Givens, Belin had the original FBI document in front of him. He did not ask Givens why he'd moved Oswald from the first to the sixth floor, nor what made him change his mind. Instead, he permitted Givens to swear to his latest version and, in the section of the Warren report he drafted,

(continued on page 33)

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Belin used the newer version to help nail Oswald as the killer.

Even before appointing Belin to the 1975 varnish job, President Ford carefully circumscribed the scope of the Rockefeller Commission's investigation by ordering it to look into only reports of domestic spying by the agency. Ford knew by then, of course, of CIA plans to murder Castro, Trujillo, Lumumba and of the hiring of Mafia figures to kill Castro. (One of the mafiosi was Sam Giancana, who was murdered in his Chicago home in June, shortly before he was scheduled to testify before a Senate committee investigating the CIA; immediately, rumors flashed across the country that the CIA had killed Giancana.)

A big question floating around Washington, when the Rockefeller Commission was appointed in January, was why Ford had been stampeded into an investigation by published reports of the CIA's illegal domestic spying. Since the CIA had been accused in the past of every possible crime and no one in official circles ever got too upset, Ford's action appeared to be setting the stage for an upper-level whitewash of the CIA's domestic activities.

But it quickly became clear to many Washington observers that Ford was really hoping to prevent other investigators from digging into the swamp and perhaps coming up with the evidence of foreign assassination plots. Precisely the manner in which the Warren Commission headed off a Senate investigation into Kennedy's murder.

Two unforeseen events took place that upset Ford's plans. The first was the decision by the Senate to order the Church committee to investigate every aspect of CIA activities. The second was the published report—later confirmed by Ford—that he had been told about CIA assassination plots shortly after becoming President. Ford thereupon was forced to add "domestic aspects" of plots to assassinate foreign leaders to the Commission mandate and to give it two extra months to conclude its investigation.

The Commission gathered much evidence to prove that there had been assassination plots in the works. At first it appeared they had all been generated after JFK was elected and the Commis-

sion carefully leaked details about those schemes. But when it became clear that the assassination plans had actually begun under Eisenhower, with Nixon as liaison between the CIA and the President, the Commission, composed of Republicans, decided that assassinations were much too hot to handle. That was in May. Ford, of course, was kept up to date and he agreed with or possibly made the decision to drop the original plan to write a lengthy chapter on the murder allegations in the final report and instead substitute a paragraph stating that there had been no time to fully explore the charges.

That decision is a rather startling demonstration that Ford isn't the astute politician he's supposed to be, because he apparently didn't consider the furor that would be raised by so blatant a suppression of assassination evidence. To compound that original error, Ford and Rockefeller never bothered telling



all members of the Commission about their decision. Weeks after the decision to suppress had been made, a member of the Commission, investment banker C. Douglas Dillon, told reporters "we've found all the evidence that is available" on assassinations and that "we will report on the allegations." In a further goof, neither Ford nor anyone else bothered to correct that statement and tell the public there would be no assassination report.

Advance copies of the Rockefeller report, with a very brief explanation for the lack of assassination material, were delivered to the White House on June 5, where they were read by several officials. Washington sources say these men were shocked by the omission, feeling it could discredit the entire investigation; it was, they said, too blatant a whitewash. Ford then held up the report a few days, to add a two-paragraph explanation that the Com-

mission had neither time nor resources to fully investigate the assassination charges and thus could come to no conclusion.

Ford's blatant side-stepping resulted in the biggest political scandal since the Saturday Night Massacre. Ford apparently never realized that the press and public would feel certain a cover-up had once again been engineered. And he did himself even further harm by saying at a press conference: "Because the investigation of the political assassinations allegations is incomplete and because the allegations involve extremely sensitive matters, I have decided that it is not in the national interest to make public material relating to these allegations at this time." He also said he would turn all the material over to Congressional committees and then added a warning:

"I know that the members of the Congress involved will exercise utmost prudence in the handling of such information."

There was one rather strange section in the Rockefeller report which raises further suspicions. Although it claimed it didn't have time to investigate charges of CIA assassinations and although its mandate doesn't seem to cover the Kennedy assassination, Rockefeller's panel went out of its way to dismiss all arguments that the Warren Commission had glossed over Kennedy's murder. The Rockefeller report agreed absolutely with the findings of the Warren Commission.

So, we've come full circle, from the Warren Commission to the Rockefeller Commission. History repeats, as they say. Back in the early days of the Warren investigation Ford told a reporter that he didn't think the full truth of the Kennedy assassination would be revealed in our lifetime; he said almost the same thing at his press conference on the Rockefeller report. Back in 1964 he demonstrated that he was more concerned with the "national interest"—a phrase used to keep secret all manner of horrors—than in getting at the truth; he repeated that at his 1975 conference. The Warren Commission exercised the "utmost prudence" in suppressing all evidence of FBI and CIA involvement in Kennedy's murder; Ford is asking his friends in the Congress to do the same.

Perhaps, this time around, it won't work. But don't bet on it. In a little-known agreement between Ford and Sen. Frank Church, the man everyone hopes will blow the whole thing wide open, the decision as to which secret documents will be given to the Senate will be made by the White House. By Gerald Ford. After reading through that sanitized version of the Kennedy assassination that Ford has written and is now peddling to TV, I wouldn't be too hopeful.