

Spotlight on Dead Flyer

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NEW ORLEANS — The political associations of David Ferrie — now described as the key figure in a New Orleans "conspiracy" to kill President Kennedy — began to come to light this week.

And Cubans of all political philosophies began to hold their breath.

Examples:

- Ferrie, a former airline pilot and self-labeled psychologist and hypnotist, presented a bitterly anti-Kennedy speech on the Bay of Pigs invasion in the summer of 1961. He was introduced to his New Orleans civic club audience as a pilot who participated in the invasion itself.

- Sometime before 1958, however, Ferrie solicited funds from a prominent New Orleans businessman to "help bring Castro out of the Sierra Maestra Mountains" and to install him in power.

- New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's investigators believe a Cuban infantryman in the Bay of Pigs force was in Ferrie's apartment shortly before the "initial planning" of the Kennedy murder began.

These isolated bits of information, admittedly circumstantial and conflicting, are expected to fan speculation that the alleged conspirators were political agents rather than mercenaries or isolated psychopaths.

Although the known facts do not yet document Garrison's "right-wing plot" theory — or the Castro plot idea which others prefer — right and left wing Cubans alike have reason for fear as Garrison's investigation progresses.

AT A PARTY

Other fragments about Ferrie's political contacts were revealed in the testimony of the most important Garrison witness yet, 25 year old Perry Raymond Russo.

The cool and verbally meticulous Russo, a political science graduate of New Orleans' Loyola University, stated that Ferrie suggested Cuba as one possible haven for the plotters after the assassination.

At a party which preceded the "initial planning" session in Ferrie's apartment, several Cubans or other Latins in olive military-style dungarees were present, Russo testified.

"He was a man prone to the spectacular," said Russo of the bizarre-appearing Ferrie, who was found dead in his apartment Feb. 22. "What he didn't do with words he would do with deeds.

"It was impossible to argue with him. If you were talking about a point in a book, he could tell you the page number."

In 1961, Ferrie was reported seen frequently in the company of Sergio Arcacha-

Smith, the New Orleans director of the anti-Castro Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front.

Arcacha-Smith made many enemies among New Orleans Cubans, according to one refugee source, simply by being seen with a "man with a face like that."

BAY OF PIGS

Later that year, Ferrie was invited to speak on the Bay of Pigs invasion failure before the New Orleans chapter of the Military Order of World Wars.

Ferrie spoke emotionally about Kennedy's "double cross" of the invasion force and his failure to authorize adequate air cover. Several walked out and the chairman adjourned the meeting abruptly.

In August 1961 Ferrie was arrested in neighboring Jefferson parish on charges of committing a crime against nature with a juvenile. A search of his home, as reported in a New Orleans newspaper on August 16, revealed several maps of Cuba and rifles with ammunition.

A news story on the following day stated that Ferrie was charged with intimidating a juvenile witness in the offense by saying that "a Cuban friend would take care of him if he didn't sign a paper saying he would not prefer charges."

In 1963, Ferrie worked as an investigator for the late New Orleans attorney Guy Bannister, a man known for his ultra-conservative speeches on the New Orleans luncheon circuit.