

How to Succeed By Failure; or Spooking the Spooks' Spook

William Buckley is the most articulate, persuasive, urbane and sophisticated spokesman of the Right. He is a long-time friend of E. Howard Hunt. He is, in fact, more than just a good friend. He is godfather to Hunt's children, alternate beneficiary of the late Mrs. Dorothy Hunt and, when Hunt ran into legal trouble as his wife's executor, rushed to Hunt's rescue in the Montgomery County, Maryland, courtroom.

This Hunt-Buckley more-than-friendship dates to their Mexico City meeting, when Hunt was really a CIA agent although accredited as a United States diplomat. It is bound tightly in the brotherhood of political think-alikes.

Buckley presents himself as a Right moderate. He is in reality to the right of Nixon. He and Nixon split after Buckley served him as a director of Nixon's official propaganda agency, the United States Information service, when Buckley felt that Nixon's forced openings to China and the USSR were selling out to The Enemy.

Nixon, ever vindictive, had Buckley's The Firing Line talk show cancelled by the Public Television Network, which is dependent upon the tax money Nixon controlled by stacking its board of directors. In fact, killing the Buckley show gave Nixon the opportunity to pretend political impartiality. He killed all the public nets liberal and minority shows with the single swing of a single axe.

Money, religion and political belief have never troubled Buckley. He was born rich, Catholic and conservative and has been faithful to all his inheritances.

He was also born with a fine intelligence, a native wit and an automatic smile. Together they enable him to say the most outrageous things, deliver the meanest personal insults, while seeming sweet and reasonable.

However,

The combination is hard to beat, particularly when he controls the show. Buckley can hold his own ^{anywhere} with the best the liberals have to offer. On commercial TV he confronted Gore Vidal during the 1968 conventions and Kenneth Galbreath during those in Miami four years later. His following was justly proud of him both times.

The one time I met him he did not live up to this billing. It was in New York City,

supper time December 5, 1966. That was during the height of the controversy swirling around the Warren Commission's unsatisfactory Report on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. I had gone to New York for a confrontation with four former Commission lawyers. Ruggero Orlando, then correspondent for Italian TV and Italy's equivalent of Life magazine, E'Europeo, took me to meet my Italian publisher, the late Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. He asked Feltrinelli and me to accompany me to a press party for some motorcycling, leather-jacketed poet.

As he took us outlanders around introducing us, Ruggero spotted Buckley holding court right in the middle of the east, the longest wall of the ballroom. Learning neither of us had met Buckley, Orlando led us to a sort of receiving line to wait our turns. One might have thought the party was Buckley's.

When the ever-smiling Great One unfolded his arms from his chest to shake hands, Ruggero described me as the author of *Whitewash*, this "fine book on the Kennedy assassination." Haughtily. and I then felt intending offense, Buckley was needlessly impolite. He said, in his most biting softness of voice, "I haven't read that one yet."

Without being aware of conscious thought, I smacked back with, "That's obvious, or you'd not have made all the stupid mistakes you have."

He had no kidney for carrying it further. He was without quick comeback, sparkling repartee. In those days at least he was not the TV terror of *The Firing Line*. He turned, immediately, for polite, pseudo-literary chitchat with Ruggero, who was aghast at my vigor.

There is a point in this memoir of the past. It says something of the thinking and genuineness of those with the Buckley/Hunt pretensions. Buckley was no less unaware of what his petty bureaucracy was doing for him that are those against whom he inveighs in government. It is not merely that there was little more topical than the JFK assassination those days, nor was it that *Whitewash*, the first of the books exposing the Warren Commission was then a best seller. Buckley was a wheel in the large estate of Albert Kohlberg, of China Lobby fame. Believing there were debating points to be scored against that bete noir of his politics, Earl Warren, Buckley had asked a literary figure he

whom I had a friendly relationship during his years in Washington, Colonel Samuel Fernando Castillo. 'Nando was one of Washington's great cooks, one of the more flamboyant playboys of the fabled stable from the Dominican Republic, a close relative by married of the late Dominican Dictator, Rafael Trujillo, then not yet assassinated, and was ~~Trujillo~~ Trujillo's military attache to the United States.)

Hunt's part in the United States' deadly, costly and anti-democratic invasion of the Dominican Republic shortly after the JFK assassination made Lyndon Johnson President is not as clear at this writing. I believe and he has given indications that he served a significant role in that disaster.

Juan Bosch had been elected in the first free Dominican election. He was turned out by a military revolt. JFK had broken diplomatic relations and refused ~~all~~ ^{his} military's importunings to recognize their brother's regime in that rarely-free land. Three weeks after Lyndon Johnson became President/^{he did recognize} the Dominican military dictatorship. When it seemed certain that Bosch would again win an election, even when it was not free, the military rose up again, again seeing The Red Devil in democracy, and Johnson poured American troops into Dominica. He was fortified, in his eyes, in this international brigandage, by a secret CIA memorandum that labelled everyone to the left of the Catholic cardinals as "Communists". It bears the Hunt trademark and it is an ideal reflection of Hunt thinking and political belief.

(I have this stuff and can expand greatly if needed. I kept files on it contemporaneously because from the outset the ultimate truth and the immorality and illegality of what was done was apparent. I had spent some years as a political/^{and intelligence} analyst in the government and specialized in Latin America.)

Between the Guatemalan and Dominican fascist revolutions there was the CIA's Cuban adventure that could never have "succeeded" and would have been a greater disaster than it was if it had lasted longer. Here as with other of Hunt's CIA adventurings we may have to await his personal boastings to learn his role or his romanticizing of it. There is no doubt he was a top dog. My own feeling from the time his name was found in the pocket notebook of a Watergating Cuban was that he is the

mysterious and among revanchist and most of all among Batista Cubans the revered, almost sainted "Frank Bender", the field-operations chief.

That it was, from concept, a pre-ordained loser also points to Hunt.

This was the nuclear ago. One man could have incinerated the world and almost did. With absolutely no chance of changing the then-popular Cuban government.

Castro did not have to depend upon terror. The terror from which he had succeeded the Cuban masses, the terror of which so many of the revanchist escapees had been part, was enough to make him popular among the majority of the poor, uneducated and hungry. That there was a viable anti-Castro underground was the dream of the CIA and its ~~XXXXX~~ Hunts. There was none and there was no uprising to meet the aborted ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ United States invasion by Cuban mercenaries many of whom considered themselves patriots.

This milestone in the United States long road of refusing to learn to live with the power that ~~ex~~ came to it from the combination of the destruction visited upon all other major world powers in World War II and its natural endowments was a prelude to Vietnam. It also made Hunt the national hero of the revenge-seeking Cubans within the United States.

When the first accounts of the Watergate arrests gave fake Cuban names, my mind flashed back to my own investigations of the JFK assassination, in which there was an immediate and strange Cuban intrusion accompanied by broad inferences of revanchist involvement. When the right names appeared, they were not strange to me.

And almost immediately upon the secret of Hunt being exposed by the ineptness that is typical of this odd breed of self-styled, revenge-seeking patriots, there was the leak of an identity for him.

This was one of the more clever workings of the CIA's Department of Disinformation. It fooled the entire press corps, if those who should have known better were, indeed, fooled.

It was inevitable that the Hunt/Bay of Pigs/CIA connection would surface. So, it was "admitted". He was described as working for the CIA in a minor Bay of Pigs role where he used the alias of "Eduardo".