

# THE GHOSTS OF NOVEMBER

In the wake of Oliver Stone's *JFK*, more than two million classified documents on the assassination have been released, providing fresh evidence of C.I.A. and F.B.I. cover-ups and even of a second gun.

Add the confession of a dying man and it seems clear that Lee Harvey Oswald was no loner: he was caught in a web of frustrated Cuban exiles, vengeful mobsters, and U.S. intelligence operatives

BY ANTHONY AND ROBBYN SUMMERS

**L**ast month in Washington, five carefully selected citizens began a mammoth task. Three historians and an archivist, led by the chief deputy attorney general of Minnesota, John Tunheim, must decide which government records on the assassination of President Kennedy may still be kept secret. They are the members of the Assassination Records Review Board, appointed by President Clinton and confirmed by the Senate under a special law passed in 1992.

It is a prestigious lineup: Anna Nelson of the American University, Kermit Hall of Ohio State, Henry Graff of Columbia, and William Joyce, a senior librarian at Princeton. The executive director is David Marwell, formerly head of research for the Justice Department unit investigating Nazi war criminals in the U.S.

Here we go again, 31 years after Dallas, and 30 since the Warren Commission told us Lee Harvey Oswald did it on his own. An attorney named Mark Lane fanned the flames of controversy with his 1966 book, *Rush to Judgment*. In 1967 the case was muddled by the follies of New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison, who claimed to have uncovered a plot hatched by "the military and intelligence power elite." Twelve years later, reporting to Congress after a

hts of Kennedy's Career



A nation in mourning: New York commuters on a Friday-evening train to Stamford, Connecticut, November 22, 1963.

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long and costly inquiry, the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded that there had "probably" been two gunmen in Dealey Plaza—one of them Oswald—and thus "probably" a conspiracy. The committee hinted that the Mafia was responsible, then passed the buck to the Justice Department, which just sat on its hands.

Last year's book *Case Closed*, by New York lawyer Gerald Posner, was as loaded a brief for the prosecution of the "Oswald lone assassin" theory as Lane's book had been for Oswald's defense. A veteran assassination scholar, former Senate investigator Harold Weisberg, has already replied with *Case Open*.

In 1963, two weeks after the assassination, a Gallup poll found that 52 percent of the American people thought there had been a conspiracy. Last November, a CBS News poll reported that 89 percent of the population now believe that, and 81 percent think there has been an official cover-up.

Oliver Stone's 1991 movie *JFK* was a dubious piece of scaremongering, yet it was in response to the concern aroused by the movie that Congress passed the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act. Since then, well in excess of two million pages of documents have been released into the National Archives, largely by the C.I.A. and the F.B.I.

The job of the Records Review Board is to rule on the massive withholdings that remain. While its powers are limited to enforcing the release of official records, the board has the right to subpoena witnesses and hold public hearings. It is expected to spend \$2.4 million in the coming year. "I see our primary responsibility," says John Tunheim, "as . . . assuring the Congress and the American people that information about the Kennedy assassination is not being hidden by any branch or agency of the federal government."

Asked in 1964 whether his Commission's documents would be made public, Chief Justice Earl Warren replied, "Yes, there will come a time. But it might not be in your lifetime. I am not referring to anything especially, but there may be some things that would involve security. This would be preserved but not made public." Today, according to figures supplied by the Assassination Archives and Research Center in Washington, between one and two million pages of relevant documents are still being withheld by federal agencies. Why?

Our investigation establishes that skep-

ticism about assassination orthodoxy is by no means limited to eccentric "buffs." The man who inherited the presidency, Lyndon Johnson, juggled conspiracy theories and did not believe in the analysis of the shooting on which the lone-assassin verdict is founded. Nor did several members of the Commission that endorsed it. And while the predominant conspiracy theory proposes that the Mafia killed Kennedy, the nature of the mysteries surrounding the case points to a more complex scenario.

Clues proliferate, some brand-new: leads indicating that we

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have not been told the truth about U.S. contacts with Oswald during and after his defection to the Soviet Union; the discovery that a journalist who features large in the case is listed in C.I.A. files as an Agency "collaborator"; credible evidence that the C.I.A. has concealed or destroyed its surveillance tapes of an Oswald visit to Mexico City; and the damning findings of the first professional intelligence analyst to work full-time on the case.

All this, and more, boosts suspicion that, even if U.S. intelligence operatives played no part in the assassination, their agencies have long hidden a relationship with Oswald. In the course of that subterfuge, they may have blocked exposure of a darker truth: our work led us to a man with links to both the Mafia and U.S. intelligence, a man who confessed before dying that he himself had been involved in the conspiracy which, he claimed, killed the president.

**T**he truth according to the Warren Commission—its 888-page report—was delivered to President Johnson on September 24, 1964, by Chief Justice Warren and his Commission members:

Senators John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky and Richard Russell of Georgia, Representatives Gerald Ford of Michigan and Hale Boggs of Louisiana, former C.I.A. director Allen Dulles, and U.S. disarmament coordinator John J. McCloy. The Commission said Lee Harvey Oswald, aged 24, former Marine and onetime defector to the Soviet Union, had acted alone. He killed John Kennedy on November 22, 1963, with three shots from a Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, firing at the president's motorcade from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, where he worked as a laborer. Two days later, in police custody, Oswald himself was shot dead by a local nightclub operator, Jack Ruby. Both men had been driven to kill by some inner compulsion. There was no evidence of conspiracy.

"The monumental record of the President's Commission will stand like a Gibraltar of factual literature through the ages to come," said Gerald Ford. Yet a stream of prominent Americans have remained skeptics, including members of the Commission itself. Senator Richard Russell, for instance, later said of Oswald, "I'm not completely satisfied in my own mind that he did plan and commit this act altogether on his own." "I no longer feel we simply had no credible evidence or reliable evidence in proof of a conspiracy . . .," said John McCloy in 1978. The F.B.I.'s domestic-intelligence chief, William Sullivan, remained a doubter: "There were huge gaps in the case, gaps we never did close." The Dallas police chief at the time of the assassination, Jesse Curry, believed two gunmen were involved.

The Secret Service agents who guarded President Kennedy have never spoken out on the record. But we now know what the agent who sat with Kennedy in the limousine thought: Roy Kellerman's widow, June, says he "accepted that there was a conspiracy." Kennedy's close aide Kenneth O'Donnell rode in the car immediately behind the president's. O'Donnell told the late Tip O'Neill that he was pressured by the F.B.I. not to say what he firmly believed, that gunfire had come from in front of the motorcade.

Although C.I.A. director John McCone told the president's brother Robert early on that he thought two gunmen had fired, Robert is not known to have expressed his own doubt until years later. In 1966, he told former White House aide Richard Goodwin,

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"If anyone was involved, it was organized crime. But there's nothing I can do about it. Not now." With publisher William Attwood, he spoke of "reasons of national security" for keeping a lid on the case. Campaign aide Richard Lubic, now a director of DDD Cablevision, still has his note of what Bobby said several days before he in turn was killed. "Subject to being elected [president]," Bobby said, "I would like to reopen the Warren Commission."

Faith in the Warren Commission has also been shaken by congressional investigations. Probes by the Intelligence Committee in the Senate and by the Constitutional Rights Sub-committee in the House left many convinced that the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. had something to hide. Richard Schweiker, the senator who spearheaded the Intelligence Committee probe, said he believed "the Warren Commission was set up at the time to feed pabulum to the American people for reasons not yet known, and that one of the biggest cover-ups in the history of our country occurred at that time."

Not so, insist Judge Earl Warren Jr. and Jeff Warren, son and grandson, respectively, of the Californian who gave the Commission its name. "He had no doubts," says the grandson. "I remember one time he said to my mother, 'I can assure you, Margaret, Lee Harvey Oswald shot the president.' There was no question in Papa Warren's mind."

William T. Coleman Jr. was a senior Commission counsel, with special responsibility for Area IV, "Possible Conspiratorial Relationships." Now 74, after a career that included a post as secretary of transportation under another Commission alumnus, President Ford, he lounges in his Washington law office and affirms, "I've always felt, and feel even more strongly today, that I'm sure, as sure as human beings can be sure, that we got it right."

In the past year, the Lyndon B. Johnson Library has released a string of recordings of phone conversations. They show Kennedy's successor wheedling, flattering, and browbeating people as he struggled to form an acceptable Commission. Senator Richard Russell pleaded in tones of desperation that he did not have the time. "The hell . . . we'll just make the time," Johnson growled. "There's not going to be any time to begin with. All you gotta do is evaluate a Hoover report he's already made."

F.B.I. director Hoover's report had not even been completed when that

call took place, a week after the assassination, but it is clear what he and Johnson wanted. "The thing I am most concerned about," Hoover said in a call to the White House two hours after Oswald's murder, "is having something issued so we can convince the public that Oswald is the real assassin." The new president appointed the Warren Commission to head off pressure for congressional investigation and to stop rumors of an international Communist conspiracy.

Barely two hours after Oswald's arrest, according to Assistant Attorney General Norbert Schlei, Hoover was

**Two hours after Oswald's arrest, Hoover was "quite convinced they have found the right party."**

declaring himself "quite convinced they have found the right party." The next day, though, he told Johnson in a private call, "The evidence that they have at the present time is not very, very strong. . . . The case as it stands now isn't strong enough to be able to get a conviction."

The details of Dealey Plaza can seem mind-bogglingly tedious. It is folly to form an opinion, however, without taking a hard look at the facts. How does the evidence stand in 1994?

Several shots rang out in rapid succession at 12:30 P.M. on November 22, 1963, as President Kennedy rode through central Dallas in his limousine. He and Texas governor John Connally, riding in front of the president, both suffered multiple gunshot wounds. They were rushed to Parkland Memorial Hospital, but Kennedy died without recovering consciousness. Connally survived.

The Dallas coroner, accompanied by a justice of the peace, wanted to perform an autopsy, as Texas law required. Presidential aide Kenneth O'Donnell, emotionally overwrought, told the judge to go screw himself. Secret Service agents, guns displayed, shoved past the coroner and rushed the president's body to the airport. Not one of the doctors at the autopsy, performed that night at the Bethesda naval hospital, near Washing-

ton, was a practicing forensic pathologist. They were further handicapped by instructions relayed by phone from Kennedy's brother Robert, huddled with the widow in a V.I.P. suite upstairs. A 1992 report in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* confirmed that the family, concerned that the world would learn Kennedy suffered from a progressive disease of the adrenal glands, wanted to prevent several routine procedures. The organs of the neck were not dissected.

We still do not know the precise nature of Kennedy's injuries. The autopsy doctors described four wounds: a small wound at the back of the skull, a massive defect in the right side of the skull, a small hole near the rear base of the neck, slightly to the right of the spine, and a hole in the throat.

The throat wound had been obscured by the Dallas doctors when they inserted an airway to try to save the president's life. Unnecessary confusion, however, reigns over the injury supposedly located near the back of the neck. The Autopsy Descriptive Sheet placed it five and a half inches below the tip of the right mastoid process, a bump at the base of the skull. The autopsists' working sketch, the death certificate, a report by F.B.I. agents present at the autopsy, the statements of several Secret Service agents, and the holes in Kennedy's jacket and shirt are consistent with a wound some *six inches* lower than reported.

The doctors failed to dissect this wound, an elementary procedure that might have established the path of the bullet. The hole was merely probed, not opened up and tracked to its destination. Newly released documents indicate that photographs and X-rays were taken during the probing attempt, but their current location remains unknown.

The exact nature of that wound is a crucial issue. It brings us to the "magic bullet," the virtually intact slug found at Parkland hospital. Why does it matter so much? The amateur movie of the assassination made by bystander Abraham Zapruder gave investigators a time frame for the shooting. It appears to show that a single gunman could not have had time to fire again between the moment Kennedy was first seen to be hit and the moment Connally appeared to react to being shot. Rather than allow for the alternative, that two gunmen had fired almost simultaneously, Warren Commission lawyer Arlen Specter—today the Republican senator



from Pennsylvania—credited the magic bullet with having hit both the president and Connally. It had, he proposed, entered Kennedy's back, exited through his throat, then whizzed on to cause Connally's multiple wounds. Thus was the single-bullet theory born, and you must accept it if you want to believe there was only one assassin.

Yet, in a later interview, Specter himself had no good answers to questions raised about his theory. At the time, doubters included members of the Commission itself and the president to whom they reported. John McCloy had difficulty accepting it. Hale Boggs had "strong doubts," and John Sherman Cooper remained "unconvinced." On one of the newly released White House tapes, Richard Russell is heard telling the president, "I don't believe it." And Johnson responds, "I don't either."

Those who don't buy the theory cannot accept that the magic bullet could have caused multiple injuries to Kennedy and Connally, smashing bones in the governor, without losing more of its met-

**Above, Lee Harvey Oswald in the pandemonium of the Dallas police station between interrogations. Right, Chief Justice Earl Warren delivers his 888-page report to President Johnson in September 1964 (with, from left, Commission members Senator Richard Russell, Representative Gerald Ford, and former C.I.A. director Allen Dulles).**



al content. Recent tests, the latest reported in the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons* last May, suggest that such a phenomenon can occur. There are other problems, however, with the magic bullet.

There is doubt as to whether the bullet was found on Connally's stretcher, as the Commission claimed, and about the number of bullet fragments recovered. Nurse Audrey Bell, the operating-room supervisor, told us that she later saw and handled "four or five bullet

fragments" after their removal from Connally's arm. The smallest, she recalled, was as big as the striking end of a match, the largest twice that size. "I have seen the picture of the magic bullet," she said. "I can't see how it could be the bullet from which the fragments I saw came." Nor could Dr. Pierre Finck, one of the autopsists. "There are," he testified, "too many fragments."

Three days after the assassination,

one of the Parkland medical staff handed "more than three" other fragments to a patrolman guarding Connally's room. X-rays, moreover, show that one fragment remained buried in Connally's thigh. The doctors chose to leave it there, and it was still in his body when he died in 1993. Did *all* those fragments really come from the magic bullet? If not, there was more than one assassin in Dealey Plaza.

There is also confusion about the fatal injuries to Kennedy's head. The autopsy doctors identified a small hole in the skull as the entry point for a bullet that blasted a crater in the right side of the head. Other medical panels, working years later from the X-rays and photographs, decided the small wound was four inches higher than originally described. Meanwhile, 17 of the medical staff who observed the president in Dallas, including the attending neurosurgeon, along with three Secret Service agents and four Bethesda medical-support personnel, have described the massive defect as having been more at the *back* of the head than at the side.

These doubts need never have arisen. The autopsy doctors failed to shave the president's head, apparently because Kennedy's family wanted him to look good should the casket be left open. The president's brain was not sectioned—another essential procedure, later vanished. So did bone fragments, tissue slides of the skin that surrounded the president's wounds, and, reportedly, photographs of the interior of his chest.

There is no consensus among those who have seen the photographs and X-rays. Some believe, contrary to the opinion of congressional consultants, that they have been tampered with. "These are fake X-rays," claimed Jerrol Custer, a technician who made some of the autopsy X-rays in 1963. The photographs are "phony and not the photographs we took," said Floyd Reibe, who took some of the pictures. One of the surgeons who worked on the president in Dallas, Dr. Robert McClelland, has also examined the X-rays. "There is an inconsistency," he said in 1989. "Some of the skull X-rays show only the back part of the head missing. . . . [Others] show what appears to be the entire right side of the skull gone. . . . I don't understand that, unless there has been some attempt to cover up the nature of the wound."

A physicist and radiation therapist at the Eisenhower Medical Center, Dr.

David Mantik, recently submitted the X-rays to a technique called optical densitometry. "This data," he told us, "provides powerful and quantitative evidence of alteration to some of the skull X-rays. They appear to me to be composites."

Last May, the Assassination Records Review Board announced that a second set of autopsy photographs may have survived, photographs apparently made from the original negatives and thus presumably authentic. Medical researchers cannot wait to see them.

The hoo-ha over forensics is about one central issue. Was just one gunman at work in 1963,

**Dr. David Mantik believes X-ray fakery was designed to cover up evidence of a frontal shot.**

or were other marksmen involved? The House Assassinations Committee, relying on the testimony of acoustics experts and witness accounts, concluded in 1979 that a second gunman did fire from in front of the president, but missed. Other studies, however, soon claimed that the purported acoustics evidence, an old Dictabelt of police radio transmissions, was probably just static, not—as believed by the committee's consultants—a recording of the gunfire.

The lone dissenter on the committee's medical panel, Dr. Cyril Wecht—a former president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences—suspected there had been two virtually simultaneous shots to the president's head, one from the rear and one from somewhere else. He is no longer the only medical expert to suggest that. Dr. Mantik told us he is confident that Kennedy was hit in the head by two gunmen, one firing from behind and one from in front. He believes the alleged X-ray fakery was designed to cover up evidence for the frontal shot.

Dr. Randolph Robertson, the only radiologist not attached to a government inquiry to have examined the X-rays, does not think they were tampered with. Yet he too believes, on the basis of a pat-

tern of intersecting fracture lines, that the president was hit in the head from both behind and in front. While other doctors have disagreed, a colleague, Dr. Patrick Barnett, has written to us supporting Robertson's interpretation. Dr. Joseph Riley, an expert in neuroanatomy, has concentrated on two key X-rays. He says they are authentic, but have been misinterpreted. "The autopsy evidence," says Riley, "demonstrates conclusively that John Kennedy was struck in the head by two bullets, one from the rear and one from the right front."

Gerald Posner claimed in his book that computer enhancement "settles the question" of the timing of the shots, and that test-firing "provided the final physical evidence necessary to prove the single-bullet theory." Posner failed to tell readers in the first edition of his book that the computer work had been done for the prosecution side in a mock trial of Oswald conducted by the American Bar Association. There was also a case for the defense, and—after a brief trial covering only limited areas of the evidence—the "jury" split, seven members favoring conviction, five favoring acquittal.

A member of the Dallas medical team that treated President Kennedy, Dr. Charles Crenshaw, drew criticism for his book, *JFK, Conspiracy of Silence*, which claimed that Kennedy's wounds indicated shots from the front. The defamation suit he has brought against *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, Warren Commission lawyer David Belin, and others is expected to oblige key medical witnesses to testify under adversarial conditions for the first time.

When John Connally died last year, the F.B.I. supported calls for postmortem removal of the bullet fragment lodged in his thigh. Modern tests might go far to resolve doubts about the magic bullet, but Connally's family refused permission. The burial went ahead.

X-ray evidence, meanwhile, suggests that one large fragment, like dozens of tiny ones, was never removed from the head of the president. "The final truth concerning the location of the wound in the back of the President's head," radiologist Robertson told a congressional committee last year, "is lying in a cemetery in Arlington with an eternal flame flickering over it." For the foreseeable future, any proposal to disturb the grave of John F. Kennedy seems likely to be greeted with revulsion. Thanks to the initial mishandling of the evidence, we inherit only one certainty. Theories

*not the one it was*



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about the meaning of the physical evidence are just that—theory and speculation, an evidentiary quicksand that compels belief in neither a lone assassin nor a conspiracy.

**W**here does the evidence leave Oswald? Here are the key facts. Oswald did have a rifle in the spring of 1963. Handwriting evidence suggests that he bought it, by mail order, using the name Hidell, and his widow said she took the famous photographs of him holding a rifle in their backyard. That rifle appears to be the 6.5-mm. Mannlicher-Carcano found after the assassination, dumped among cartons on an upstairs floor of the Depository. One live round remained in the breech, and three used cartridge cases were found near a sixth-floor window. Experts say the cartridges had been fired in the Carcano, as had the magic bullet reportedly found at Parkland hospital. They add that fragments retrieved from the president's and Connally's wounds, and from the limousine, were almost certainly from just two bullets fired from the Carcano.

Oswald was carrying a package when he went to work on November 22. A palm print allegedly found on the underside of the gun was Oswald's. Three prints on cartons found near the suspect window were his. Oswald left the Depository soon after the assassination, and was arrested less than an hour and a half later, close to where a policeman had been shot dead in a hail of revolver fire. Although the ballistic evidence in the policeman's murder is less convincing, Oswald was carrying a revolver when arrested. Meanwhile, persuasive testimony and evidence suggest that, one night seven months earlier, Oswald had fired a shot through the window of an ultraconservative retired general, Edwin Walker, but missed.

Oswald steadfastly denied having shot anyone on November 22, and there were some weaknesses in the prosecution case. It was not established that it was he who had picked up the mail-order rifle at the post office. Also, to the horror of congressional staff, it was discovered in the 70s that the chain of possession and storage of the fragments of bullets, allegedly fired from the Carcano, had been hopelessly inadequate. A fragment from the limousine had vanished, and one fragment container was found to be empty. If some of the ballistic evidence is missing and some

remains in the bodies, the shooting cannot be blamed conclusively on one man with one gun.

The evidence that the rifle was stored in the garage of the house where Oswald's wife was staying, and where he slept the night before the assassination, is thin. "The fact is," wrote Commission lawyer Wesley Liebeler in a memo requesting changes to the draft of the Warren Report, "that not one person alive today ever saw that rifle in the . . . garage in such a way that it could be identified as that rifle." He was ignored.

Three of Oswald's prints

**The public has had to wait 30 years to learn that a second gun was found at the scene.**

were found on cartons near the suspect window, but Oswald's job had involved working on the sixth floor. Prints belonging to others were also found on the cartons, one an identifiable palm print never linked to any Depository employee, nor to any law-enforcement official known to have handled the boxes.

Most agree that to have fired the Carcano three times—twice accurately—in the 4.8 to 5.6 seconds the Warren Commission established as the minimum timespan would have been a remarkable feat. No professional marksman was able to achieve that in subsequent tests. At most, the timespan was about eight seconds. The record shows that, years earlier in the Marines, Oswald was at best a competent marksman. And there is scant evidence that he practiced with a rifle in the remaining four years of his life. Suggestions to the contrary were published in the Warren Report, again in spite of protests from Commission counsel Liebeler about "the level of reaching that is going on."

The attempt to kill General Walker occurred when Walker was seated in a well-lit room, opposite an uncurtained window. If Oswald was such a good shot, how come he missed Walker but hit the president in a moving

car twice in the space of a few seconds?

It is not true, as suggested last year, that a new analysis of the fingerprint evidence ties Oswald more closely to the crime. Experts disagree as to whether the marks in question—partial prints found near the Carcano's trigger guard—are identifiable as Oswald's. The Oswald palm print, said to have been lifted by the police but not to have been detectable when it reached the F.B.I. laboratory, was on a part of the gun accessible only when the weapon was disassembled. "I would say," says former police lieutenant Carl Day, who handled the fingerprint evidence in Dallas, "that this print had been on the gun several weeks or months." If the print was authentic, it indicated only that Oswald had handled the weapon at some time not necessarily on November 22. No prints were found on the spent shells nor on the live round remaining in the chamber.

"We don't have any proof that Oswald fired the rifle," former Dallas police chief Curry said in 1969. "No one has been able to put him in that building with a gun in his hand."

Under arrest, Oswald would claim he had been eating in the first-floor lunch room at the time the president was shot. He said—accurately as it turned out—that two specific fellow workers had walked through the room at one point. If Oswald was not in that room, it is remarkable that he correctly described two men out of a staff of 75. Another witness has placed Oswald in the second-floor lunchroom at 12:15 P.M., or few minutes later. That is where he was seen right after the assassination by the first policeman to enter the building.

The president was shot at 12:30 P.M. but, according to the published schedule, had been due to pass the Depository at 12:25. Would a killer planning to shoot the president have been sitting around downstairs at 12:15 P.M., or later, if he expected to open fire within minutes? No official inquiry has pursued this question.

Once the mind is open to such issues the questions come tumbling. Witnesses to the murder of policeman J. D. Tipp and the attempt to kill General Walker spoke of not one but two suspects near each crime scene. Witnesses to the assassination spoke of seeing two men with a gun on a high floor of the Depository. Two policemen encountered men behaving suspiciously on the infamous "grassy knoll."

# Investigation

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Just when you think the story holds no more factual surprises, it tends to produce one. We now have an F.B.I. report revealing that, at 7:30 on the morning after the assassination, "A SNUB NOSE THIRTY EIGHT CALIBER SMITH AND WESSON, SERIAL NUMBER EIGHT NINE THREE TWO SIX FIVE, WITH THE WORD QUOTE ENGLAND UNQUOTE ON THE CYLINDER WAS FOUND . . . IN A BROWN PAPER SACK IN THE GENERAL AREA OF WHERE THE ASSASSINATION TOOK PLACE." So a revolver was found near the Book Depository—"IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY," according to other F.B.I. reports. In spite of repeated Freedom of Information requests by California researcher Bill Adams, the F.B.I. has not revealed how its investigation of the gun was concluded. Whether or not the weapon has any significance, it is a scandal that the public had to wait 30 years to learn that a second gun was found at the scene of the crime.

In the summer of 1964, when the Warren Report was being drafted, Oswald's elder brother Robert received a call from a Commission lawyer holed up in a cabin in Vermont, working on the chapter that would deal with *why* Oswald had killed President Kennedy. Robert Oswald was "flabbergasted," he told us, that the Commission had yet to find a motive for the man it had pegged as the lone assassin.

It is clear from a dozen witnesses that Oswald repeatedly spoke about John F. Kennedy in terms of admiration. He "showed in his manner of speaking that he liked the president," said a policeman who talked with him in August 1963. In a conversation about civil rights a month before the assassination, Oswald said he thought Kennedy was doing "a real fine job, a real good job."

The writers of the Warren Report fell back on painting Oswald as having "an overriding hostility to his environment." "We ducked the question of motive," Commission counsel Burt Griffin admitted years later.

"I'm just a patsy," Oswald insisted to reporters in the police station. Yet if Oswald was framed, his actions and words made him look guilty as hell—of something. He carried false ID, used phony names, lied repeatedly. Was Oswald, whether lone assassin or accomplice in an ambush, a witting participant? Was he manipulated by others into committing the deed? Was he munching his lunch downstairs while

others fired, only to realize afterward that he had been made the fall guy?

Shortly after 6:15 P.M. on November 22, as a helicopter bore Lyndon Johnson to the capital from Andrews Air Force Base, the new president discussed the terrifying prospect that Kennedy's murder might be the prelude to a nuclear attack by the Soviet Union. In the hours that followed, troubling information reached Washington. From the C.I.A. in Mexico came reports that Oswald had visited the Soviet and Cuban Embassies there seven

**A mounting body of testimony suggests that the Kennedy brothers approved the plots to murder Castro.**

weeks earlier. While his ostensible purpose had been to apply for visas, he had talked with Consul Valeriy Kostikov, a K.G.B. officer believed by the C.I.A. to be a specialist in murder and sabotage. Then came fresh cables from Mexico. A "professed Castroite Nicaraguan" was claiming that he "saw Lee Oswald receive \$6,500 in a meeting inside the Cuban Embassy."

Less than three months earlier, Fidel Castro had fulminated about American efforts to kill him. "U.S. leaders should think," he warned, "that if they are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe."

Since 1960, the United States had been running what Johnson was to recall as "a damned Murder Inc. in the Caribbean." As the public learned only in the mid-70s, senior C.I.A. officers connived with Mafia leaders and anti-Castro Cubans in a series of plans to have Castro assassinated.

A mounting body of testimony suggests that the Kennedy brothers approved these plots. Before his death this year, a former C.I.A. deputy director, Richard Bissell, went further than previously toward saying as much. George Smathers, former U.S. senator from Florida and the president's close friend,

told us flatly, "Jack would be all the time, 'If somebody knocks this guy off, O.K., that'd be fine.' . . . But Kennedy obviously had to say he could not be a party to that sort of thing with the damn Mafia." Did Bobby Kennedy know? "Sure," said Smathers.

On the day Kennedy was assassinated, C.I.A. officer Nestor Sanchez was in Paris, passing an assassination device—according to C.I.A. sources, a Paper Mate pen modified to serve as a poison syringe—to Rolando Cubela, one of Castro's close associates. The new head of the Agency's Cuba operations, Desmond FitzGerald, had met with Cubela three weeks earlier, claiming to be Robert Kennedy's personal representative. He promised that the U.S. government would back any anti-Communist group that "neutralized" the Cuban leadership.

Manuel Artime, a Cuban exile leader much favored by the Kennedys, told a congressional investigator that the president personally was behind the Cubela plot. "Artime stated he had direct contact with J.F.K. and R.F.K.," the investigator noted. "They in turn contacted the C.I.A. . . . AM/LASF [the C.I.A. cryptonym for the Cubela operation] was proposed by J.F.K."

On the morning of Kennedy's death according to new research, FitzGerald attended a meeting to put the finishing touches to another murderous scheme one promoted by Robert Kennedy. Those present allegedly included future Watergate villains E. Howard Hunt and James McCord—although Hunt, whose movements that day have long been a contentious issue, claims he attended no such meeting and was not handling Cuban matters at the time. (McCord did not respond when we attempted to reach him.) One who admits he was present is Harry Ruiz-Williams, a Cuban exile whom the president's brother had taken into his confidence. Robert Kennedy had made favorites of a handful of exiles, invited them to his home and plotted mayhem with them. One of these Cubans, who insists on anonymity, has told how in 1963 another senior Castro official, not Cubela, agreed that for a large cash payment—he would organize the violent overthrow of Castro and key colleagues. Robert Kennedy arranged for a deposit to be paid into a foreign bank, and by November 22 the operation was imminent. Had the president's assassination not intervened, the exile go-between would have set off on a secret mission to Havana. The coup

to be followed by American support, was expected to occur within 10 days.

Lamar Waldron and Thom Hartmann, two Atlanta researchers preparing a book on the operation, have obtained corroboration of its existence from U.S. military and government sources. Former secretary of state Dean Rusk says he learned of the coup operation after the president's death.

Even so, in the weeks before Dallas, U.N. delegate William Attwood was talking with his Cuban counterpart and a Castro aide about a possible *peace* initiative. The last call to Havana occurred at two A.M. on November 18, with Castro listening in on an extension. All this was done with the approval of President Kennedy, whose brother was overseeing current plans for Castro's removal. The height of duplicity? "Oh, there's no particular contradiction there," Dean Rusk told us. "It was just an either/or situation. That went on frequently." All the same, Rusk admits that the Kennedys were "playing with fire."

Did Kennedy die in Dallas because a nonentity named Oswald read about Castro's retaliation threat in the newspaper and took matters into his own

hands? Or did Castro learn that the Kennedys themselves were behind the plots, and hit back just as he had said he would? Was Oswald, wittingly or unwittingly, manipulated by Havana?

There is nothing in the Warren Report about plots to kill Castro. Years later, when their existence was revealed, some former Commission members were outraged, saying the C.I.A. had kept them in the dark. According to Earl Warren's son and grandson, however, the chief justice did know about the plots. The notion that Castro was behind the assassination was taken seriously, so seriously that Warren dispatched staff counsel William Coleman on a secret mission. Coleman, who has spoken of the trip privately, was closemouthed when we asked about it. "I can't talk," he said. "It was top-secret." Asked to confirm or deny that he had met Castro, he said only, "No comment."

What Coleman will say is that his mission helped convince him that Castro had nothing to do with the president's death. The Warren Report, and that of the House Assassinations Committee, took the same view. It would have been suicidal folly for Castro to risk provoking a devastating American revenge at-

tack. It would have been even greater insanity to use a known pro-Castro activist like Oswald, whose involvement would point straight to Havana.

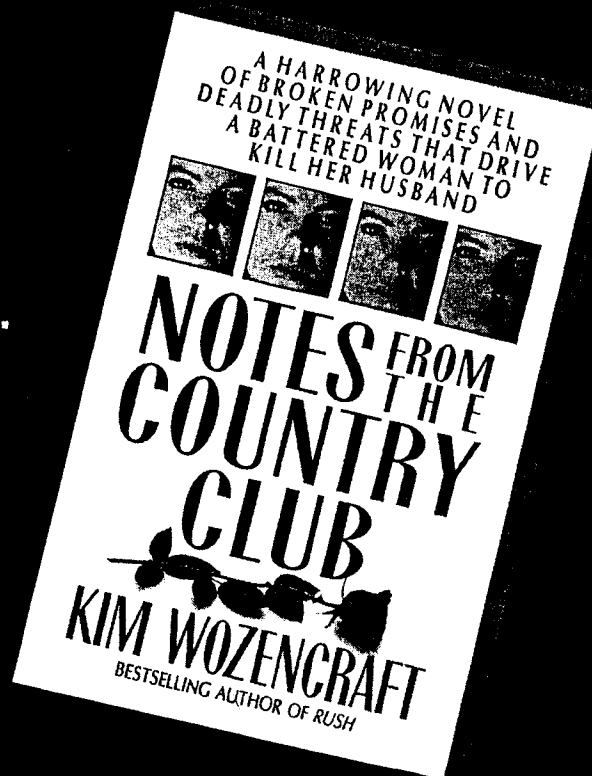
Nor does any serious observer suspect the Soviets were involved. In 1993 we talked in Moscow with Vladimir Semichastny, who headed the K.G.B. while the alleged assassin lived in the Soviet Union. "I can say, from what I saw in the file," he told us, "that neither we nor the military ended up interested in Oswald. Obviously he was questioned on behalf of the K.G.B., though probably not directly. There was also the possibility of him being an American agent, and of course we had to watch him. If he had seemed of potential use to us, we might have tried to use him. But he didn't, and we didn't."

There is no evidence worth a damn to link Moscow to Kennedy's murder.

The most durable conspiracy theory is that the Mafia killed the president. Believable memories tell us that the shiny Kennedy political machine was oiled with dirty grease. Kennedy dollars, in a rich man's briefcase, handed by the candidate to his mistress to carry on the night train to Sam Giancana, the Mafia

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# Investigation

boss in Chicago; a million in Mob dollars in a satchel, stashed in a Las Vegas hotel suite by the candidate's brother-in-law; the stench of corruption over the razor-thin vote margin that gave Kennedy victory over Richard Nixon; then, once Kennedy was in office, the continued use of Giancana and Florida Mafia boss Santo Trafficante in the plots to kill Castro.

The Mafia thought they had a deal, their help in exchange for a complaisant Justice Department. But Attorney General Robert Kennedy, "full of piss and vinegar," as F.B.I. agents who admired him used to say, moved to crush the very men who thought they had earned an easy ride.

"He'll get what he wants out of you," an F.B.I. bug overheard Giancana say of the president, "but you won't get anything out of him." The Kennedys, Trafficante told an associate in late 1962, were "not honest. They took graft and they did not keep a bargain."

"The Mob typically doesn't hit prosecutors or politicians," said former Assassinations Committee chief counsel Robert Blakey. "You are all right . . . just as long as you do not 'sleep with them,' that is, you do not take favors, either money or sex. Once the public official crosses the line, he invites violent retribution." Blakey believes that is what happened. While his committee merely identified Trafficante and New Orleans mobster Carlos Marcello as suspects, Blakey went further. "The Mob did it," he said. "It is a historical truth."

It seemed that this truth was being hammered into place last spring, with the publication of *Mob Lawyer*, the autobiography of Frank Ragano, an attorney who long represented Trafficante, Marcello, and crooked teamsters leader Jimmy Hoffa. "Santo, Carlos, and Jimmy" often spoke of their wish to see both Kennedy brothers dead, writes Ragano. In July 1963, he claims, Hoffa dispatched him to New Orleans to ask Trafficante and Marcello to kill the president. The mobsters' reaction, when he passed on the message, led Ragano to think the idea "had already seriously crossed their minds." After the assassination, a gleeful Hoffa allegedly exclaimed, "I told you they could do it. I'll never forget what Carlos and Santo did for me." Marcello supposedly said, "When you see Jimmy, you tell him he owes me and he owes me big."

According to Ragano, Santo Trafficante phoned on March 13, 1987, four

days before his death, to request a meeting. When the lawyer arrived to take him for a drive, the ailing 72-year-old shuffled to the car in pajamas and a terry-cloth robe. Then, slumped in Ragano's Mercedes-Benz, he talked in Sicilian of the old days, old murders, and the Kennedys.

"That Bobby," Ragano quotes the dying mobster as saying, "made life miserable for me and my friends. . . . God-damn Bobby. *Carlos é futtutu. Non duvevamu ammazzari a Giovanni. Duvevamu ammazzari a Bobby.*" ("Carlos [Marcello] fucked up. We shouldn't have killed

**"We shouldn't have killed John," said Trafficante. "We should have killed Bobby."**

John. We should have killed Bobby.") Trafficante did not elaborate, and the lawyer says he did not ask him to. He worried for a while after the mobster died, then confided in his wife, and eventually went public. "I went over it with Ragano pretty carefully," chief counsel Blakey told us, "and my judgment was that this was him simply remembering what happened."

Trafficante's widow, his two daughters, and several friends and neighbors, however, say the March 13, 1987, meeting never happened. Ragano claims it occurred in Tampa, the family's traditional base and his own hometown. But Trafficante had long since made his principal residence in North Miami Beach, and the family says he had not visited Tampa since the Christmas holidays. He was so ill, they insist, what with heart disease, thrice-weekly hospital visits to have kidney dialysis, and a permanent colostomy bag, that travel had become a major undertaking.

Ragano writes in his book that he met Trafficante on the afternoon of March 13. The time, he told us, was about 1:30. Yet Jean Amato, the widow of one of Trafficante's close associates, says she visited the Trafficantes at home in North Miami Beach between noon

and two P.M. Jack Hodus, a pharmacist, says he was there by about six P.M., and other accounts place the mobster in Miami for dinner. Even if only Jean Amato is telling the truth, Trafficante could not possibly have been in Tampa, as Ragano claims, at 1:30 P.M.

Ragano says he can respond with three witnesses of his own, but declines to produce them unless the Trafficantes take him to court for libel. Meanwhile there is the medical evidence. The records of Miami's Mercy Hospital indicate the mobster was being treated in the dialysis unit until 7:15 P.M. the previous day, and was back in the unit by the afternoon of March 14. Dr. Felix Locicero, Trafficante's Tampa nephrologist says he knew of no visit on March 13 and thinks it "unlikely" the mobster was in town.

Unless Ragano can produce stronger evidence, his Trafficante confession story cannot be relied upon. Yet exposing Ragano as a liar would not dispose of the "Mob dunnit" theory, nor of the notion that Trafficante and Carlos Marcello played some part in Kennedy's murder. "Mark my word," Trafficante is reported to have said to a close associate in September 1962, "this man Kennedy is in trouble, and he will get what is coming to him. . . . He's not going to make it the election. He is going to be hit."

That same month, Trafficante's friend Marcello was burning with hatred, and had a special, personal reason to wish the Kennedys removed from power. He was not a U.S. citizen, and the president's brother had used the fact to boot him out of the country the previous year. Although now back in New Orleans, Marcello remained under constant threat of deportation.

According to Ed Becker, a California entrepreneur, Marcello became enraged during a business meeting. As the whiskey flowed, he "clearly stated I was going to arrange to have President Kennedy murdered." As "insurance" for the assassination, he spoke of "settling up a nut to take the blame."

Was Oswald that nut? Congress's Assassinations Committee noted that the alleged assassin's childhood and youth had been spent in New Orleans. Oswald's mother's friends included a corrupt lawyer linked to Marcello's criminal operation and a man who served Marcello as bodyguard and chauffeur. One of Oswald's uncles, John "Moose" Murret, had been seen by police in Marcello's company. Another, Charles "Dut Murret, a bookie in the Marcello gang

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bling network, was a father figure for Oswald—whose natural father had died before he was born. In the spring and summer of 1963, when Oswald went back to New Orleans, he at first stayed with the Murrets. When he got arrested, after getting into a brawl with Cuban exiles while passing out pro-Castro leaflets, it was the Murrets who organized bail. The man they asked to arrange it was close to one of Marcello's oldest friends, Nofio Pecora. Pecora's New Orleans office number, phone records show, was called three weeks before the assassination by Jack Ruby.

**T**he Warren Commission misled the American public by describing Ruby as a "moody and unstable" character with no significant link to organized crime. The later congressional probe established that he did have multiple underworld connections. His bosom pal, Lewis McWillie, had worked in Trafficante's Cuban gambling operation in the Batista days, and Ruby reportedly visited Trafficante when he was detained in Havana after the revolution.

Provocative stuff, but it does not prove the Mafia killed Kennedy. Another strand of evidence, one that at first appears to point to the Mob, may lead to a more complex truth. Right after the assassination, acting on a tip, New Orleans law-enforcement authorities took a brief interest in David Ferrie, then employed by the legal team working to thwart the renewed Kennedy effort to deport Carlos Marcello. He was released after cursory questioning, and his name does not even appear in the Warren Report. It should.

Last year, after decades of debate as to whether Ferrie ever met Oswald, *Frontline* discovered an old photograph that seems to settle the matter. Apparently taken in 1955, when the alleged assassin was a teenage member of the Civil Air Patrol, it shows C.A.P. cadets at a cookout. Former cadets, one of whom is himself in the picture, told *Frontline* they recognized both Oswald and Ferrie, who was a C.A.P. instructor, in the photograph. Jerry Paradis, also a former instructor, told us, "They were undoubtedly in that unit together. I was a lieutenant coinciding with the months Oswald was a recruit. . . . I recall him as a very quiet, serious young man. . . . David Ferrie was sort of the scoutmaster."

Ferrie, then a 37-year-old pilot for Eastern Air Lines, was a right-wing zealot and a homosexual with a predilec-

tion for teenage boys. Some fellow Marines wondered about the sexuality of Oswald himself. He reportedly took friends to the Flamingo, a gay bar on the Mexican border that he appeared to have visited before. In Japan, he seemed comfortable in a "queer bar."

According to his mother, Oswald was encouraged to join the Marines by a "recruiting officer" in uniform who had "influenced [him] while he was with the Civil Air Cadets [*sic*]." She said the man came to the Oswald apartment to try to persuade her to let the boy join up while still under-age. It seems unlikely that a genuine Marine recruiting officer would have tried to persuade

As "insurance" for the assassination, Marcello spoke of "setting up a nut to take the blame."

a cadet's mother to break the law. Ferrie, on the other hand, regularly urged his charges to join the armed forces. He was also no stranger to the fakery of personal documents, including his own application form to join Eastern Air Lines and, years later, a phony birth certificate for mobster Carlos Marcello.

Although the Marines spotted the forgery, and did not allow Oswald to join up until he turned 17, a fake birth certificate had been created for him, apparently with some help from a lawyer linked to Marcello. In 1960, after Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union, there was such a flap at the F.B.I. over the whereabouts of Oswald's genuine birth certificate that J. Edgar Hoover alerted the State Department to the "possibility that an impostor is using Oswald's birth certificate."

The F.B.I., the State Department, and the Office of Naval Intelligence resumed exchanging reports referring to the certificate when Oswald returned from Russia without it, and it never did turn up. "I don't know where the impostor notion would have led us," former Warren Commission counsel W. David Slawson has said, "but the point is, we didn't

know about it, and why not? . . . It conceivably could have been something related to the C.I.A."

The C.I.A.? From here on we tiptoe from stepping-stone to stepping-stone across a quagmire, and the trail does not lead only to the Mafia.

In 1955 and '56, the teenage Oswald worked as a messenger for Gerard Tujague's Forwarding Company. In 1961, a few months after Hoover wrote his "impostor" memo, an American and a Cuban exile negotiated to buy 10 Ford pickup trucks from a dealer in New Orleans. The dealer remembered the incident after the assassination, dug out the sales slip, and found that his memory was not playing tricks.

One of the prospective truck purchasers named on the form was "Oswald," listed as representing the Friends of Democratic Cuba. This was an anti-

Castro group, and the truck negotiation occurred during the buildup to the C.I.A.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion. While the real, apparently pro-Communist Oswald was far away in the Soviet Union, someone of the opposite political persuasion may have been using his name in the United States. A leading member of the Friends of Democratic Cuba was Oswald's onetime employer, Gerard Tujague.

Another luminary of the group was Guy Banister, a former senior F.B.I. agent who had retired, suffering from a serious brain disorder. He was a member of the paramilitary Minutemen organization and a disciple of myriad extreme right-wing causes. In 1963 Banister headed a New Orleans detective agency, in offices that served as a crossroads for anti-Castro exiles. Recent tenants of the building had included the Cuban Revolutionary Council, the umbrella group created by the C.I.A.

Some of the *pro*-Castro literature in Oswald's possession that summer, produced by the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, was stamped with the address of the premises that housed Banister's operation—"544 Camp St." Three people who worked there have said they saw Oswald in Banister's offices. Banister's secretary and lover, Delphine Roberts, has made detailed allegations, most recently last year. She says that her boss and Oswald appeared to know each other, and that she had the impression Oswald was working for Banister "undercover." "Don't worry," Banister told her when she voiced amazement at Oswald, with his *pro*-Castro propaganda, being in such

improbable company. "He's with us."

One of Banister's closest associates, in 1963, was Oswald's old C.A.P. acquaintance David Ferrie, also an anti-Castro activist. Both men helped Mafia boss Marcello in his fight against deportation. After the assassination, one of Marcello's lawyers went to Ferrie's home to say Oswald had been carrying Ferrie's library card when he was arrested. Nothing in the record confirms that such a card was found on Oswald. Yet Oswald's former New Orleans landlady and a neighbor said Ferrie visited them, too, asking about a library card. The landlady told us he seemed frantic. He also asked one of his former Civil Air Patrol cadets whether Oswald featured in old photographs of his C.A.P. unit.

Ferrie, Banister, and the Camp Street connection draw us away from suspicion of the Mafia alone, first to the notion that anti-Castro exiles may have been involved, then to the abhorrent possibility that some of their mentors in American intelligence conspired with them.

For many of the quarter of a million dispossessed exiles and their supporters, the name Kennedy was synonymous with betrayal. Betrayal in failing to provide more American backup at the Bay

of Pigs invasion, betrayal in resolving the missile crisis with a settlement that left Castro more entrenched than ever. Such critics did not believe the president's promise that he would one day celebrate victory with them in a free Havana. They were furious when, in the spring of 1963, Kennedy ruled out the use of U.S. troops and clamped down on unauthorized commando raids.

Ferrie had made an anti-Kennedy speech after the Bay of Pigs, a speech so vitriolic that he was asked to leave the podium. He had also been heard to say, "The president ought to be shot." Congress's Assassinations Committee was troubled by something a Cuban exile, Homer Echevarria, was reported to have said while negotiating an arms purchase in Chicago. The money for the guns would come through shortly, he promised, "as soon as we take care of Kennedy." The date was November 21, 1963.

The following afternoon in Washington, probably about two hours after hearing that his brother was dead, Robert Kennedy placed a call to the Ebbitt Hotel on H Street NW, a nondescript place the C.I.A. used to lodge visiting exiles. He apparently spoke

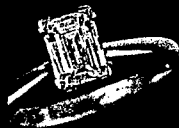
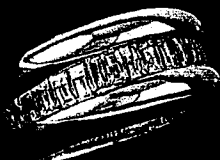
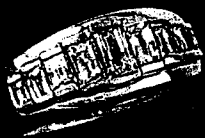
first with his Cuban protégé Harry Ruiz-Williams, just back from the meeting with C.I.A. officials he was to recall as "the most important I ever had on the problem of Cuba." Then he asked Williams to pass the phone to the man with him in the room, the journalist Haynes Johnson. Johnson, Kennedy knew, was close to the leading C.I.A.-backed exiles. "Robert Kennedy was utterly in control of his emotions when he came on the line," Johnson recalled, "and sounded almost studiously brisk as he said, 'One of your guys did it.'"

Kennedy was later to voice the suspicion that an element in the C.I.A. was responsible. "At the time," he was to tell his aide Walter Sheridan, "I asked [C.I.A. director] McCone . . . if they had killed my brother, and I asked him in a way that he couldn't lie to me, and they hadn't."

But McCone was a Kennedy appointee, and he had been kept out of the loop by some of those handling the dark side of anti-Castro operations. In pursuit of the Kennedys' own goal, the overthrow of Castro, some C.I.A. officers had been rubbing shoulders with mobsters and passionately committed exiles for too long, and had

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come to share the resentment toward the Kennedys. Several had been down-right insubordinate.

There had been Gerry Droller, the C.I.A. director of operations at the Bay of Pigs, inciting exile leaders to pretend to imprison him and his colleagues and then "go ahead with the program" if the administration tried to block the invasion. There had been William Harvey, the gun-toting operations coordinator, once introduced to President Kennedy as a real-life 007. He was infuriated by Robert Kennedy's attempts to micro-manage the secret war from Washington. Harvey referred to the attorney general as "that fucker," and to the Kennedy brothers as "fags."

Things came to a head during the most perilous moment of the missile crisis, when Bobby learned Harvey had sent several commando teams into Cuba. Harvey was removed from his Cuba job soon after, then sidelined to a posting in Rome. Congressional investigators have reeled off a string of possible reasons to suspect Harvey in the Kennedy assassination: He hated the Kennedys. He created the C.I.A.'s contingency plan for assassination. He selected criminals qualified for such work, and paid them out of C.I.A. funds. In the course of plotting to murder Castro, he had become close to the mobster Johnny Roselli, who in turn ran with Santo Trafficante, a primary suspect.

A torrent of prejudicial information about Oswald started to flow within hours of the assassination. Its purpose was to link Castro's Cuba with the alleged assassin, and it seems to track back time and again to U.S. intelligence or the exiles. Shortly after the wire services identified Oswald as the suspect, a Florida reporter named Hal Hendrix offered colleagues a detailed brief on Oswald the pro-Castro leftist. He said recently he did not recall doing so, but a reporter's contemporaneous notes indicate that he did. Hendrix, known to his colleagues as "the Spook," worked closely with the C.I.A. station in Miami.

Around the same time, in New Orleans, a Cuban exile named Alberto Fowler reportedly phoned Washington with similar details. He asked that NBC be advised that Oswald had been filmed passing out pro-Castro leaflets. Fowler would shortly join the board of a right-wing propaganda outfit called INCA, the Information Council of the Americas. INCA's director, Edward Butler, had that summer debated Oswald on the radio, drawing attention to his Communist

leanings. "Butler," says a 1970 C.I.A. document, "has always welcomed an opportunity to assist the C.I.A." INCA's chairman, Alton Ochsner, funded a newsletter edited by a longtime C.I.A. operative, William Gaudet. Gaudet's name appears next to Oswald's on the list of permit numbers relating to his trip to Mexico.

According to the late Clare Boothe Luce, wife of the founder of *Time* magazine and an ardent supporter of the exile cause, she too received a call late on the 22nd. It was one of her "Cuban boys," ringing with more background on Oswald, "the hired gun of a Cuban Communist assassination team." The caller referred to Oswald's recent travel to Mexico—a fact that did not become public knowledge until 48 hours later, but that was already known to U.S. intelligence. Was this merely

**"Flo, they're going to kill him. They're going to kill him when he gets to Texas."**

exploitation after the fact? Perhaps not.

A prominent anti-Castro propagandist in Mexico, Eduardo Borrell, spread word that Oswald, during his visit to Mexico City, had had a lengthy private meeting with the Cuban ambassador. Borrell told us last year that his main source for the lead, an exile with links to U.S. intelligence, gave him the information several weeks *before* the assassination.

A number of these yarns had a common thread, that Oswald had boasted he was a marksman with a yen to shoot either Castro or Kennedy. That allegation had first been seeded in Dallas, on the eve of the Mexico trip, when two Latins and an American paid an impromptu visit to the apartment of a young exile named Silvia Odio. Two months later, when Odio and her sister saw the television pictures of Oswald, they at once recognized him as the American in the group. Odio says she has never forgotten the phone call she received after the

visit from one of the two Latins. He had told her, with heavy emphasis, that "Leon Oswald" was an ex-Marine, an expert marksman who said President Kennedy should be shot.

It looked then, Odio says, as though the incident was part of "some kind of scheme or plot." Her story troubled the Warren Commission chief counsel enough for him to press the F.B.I. to prove or disprove her veracity. J. Edgar Hoover obliged, just three days before the report was delivered to the White House, saying his agents had found a man who admitted to having visited Odio, along with two companions, one of whom resembled Oswald, at the relevant time.

On that basis, the Warren Report included a last-minute note implying that the Odio episode was a case of mistaken identity. Yet the F.B.I. at first withheld from the Commission the fact that, faced with denials by his companions that they had ever met Silvia Odio, the convenient witness had recanted his story. And after the F.B.I. had belatedly come clean—when the Warren Report had gone to press—the Commission in turn failed to publish the information in its volumes of evidence. Years later, the House Assassinations Committee would describe the problem witness's story as having been "an admitted fabrication." A closer look at that witness takes us down a disquieting trail.

He was Loran Hall, alias Lorenzo Pascillo, a 33-year-old former army sergeant who had reportedly been trained in counterintelligence. In 1959, Hall had gone to Havana to work in the casino of the Capri Hotel, controlled by Mafia boss Trafficante. According to Hall, he shared a Quonset hut with Trafficante when they were confined in a Castro detention camp. Notes of Hall's interviews with congressional investigators, released last year, indicate that the C.I.A. contacted him the day after his release and repatriation. A C.I.A. document says Hall was of interest only "for debriefing." In 1989, however, his son said in court testimony that his father remained a C.I.A. operative for many years.

In 1963, Hall was embroiled in the secret war against Fidel Castro, training commandos and running guns. He has said he encountered Santo Trafficante again, at a meeting in Miami that spring, and was asked to take part in one of the C.I.A.-Mafia operations against Castro. While the true purpose of the mission remains in doubt, the record shows that it

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was launched with C.I.A. support, and had a C.I.A. code name, Operation Tilt. Hall did not in the end take part in the operation, which was lucky for him. Of the 10 commandos who were landed on the Cuban coast, not one returned alive.

In 1977, during the House Assassinations Committee inquiry, Hall testified only with reluctance, and on condition of immunity from prosecution. "As it stands right now," he explained in a taped interview that year, "there's only two of us left alive—that's me and Santo Trafficante. And as far as I am concerned we're both going to stay alive—because I ain't gonna say shit."

In a sense, though, Hall spoke volumes. What we now know about Operation Tilt not only indicates a link between Hall and the machinations of the C.I.A. and Santo Trafficante. It brings into focus another player, a man who—we learned from four witnesses—claimed to have personal knowledge of what happened in Dallas.

**T**he man who took him to meet Trafficante in 1963, Hall told the committee, was an electronics expert named John Martino. Martino, then 52, came on like a gangster without ever quite being identified as one. In 1959, after decades in the slot-machine rackets and a spell running surveillance at a Trafficante casino in Havana, Martino had been imprisoned by Castro. Although the Cubans charged him with trying to smuggle out a counterrevolutionary, Martino said that his principal mission had been to liberate gambling cash left behind by Trafficante. When he emerged from jail in 1962, white-haired and emaciated, he threw himself into the fight against Castro.

An early F.B.I. report tags Martino as Trafficante's "close friend," and the mobster was seen at his home in the mid-60s. It is also clear, from C.I.A. documents and from interviews with his widow and son, that Martino had contacts with the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. William "Rip" Robertson, a C.I.A. agent who had defied presidential orders by going ashore at the Bay of Pigs, was a familiar face at his home. Martino was in touch with former U.S. ambassador William Pawley, a champion of the exiles, whose C.I.A. file shows he was hand in glove with the Agency's highest officials. Martino worked closely with Trafficante's liaison with the C.I.A., John Roselli, and took part in at least one of the plots to kill Castro. And reportedly, by his own account, in a successful plot to

kill the president of the United States.

After the assassination, Martino would be one of the noisiest of those alleging that Castro had had Kennedy killed. Reminded of that in private years later, however, he would chuckle and say that that had been just a propaganda line—Kennedy had been killed by murderers of a different hue.

We found John Martino's widow, Florence, aged 80, living in the Miami Beach home she and her husband bought in the 50s. Her eldest surviving child, Edward, was using an adjoining

**To Newman,  
it looks as though the  
C.I.A. has been lying  
about Oswald for more  
than 30 years.**

apartment. Both had vivid memories of November 22, 1963. "John insisted he wanted to paint the breakfast room," Florence recalled. "We were supposed to go out to the Americana for lunch. . . . But it was on the radio about [the visit to] Dallas. . . . We were talking about President Kennedy. And he said, 'Flo, they're going to kill him. They're going to kill him when he gets to Texas.'" Florence questioned her husband briefly, got no meaningful response, and went out for a while. She was home again by the time Edward, 17 at the time, heard the news of the assassination on television. "When I called them in," he remembered, "my father went white as a sheet. But it wasn't like 'Gee whiz'; it was more like confirmation." "Then John was on the phone . . .," Florence remembered. "He got I don't know how many calls from Texas. I don't know who called him, but he was on the phone, on the phone, on the phone . . ."

In the course of the publicity that accompanied his release from jail in Cuba, Martino had met several times with a young *Newsday* reporter, John Cummings. After the assassination, Cummings began calling his contacts in the anti-Castro movement, including Martino. "He said then," Cummings told us, "that there had been two guns, two people involved. . . . Later, when I asked if

anti-Castro Cubans were involved, he said, 'That's right.' But very often with Martino, you knew there wasn't any point in asking more."

Cummings went on to become an award-winning reporter, and stayed in occasional touch with Martino until his death in 1975. "I called him in the spring," Cummings says, "and he told me he was ailing, and I went to see him. And he came out with a *mea culpa* about J.F.K. He told me he'd been part of the assassination of Kennedy. He wasn't in Dallas pulling a trigger, but he was involved. He implied that his role was delivering money, facilitating things. . . . He asked me not to write it while he was alive."

That same year, Martino talked with a business partner named Fred Claasen. "Martino said Oswald wasn't the hit man," Claasen said. "He told me, 'The anti-Castro types put Oswald together. . . . Oswald didn't know who he was working for. . . . He was to meet his contact at the Texas Theatre [the movie house where he was arrested]. . . . They were to meet Oswald in the theater and get him out of the country, then eliminate him. Oswald made a mistake. There was no way we could get to him. They had Ruby kill him.'"

Martino let drop two things to his wife after the assassination. He told her, "When they went to the theater and got Oswald, they blew it. . . . There was a Cuban in there. They let him come out." He said, "They let the guy go, the other trigger."

Some two months before the assassination, Florence Martino said, a "man from Washington, tall and large . . . in a dark suit, like from the State Department," had brought a young Cuban to the house. Later, her husband would ask her, "Flo, do you remember that good-looking kid that was sitting on the couch? He was involved. . . . He was one of them." A month after we taped Florence Martino's interview, she died.

The last time he met reporter Cummings, John Martino made an astonishing claim. "It came out of the blue," Cummings recalls. "John told me he had himself met Oswald several weeks before the assassination, in Miami. He said an F.B.I. agent named Connors asked him to come to a boat docked in Biscayne Bay, and introduced him to Oswald by name. The impression John got was that Oswald didn't know his ass from his elbow, didn't know what he was involved in. He thought the agent wanted him to meet Oswald because



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John was involved in anti-Communist activity, and Oswald was someone this agent was running."

We have not been able to trace a Miami agent called Connors answering the description provided by Cummings. F.B.I. files show Martino did have contacts *after* the assassination with an agent named James J. O'Connor, whom we tracked down in retirement. "John Martino?" he said. "I'm afraid all I could tell you is, yes, the name rings a bell. . . . I don't recall that he was a regular contact." O'Connor said he cannot recall whether he was in touch with Martino before the assassination. He said he never met Oswald at any time.

Cummings, an investigative reporter for more than 30 years, does not think the Martino allegation was just a crook's slur against a law-enforcement officer. "I believed Martino," he says. "It came across, just before he died, like a confessional. I was told that Connors, the agent he named, was in Counter-Intelligence."

Several pages that refer to Martino have been withdrawn from the Kennedy-assassination collection at the National Archives, at the insistence of the C.I.A. and the F.B.I.

The Martino episode raises grave questions about the F.B.I., as does the Sylvia Odio story—one that strongly suggested Oswald was being set up. Why did the Bureau tell the Warren Commission that Odio's testimony had an innocuous explanation, when it knew the sole witness statement to that effect—Loran Hall's—was a fabrication?

Former agent Harry Whidbee, whose reports on the case included the news that Hall had retracted, says the Kennedy investigation was "a hurry-up job. . . . We were effectively told, 'They're only going to prove [Oswald] was the guy who did it. There were no co-conspirators, and there was no international conspiracy.' . . . I had conducted a couple of interviews, and those records were sent back again and were

former F.B.I. supervisor Laurence Keenan, "we could say the investigation was over. 'Conspiracy' was a word which was *verboten*. . . . The idea that Oswald had a confederate or was part of a group or a conspiracy was definitely enough to place a man's career in jeopardy. . . . Looking back, I feel a cer-

tain amount of shame. This one investigation disgraced a great organization."

According to an aide, Warren Commission member Hale Boggs thought F.B.I. director Hoover himself "lied his eyes out to the Commission—on Oswald, on Ruby, on their friends, the bullets, the gun, you name it." Since the Mafia may have had a hand in the assassination—and knowing as we now do how Hoover long failed to pursue organized crime, hobnobbed with Mob associates, and feuded with the Kennedy brothers—some suspect the F.B.I. chief of personal

complicity. Yet Hoover's watchword, for half a century, was "Don't Embarrass the Bureau," and Oswald may simply have been the ultimate embarrassment.

"There's not much question," said Congressman Don Edwards, after chairing House committee hearings in 1975, "that both the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. are somewhere behind this cover-up. I hate to think what it is they are covering up—or who they are covering for." Edwards is himself a former F.B.I. agent. Long



**Top, Oswald's murderer, Jack Ruby (center), with his lawyer Melvin Belli (right) a month after Kennedy's assassination. Above, Mafia boss Carlos Marcello (with cigar) and his attorney in New Orleans two years before the assassination. Right, mobster Santo Trafficante appeared with Marcello at a Queens, New York, courthouse in 1966.**



rewritten according to Washington's requirements."

"Within days," says

# Investigation

after his work on the Commission was done, Senator Richard Russell said simply, "We have not been told the truth about Oswald."

The C.I.A. gave the Warren Commission a solemn assurance that Oswald had never been its agent or informant. Internal correspondence, however, shows that officials wanted the denial to be *carefully phrased*. Former C.I.A. director Allen Dulles, who served on the Commission, told his colleagues an Agency official might well not admit that someone had been an agent, even under oath.

Some wonder whether U.S. intelligence was able to pressure Oswald into service because he had committed some crime during his Marine service, or because he had homosexual leanings. Was his defection to the Soviet Union, following service on a top-secret U-2 spy base, a genuine defection? Or was Oswald a low-level tool in a Cold War intelligence operation? Why was there no "damage assessment" conducted by the navy, and why did the Passport Office post no "look-out card" following Oswald's defection in 1959? How come his estimated expenditures en route to Moscow exceeded his known funds? And there's a new oddity, discovered by us this year.

The official story has it that when Oswald defected he went to the American Embassy in Moscow only once, visiting only the consular office on the ground floor. Yet the widow of the assistant naval attaché, Joan Hallett, who worked as a receptionist at the embassy, says Consul Richard Snyder and the security officer "took him upstairs to the working floors, a secure area where the Ambassador and the political, economic, and military officers were. A visitor would never ever get up there unless he was on official business. I was never up there." According to Hallett, Oswald came to the embassy "several times" in 1959.

Congress's Assassinations Committee was "extremely troubled" by the fact that the C.I.A., which had previously employed Consul Snyder, was "unable to explain" a reference in his Agency file to "cover."

While in Moscow, Oswald was interviewed by Priscilla Johnson McMillan, a reporter for the North American Newspaper Alliance, who had been asked by one of Snyder's colleagues to "help us in communicating with him. . . ." After the assassination, in the United States, McMillan had early access to Oswald's widow and later wrote a book pinning the crime on Oswald. The House com-

mittee concluded that McMillan had "no clandestine relationship" with the C.I.A. In a batch of C.I.A. documents released since then, she is listed as a "Witting Collaborator OI code A1" in 1975, not long before her Oswald book was published.

"My bottom line," McMillan told us this year, "is that I never worked for the C.I.A. . . . I don't know what was in the mind of the person who put me down as a Witting Collaborator. . . . [In Moscow] I had no way of knowing who in the American Embassy, say, worked for the C.I.A. and who didn't." Other documents show that the Agency saw McMillan as "a promising source" in 1956, and made repeated contact with her in the years that followed. A high-level F.B.I. document, dated the day after the assassination, cites a State Department security officer as saying McMillan's contact with Oswald had been "official business."

For three decades, as the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. reluctantly disgorged first a trickle and then—last year—a flood of documents on Oswald, researchers have stared at code numbers, cryptonyms, and marginalia with untrained eyes. Now an unlikely champion has arrived to lead them by the hand. Until his retirement in August, John Newman was a major in U.S. Army Intelligence. At 43, he cannot discuss precisely what he has been doing for the past two decades, except to say that it involved intelligence analysis and a stint at the highest levels of the National Security Agency. Newman is also a trained historian, author of a study of American policy in Vietnam, and he is now writing an exposé of the relationship between the C.I.A. and Lee Harvey Oswald.

"In a sense," Newman says, "it doesn't matter to me who killed Kennedy. What matters now is whether we're told the truth about it today. If you study recent American history, the lies about Vietnam, Watergate, and on and on, and see the level of cynicism and malaise that's grown up, it's frightening." Newman works in the cluttered basement of his suburban home, moving between his computer and rows of boxes containing thousands of once secret government documents. "What I can do that people without my background never could," he says, "is to interpret these things, work out how many people saw a report, how often, when, and why. I can peer into the minds of the people who handled Oswald's files."

To Newman, it looks as though the

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# Investigation

Intelligence analyst John Newman surrounded by declassified government documents in his Maryland office. On the rear wall, a blown-up photo linking Oswald to Marcello associate David Ferrie, who claimed they had never met. Inset, from left, members of the Assassination Records Review Board at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., 1994: Henry Graff, Kermit Hall, William Joyce, John Tunheim, and Anna Nelson.



**John Martino claimed "there had been two guns, two people involved."**

C.I.A. has been lying about Oswald for more than 30 years. The cable that flashed from Moscow to Washington immediately after Oswald's defection said he had told embassy officials that he had "OFFERED SOVIETS ANY INFORMATION HE HAS ACQUIRED AS ENLISTED RADAR OPERATOR." The Oswald who worked on a spy-plane base had admitted he was a traitor. Yet we are asked to believe that the C.I.A. did not open a 201 file—a file

in its central records system—on Oswald until more than a year later.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist," Newman says, "to understand that the Agency's attempts to explain this do not wash. I have found hard documentary evidence that other files were opened on Oswald immediately, files that were very, very sensitive. The alarm bells were ringing, but then somebody pulled

the switch. I have senior Agency personnel on the record on this one. This is a configuration consistent either with Oswald being the object of a sensitive intelligence investigation or with Oswald as an intelligence asset."

Newman believes he has exploded the C.I.A.'s assurance to the Warren Commission that it never interviewed Oswald or communicated with him "directly or in any other manner." He points to a memo written three days after the assassination by an officer identified only as "T.B.C.," the chief of SR6 in the Soviet Russia Division, in which he recalled having discussed "the laying on of interview[s] through the [Domestic Contacts Division] or other suitable channels."

Last year, while poring over records at the National Archives, Newman

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HARRY BENSON

found a scrawled note on a C.I.A. document that read, "Andy Anderson OO on Oswald." "OO" was the office symbol for the C.I.A.'s Domestic Contacts Division, and would seem to refer to a debriefing of Oswald, on his return from the Soviet Union, by a D.C.D. officer called Andy Anderson. The former deputy chief of the division says that the C.I.A. did debrief Oswald. A former D.C.D. officer, Donald Deneselya, recalls reading such a debriefing report "four to five pages in length."

Newman notes that the SR6, the department headed by "T.B.C.," was also known as the Soviet Realities Branch, which among other things was responsible for "painting"—spy jargon for creating "legends" for—" sleeper" agents in the Soviet Union. The document bearing the scribble about the Oswald debriefing is a memorandum from CI/SIG, the mole-hunting unit in C.I.A. Counter-Intelligence.

It is not the debriefing itself, though, that concerns Newman. "That was their job. It's something they had every right to do. The Agency would not lie to cover for something that wouldn't get them in trouble anyway. The denial that they had any interest in Oswald is a big billboard

saying there's something else. The denial is part of a broader lie. . . . There's an unexplained anomaly, and among the questions it poses is whether or not the Agency had an association with Oswald."

In the shadows of Oswald's life back in the United States flicker hints of a relationship with the C.I.A. Oswald's friend and mentor until the spring of 1963 was a Russian émigré named George de Mohrenschildt. He later claimed he was cleared to associate with Oswald by a D.C.D. agent. A senior C.I.A. officer, Frank Hand, told a colleague that the Agency had placed a "control agent"—not de Mohrenschildt—close to Oswald and his wife to monitor their activities. Hand, the files show, was involved in a high-level discussion of the plots to kill Castro.

A prominent Cuban exile leader, Antonio Veciana, says he encountered Oswald in the company of the exile's U.S. case officer—whom he believed to be C.I.A.—in late summer of 1963. According to Veciana, the case officer was deeply involved in anti-Castro operations and fiercely critical of President Kennedy.

When Oswald went to Mexico, seven weeks before the assassination, his visits

to the Soviet and Cuban Embassies were picked up by C.I.A. surveillance. A recently released congressional report quotes several former Agency officers, including the 1963 Mexico station chief, Winston Scott, as saying that C.I.A. cameras got pictures of Oswald during these visits. Why, then, has the Agency never produced such photographs, not even for the Warren Commission?

The C.I.A. has acknowledged that tape recordings, the harvest of telephone taps, were made of conversations Oswald apparently had with employees at the Communist embassies. They claim these tapes were routinely destroyed before the assassination. Yet a senior officer who served in Mexico at the time told us they existed after November 22. Former Warren Commission lawyers William Coleman and David Slawson tell us they heard such tapes, courtesy of the C.I.A., months after the assassination. If so, where are the tapes now?

John Newman has found buried treasure in the files on the Mexico visit. He has discovered a sin of omission, a gap in the record where it should chronicle the central theme of Oswald's life before the assassination—the Cuba connection. "This is one of the more sensitive

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pieces," Newman says, "an enormous internal lie by the Agency about Oswald. Mexico is part of a larger pattern, the withholding of information within the C.I.A. itself. It's premeditated, not accidental, and I can prove it. Some of the C.I.A. employees involved are alive. We have a presidentially appointed panel in place, the Records Review Board, empowered to subpoena people and ask them hard questions. What we have here is a major problem for the C.I.A. I'm now certain," says Newman, "that Oswald was the center of attention of many people in the C.I.A.—he was either part of an operation or an operation was built around him."

In the C.I.A. releases, we found a revealing batch of papers dated two years before the assassination. They reflect liaison between the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. on penetration of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, the pro-Castro group to which Oswald would proclaim an affiliation in 1963. And they reveal that the C.I.A. side of the operation was directed by a Western Hemisphere Division officer, "Dave Phillips" of "C/WH/4/Propaganda."

David Phillips, who rose to become head of the division, has long been a controversial figure in the assassination story. He was in charge of anti-Castro operations in Mexico in late 1963, and would one day run into trouble with Congress's Assassinations Committee. Chief counsel Blakey later said dryly that the committee had been "less than satisfied with his candor."

A former C.I.A. Clandestine Services officer who worked with Phillips, Joseph Smith, told us that the Agency's attitude toward the Fair Play for Cuba Committee—the F.P.C.C.—was "one of great hostility. . . . We did everything we could to make sure it was not successful—to smear it and I think to penetrate it. I think Oswald may have been part of a penetration attempt."

Members of the F.P.C.C. wondered constantly whether their colleagues were government stool pigeons. One former New Jersey member, Hal Verb, says that suspicion even fell on one of the group's founding directors, a CBS Radio journalist named Richard T. Gibson. While Gibson staunchly denies any disloyalty, recently released C.I.A. documents include a letter in which—more than a decade later—the Agency formally asked a commercial company "to assist C.I.A. by placing on retainer Mr. Richard T. Gibson." "How would that have come

out? . . .," said Gibson when we told him about the document. "I'm amazed. It sounds a little bit like disinformation to me." He suggested that the letter might be about a different man with the same name and middle initial.

The C.I.A. and the F.B.I. were turning the screws on the F.P.C.C. in the weeks before the assassination. The group's New York office had been burgled in April 1963, and again in October. Oswald wrote a string of letters to the F.P.C.C. that year, and the files show the F.B.I. read or copied at least two of them. Oswald was busily involved in Fair Play for Cuba activity in 1963.

On September 16, 1963, the C.I.A.

**F.B.I. agent Hosty flushed Oswald's note down the toilet hours after Ruby shot Oswald.**

advised the F.B.I. that it was "giving some consideration to countering the activities of [the F.P.C.C.] in foreign countries," and to "planting deceptive information which might embarrass the Committee." The day after the message went to the Bureau, Oswald applied for a tourist card to visit Mexico—there to flaunt his F.P.C.C. membership at the Cuban Embassy.

Like the C.I.A., the F.B.I. solemnly assured the Warren Commission that Oswald had never acted for the Bureau "in any capacity." J. Edgar Hoover said every agent who would have had knowledge of a recruitment attempt had signed an affidavit saying it never happened. Two agents who had been involved in pre-assassination inquiries into Oswald's activity in New Orleans, however, signed no such affidavit. One of them, Milton Kaack, became apoplectic when we contacted him in retirement years later. He cried, "No. No. . . . You won't get anything out of me," and hung up.

As with the C.I.A., rumors of an Oswald link have hung around the F.B.I. like smoke on a windless day. A story that the alleged assassin was a paid informant, with a payroll number, was one of the first problems faced by the Warren

Commission. We tracked down a former F.B.I. informant who says he learned Oswald was indeed used by the F.B.I. in New Orleans. Joseph Burton, now running a modest locksmith's business in Plant City, Florida, says he was employed for two years in the early 70s to pose as a Marxist and infiltrate radical groups. Sometimes he was accompanied by a woman from New Orleans, also an F.B.I. asset. The Bureau has admitted that Burton was "a valuable and reliable source" and was paid for his services. A senior official confirmed to *The New York Times* that the woman, whose name was not revealed, performed missions abroad for the F.B.I.

"I did several trips with her," Burton told us, "and she said she and her husband—they were both working for the Bureau—knew Oswald had been connected with the F.B.I., in the New Orleans office. Her Bureau contact, she said, told her Oswald had been an informant. . . . I talked about Oswald with the agent I usually met with in New Orleans. And he said, 'Oh, we owned him,' or something to that effect. They always used that statement if they were paying someone to cooperate with them."

Researchers will confront the Assassination Records Review Board with a new twist in the case, one that may prove revelatory about Oswald and the F.B.I. Fresh information, gathered by Dallas journalists Ray and Mary La Fontaine, suggests an astonishing scenario. Drawing on interviews and previously hidden records, the La Fontaines present evidence which, if valid, indicates that Oswald knew Jack Ruby before the assassination. Shortly after his arrest on November 22—before Ruby's name was linked to the assassination story in any way—Oswald reportedly told a cellmate he and Ruby had been present a few days earlier at a meeting in a motel. The discussion at the meeting had been about guns and money.

The new research reveals that in November 1963 F.B.I. agents and agents of the I.R.S.'s Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Tax were indeed involved—though working on separate agendas—in investigating a weapons-trafficking network linked to impending exile operations against Castro's Cuba. Jack Ruby's auto mechanic, Donnell Whittier, was arrested in possession of stolen weapons just four days before the assassination.

The La (Continued on page 139)



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(Continued from page 132) Fontaines, whose book on the case is to be published next spring, suggest the F.B.I. has something significant to hide about the episode. They note that one of the agents on the gunrunning case, James Hosty, twice visited Oswald's wife, inquiring about him, in November 1963.

When the Bureau typed up the alleged assassin's handwritten address book and sent it to the Warren Commission, it omitted the name, address, and license number of James Hosty. And there was something else, something horrendous, which did not come to light until 1975. Two weeks before the assassination, Oswald had gone to the Dallas office of the F.B.I. and delivered a note, addressed to Hosty. We shall never know what it said, because—probably acting on orders relayed from J. Edgar Hoover himself—Hosty flushed it down the toilet hours after Ruby shot Oswald.

Hosty testified that he never met Oswald. We obtained a copy of an affidavit given to the Senate Intelligence Committee by a former agent who once worked with Hosty, Carver Gayton. According to Gayton, Hosty told him he had "listed Oswald as a P.S.I. (Potential Security Informant)," although—Hosty said—he had never met him. The F.B.I. has admitted that another agent, Charles Flynn, tried to develop Jack Ruby as a P.C.I. (Potential Criminal Informant) four years before the assassination, and met with him nine times in a period during which Ruby made several visits to Cuba.

"Everyone will know who I am now," Lee Oswald is said to have remarked under interrogation. Yet, 30 years on, we still cannot be sure who he really was. Eight months after Dallas, J. Edgar Hoover was asked privately whether Oswald had really been the assassin. "If I told you what I really know," he replied, "it would be very dangerous to this country. Our whole political system could be disrupted."

David Phillips, the C.I.A. disinformation specialist in charge of Cuban operations in Mexico during the Oswald visit, left behind an unpublished manuscript for a novel when he died in 1988. It features a character apparently modeled on himself, a C.I.A. officer who served in Mexico City. "I was one of the two case officers who handled Lee Harvey Oswald," the fictional character writes in a letter. "We gave him the mission of killing Fidel Castro in Cuba. . . . I don't know *why* he killed Kennedy. But I do know he used precisely the plan we had devised against Castro. Thus the C.I.A.

did not anticipate the president's assassination, but it was responsible for it. I share that guilt."

Before Phillips died, he had several conversations with Kevin Walsh, a former Assassinations Committee staffer now working as a private detective in Washington, D.C. "My private opinion," he told Walsh in all apparent seriousness, "is that J.F.K. was done in by a conspiracy, likely including rogue American intelligence people."

The known suspects are all beyond questioning now, Oswald in a reinforced grave at Fort Worth's Rose Hill cemetery, Ruby in a Jewish cemetery in Chicago, Carlos Marcello in his tomb near New Orleans, Santo Trafficante behind bars at last, in a closed mausoleum at the Unione Italiana cemetery on the outskirts of Tampa.

"Consider the possible reality," former Warren Commission counsel Burt Griffin suggested to the Assassinations Committee, "that under the American system of civil liberties and the requirement of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, that it is virtually impossible to prosecute or uncover a well-conceived and well-executed conspiracy."

In Mexico last year we interviewed Stanley Watson, a former C.I.A. deputy chief of station. Though aged and retired, he deftly fended off our questions. Watson agreed, though, that there are still secrets about this case. "I don't think we'll ever know now," he murmured, "or at least not until after . . ." His voice trailed off, and then he added, "I was just about to commit an indiscretion."

"Most of us want to see full disclosure now," says John Newman. "Either there's secrecy because we're protecting legitimate secrets still, or somebody's engaged in efforts to cover their tracks because there's something criminal there. And I think the American people say, 'It's time we knew.'"

"We had the Warren Commission, and we had the House Committee, and now we have these five individuals of the Assassination Records Review Board. It's an unprecedented moment in a modern democracy, when a law has to be passed by the Congress to say we're going to tell the truth about something. I don't think there'll ever again be a chance to convince the public that we're getting the truth on this thing."

In the months to come, the Review Board may take us closer to the elusive truth. If it does not, the mysteries of the Kennedy assassination may remain forever in limbo. □

Fresh representative quote from the most disreputable sources and  
largely a rehash with some particulars highlighted.  
The main purpose is to work to confirm the work  
of others