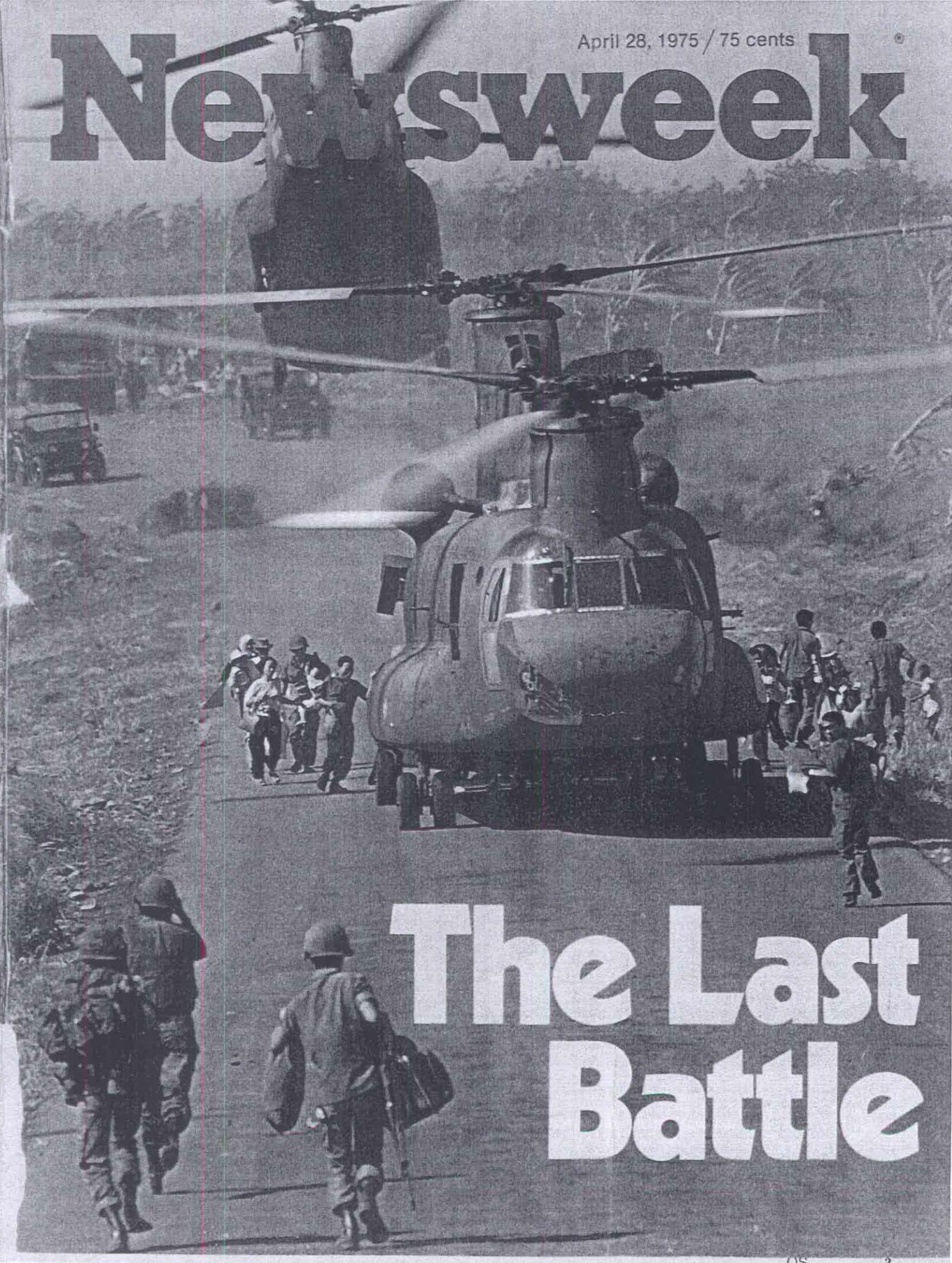
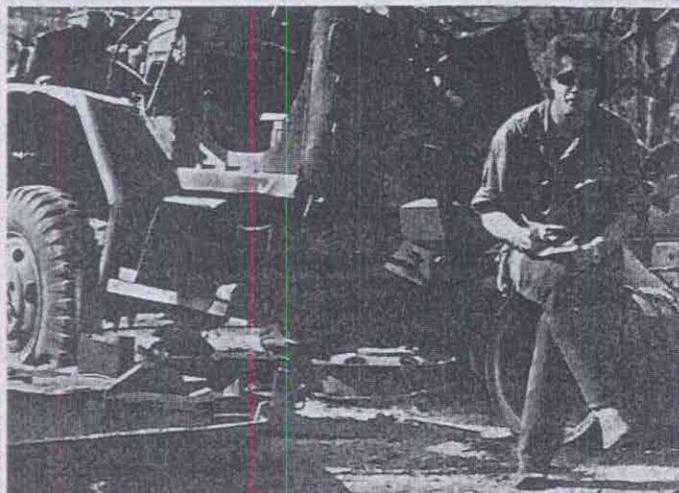


April 28, 1975 / 75 cents

# Newsweek



## The Last Battle



Proffitt at Xuan Loc: No longer a city, now a killing ground

## The Last Battle Page 16

History dealt America one of its ironies last week. At the moment that the U.S. began celebrating the Bicentennial of its fight for independence, two nations it struggled to help were in the process of losing theirs. As Gerald Ford stood with a group dressed up in Minuteman uniforms in Concord, Mass., South Vietnamese soldiers stood in the rubble of Xuan Loc and prepared for their country's last battle. Newsweek correspondent Nicholas C. Proffitt and photographer Nik Wheeler were the first Western journalists to cover the fighting in Xuan Loc—a deathtrap that could become the Dienbienphu of 1975. (Newsweek cover photo by Hiroji Kubota—Magnum.)

## Operation Baby Lift

In recent weeks, hundreds of South Vietnamese orphans have been brought to the U.S. for adoption by Americans. Some have called it a sop for national guilt feelings, some see it as an act of humanity. Columnists Shana Alexander (page 88) and Meg Greenfield (page 31) take two different points of view.



## Bribes Galore? Page 70

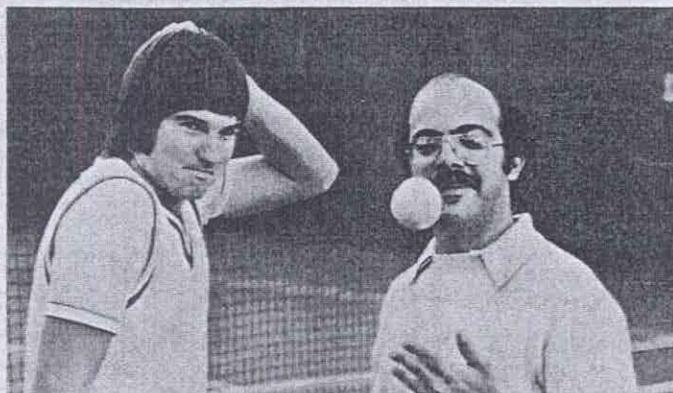
The illegal corporate campaign contributions of Watergate may be peanuts compared with the bribes that some companies seeking business abroad dole out to foreigners. Three Federal agencies are inquiring into what one official called "corruption on a staggering scale."

## Inquest on JFK Page 36

Once again, an odd-lot assortment of conspiracy theorists is picking through the evidence in the John F. Kennedy assassination file—the film frames, the bullets and bullet fragments, the eyewitness accounts—and spinning it all into ever more elaborate theories about who killed JFK and why. Are they on to something—or does the Warren commission's judgment that a loner named Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole assassin still stand the test of more than a decade's time?



The JFK file: A murder bullet



Connors with Bonventre: Superstardom and \$250,000

## Bad Boy of Tennis Page 52

A boastful, bumptious brat named Jimmy Connors, 22, will meet Australia's 30-year-old John Newcombe at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas this week in a \$250,000 contest that could confirm Connors's role as the newest superstar of tennis. With reports from Associate Editor Peter Bonventre, Sports editor Pete Axthelm profiles the contenders and previews the match.

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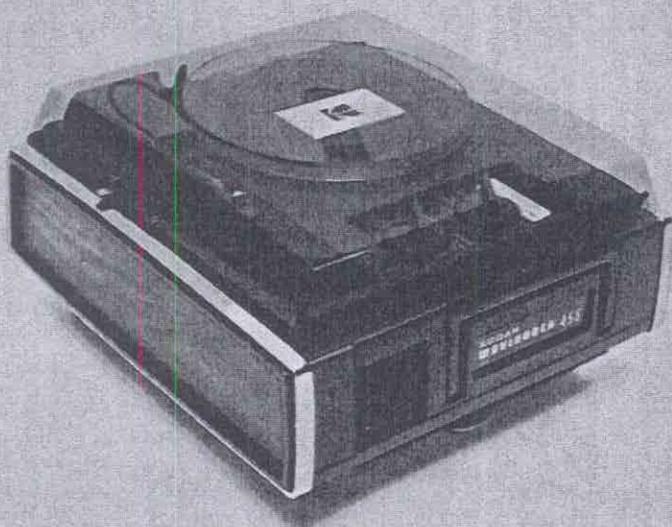
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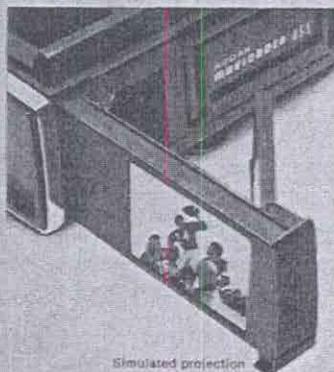
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## Kodak shapes up the movie projector.

You'll wonder where the reels have gone when you first look at the Kodak Moviedeck projector. They're there, of course. But Kodak's found a way to keep them inside, out of the way.



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## Letters

### The Vietnam Debacle

It is obvious that the South Vietnamese are suffering because they believed in the American will to fight against oppression. I am alarmed and embarrassed at my government's apathy toward the South Vietnamese people. For our Bicentennial, I think we should fly the Stars and Stripes at half-staff the entire year.

CLYDE WARNER

Bisbee, Ariz.

■ Those eighteen holes the President played while living high off the hog in plush Palm Springs (NATIONAL AFFAIRS, April 14) were obviously not on the links but in his head. Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Ford putted while Da Nang collapsed. What kind of leadership is this?

MARY-GENE MARR

Laguna Beach, Calif.

■ We should rid ourselves of guilt about "betrayal." We did our best; we poured in help equal to the combined budgets of many nations, and we made the supreme sacrifice of a heavy toll in lives.

J. ZAKUSIA

Detroit, Mich.

■ In covering the tragic Vietnam story, you failed to make it absolutely clear that the refugees are fleeing war, not the Communists. They are "voting with their feet"—but voting to escape bombing, shelling and the unknown that a massive transition in government control brings.

T. E. HILTON

Brooklyn, N.Y.

■ When President Ford signed the tax bill, he said the budget had reached its limit—not one more red cent would be spent to aid the American people. But he expects the American people to shell out a billion more dollars for a corrupt dictator on the other side of the world.

DAVE KESSELING

Dover, Del.

■ Re the agony of South Vietnam, may I suggest that "honorable mention" be given the aggressor, North Vietnam, without whom this holocaust would not be possible?

INES K. HORTON

Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.

### Leary's Progress

In these times of so much depressing news, I was disappointed that your March 10 issue printed a heavier than necessary report about my current transitions.

I was not paroled, but released from California custody. The Federal sentence I am serving was not for smuggling but for

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## God Bless the CIA

An article appeared in this space a few weeks ago entitled "Abolish the CIA!" It began by describing in some considerable detail the Viet Cong bombing of the American Embassy in Saigon in 1965. I was the CIA chief of station at that time. I have a different perspective on what happened that morning and on the way Americans should be thinking about the CIA these days.

The American Embassy was indeed bombed on March 30, 1965, by a Viet Cong terrorist squad who packed an old sedan with about 350 pounds of C-4 plastic explosive and then rolled the car up under my window in the embassy. They set off a time-pencil detonator, began a fire fight with local police on the sidewalk and were blown up with them when the car detonated just a few seconds later.

One of my secretaries was killed instantly, two of my officers were permanently and totally blinded, and many others on my staff were injured to one degree or another, myself included. I was led away from the embassy, bleeding like a stuck pig because that's the way all head wounds bleed. Besides the American casualties, more than a score of innocent South Vietnamese passers-by were killed by the blast and many wounded.

### GRIM PROPOSAL

This incident apparently served to provide the author of the other article with the notion that I had lied to him. He reported that the Viet Cong terrorists had finally opened his eyes and thus led him to the grim proposal that the real way to celebrate America's Bicentennial is by abolishing the CIA entirely.

I find this proposal singularly frivolous and downright dangerous. Whether one likes the notion or not, the fact remains that there are many tigers roaming loose in the world today; they are unfriendly to the United States and eagerly await the opportunity to leap upon us if the risk is not too great.

In certain quarters it has become stylish to say that the cold war never really existed but was made up by cold war warriors to justify their own predilections for adventure and thrills.

The fact is that European countries during the late 1940s, the '50s and the '60s were threatened and gravely endangered by hostile forces mainly bank-

rolled and guided by the Soviet Union and its executive intelligence arm, the KGB. There were murders, kidnappings and hundreds of other acts of violence and terror, perpetrated by the Soviet Union and its allies of Eastern Europe. Nations were dominated, threatened and overthrown, and whole peoples were thrust into a form of political society that they detested and that they fled whenever opportunity presented itself.

Those who now say that the cold war never really happened have apparently forgotten or have chosen to forget how the present Polish Communist state was established, or how the defenestration of Eduard Benes in Prague in 1948 signaled the disappearance of a democratic Czechoslovakia and the simultaneous birth of the Communist state we know today. The act of suppression was repeated by the Soviets in 1968. The Russians were saying: Once we get you, we will keep you.

### MARVELOUS BRAVERY

Hungary experienced a similar trauma in 1947, but after it de-Communized itself with marvelous bravery and purity in 1956, the country was overrun by the Soviets yet again.

During all of these years in Europe there were no armies at war in the field but there were friendly intelligence services, along with the CIA, who were caught up in this not-so-silent combat.

I should point out here that my Washington-based CIA colleagues have always performed magnificently and the great value of their work has always been underrated. There were also those of us who were privileged to work in somewhat closer contact with dangerous and distinctly unfriendly opponents.

In today's world there is a large area of policy that is primarily the domain of our State Department Foreign Service, much maligned but always reliable and dedicated. Similarly, there is our military establishment in all of its branches, strong, tough, devoted, but not so well-equipped as the jungle-world of 1975 requires. These two arms, our diplomatic service and our military establishment, are, however, ill equipped to deal with the covert foreign arm of the Soviet Union, the KGB, and its allies in countries under its influence or under attack.

This is where the CIA comes in.

Our motivation for serving in the CIA

has been misrepresented as a "sport."

While I regret not one minute of my service with the CIA, at home or abroad, I must say I never considered it to be a sport. There were moments of great hilarity, long periods of tedium and hard, slogging work, and occasionally moments of acute terror.

The foreign operations of the CIA must exist to carry out certain tasks in the American nation's interests that the diplomatic service cannot do and that our military establishment cannot do short of war. To think otherwise is to ignore the real world as it exists and will exist for a long time to come, and to put the safety and freedom of the American nation in real jeopardy.

Let nobody be in doubt about this: so as long as the United States exists as a free nation, the Soviet Union perceives it as a threat to its existence as a system. Détente is possible up to a point, but prudence and carefulness must be ever-present considerations as we seek to find a way in which we can all inhabit this planet peacefully without major war.

### UNFORGIVING HISTORY

During this continuing uproar about the CIA one can only imagine the wonderment with which the Soviet Politburo and KGB leadership must observe these antics on the American political scene. They are being offered precisely the goal they would dearly love to achieve: the abolition of the CIA. To me it is tragic that there are apparently serious and influential American voices now being raised in favor of such abolition. History has a way of making its participants pay, and sometimes pay heavily, for their errors. Further, history by and large does not offer second chances. If we should misread or misunderstand history so badly as actually to abolish the CIA, an unforgiving history will exact its penalty from all of us, and from our children.

*Peer de Silva is a retired CIA officer who has served as CIA chief of station in various countries of Europe and Asia. He was CIA chief of station in Saigon from December 1963 until April 1965, when he was evacuated due to wounds received during a terrorist bombing.*

## TRIALS:

### A Reputation Retrieved

The jury was taking too long. All the courtroom buffs agreed that the bribery case against Big John Connally was remarkably flabby and the defense had been superb; a snap acquittal was almost a foregone conclusion. Yet the jurors were heading into their sixth hour of deliberation, and the former Treasury Secretary and Texas governor paced the corridor outside the Washington courtroom in growing apprehension. Connally's wife, Nellie, confided that her stomach was rumbling; Connally himself chatted about energy shortages and Soviet politics—and nervously rattled a fistful of coins. He was reading a Bible when the jurors filed back into the courtroom, their eyes averted and their faces blank. But after all the suspense, the verdict was almost anticlimactic: a resounding "not guilty" on both counts.

Connally's acquittal represented the first major defeat for the Watergate special prosecutors—and raised the question why he had been indicted in the first place. The charge, that for only \$10,000 a millionaire had peddled his influence with Richard Nixon to get milk subsidies raised, was unlikely on its face; the accuser, dairy lawyer Jake Jacobsen, was a confessed perjurer and bagman who had bartered his testimony for the dismissal of unrelated and more serious charges. The prosecutors thought that there was enough in Jacobsen's testimony, backed up by circumstantial evidence, to justify a trial. But friends of Connally suggested that leaks about the case had put pressure on the prosecutors to indict him or be accused of whitewashing him—and that, when the grand jury's term was about to expire, the prosecutors decided to press charges in hopes of finding evidence later.

**Silk:** Connally brought to the witness stand last week all the ruddy good looks and silken charm that helped make him a national figure. His character witnesses included such famous Texans as Lady Bird Johnson and black Rep. Barbara Jordan, glittering alumni of the Kennedy and Johnson years and even Billy Graham, whose description of his work—"preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ"—elicited an "amen" from one juror. In their wake came less spectacular witnesses who flatly contradicted Jacobsen's account of meetings at which he and Connally had allegedly conspired.

But Connally's most powerful weapon may have been his lawyer, Edward Bennett Williams. The indictment had accused Connally of accepting two \$5,000 payments; under cross-examination, Jacobsen admitted that he had obtained a third payment of \$5,000 from his client, Associated Milk Producers, Inc., and guessed haplessly that he "must have" given that to Connally, too. The third payment, said Williams, was "the thirteenth stroke of a grandfather clock in the

night. It casts doubt on everything that went before it." Williams earned his fee (at least \$250,000) in his summation alone, shouting and stage-whispering about "wisdom . . . justice . . . love . . . truth." Finally, he apologized to the jurors: "I've never learned to talk about human liberty or human reputation concisely or complacently."

In rebuttal, associate prosecutor Frank M. Tuerkheimer urged the jury to review "the evidence carefully, logically and dispassionately." The jurors took Tuerkheimer at his word, conscientiously poring over reams of testimony. Despite the acquittal, the jury stopped well short of enthusiasm. "Our verdict meant not that we had found necessarily that John Connally was innocent," said jury foreman Dennis O'Toole, "but rather not guilty



Susan T. McElhinney

The Connallys: 'Amen,' said a juror

based on the case presented to us."

However lukewarm, the verdict eviscerated the remaining charges that Connally had conspired and committed perjury to cover up the bribery; the judge accordingly dropped them, and Connally was free to resume his life: ranching, lawyering and just possibly running for President. He has little currency in his adopted GOP and has yet to measure the lingering taint of his indictment, but on the courthouse steps, he sounded suspiciously like a candidate. His acquittal "has made me more deeply committed to preserving the system," he said. "I hope as long as I live, I never lose the desire to participate in public affairs."

—SANDRA SALMANS with STEPHAN LESHNER in Washington

## THE WHITE HOUSE: Palace Intrigue

Gerald Ford, says one of his aides, "hates more than anything to have his senior staff fighting with each other." But backstairs infighting plagues all palaces, and last week a small classic of the genre erupted from the West Wing into the public prints.

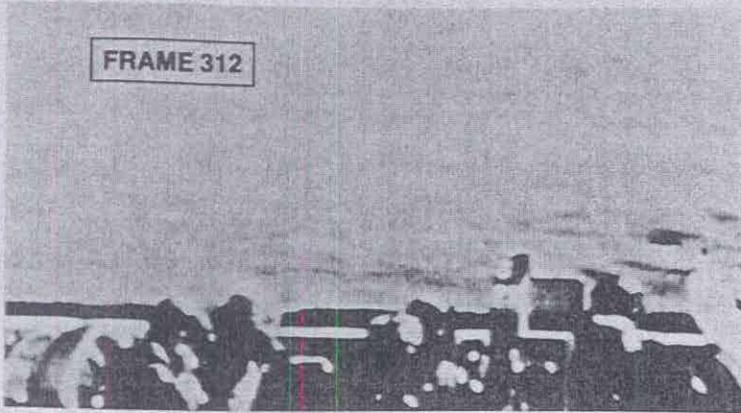
It began in the drumbeating for Ford's recent State of the World speech, when a faction generally assumed to be headed by chief of staff Donald Rumsfeld began floating rumors to the press that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was a waning star—that the speech would declare Ford's independence from Kissinger. The rumors crested when CBS reporter Bob Schieffer told his viewers that Kissinger might lose his second hat as chairman of the National Security Council.

The campaign proved more wish than reality; Ford's speech was an echo-perfect replay of Kissinger's line, and Ford himself reportedly chewed out several aides and ordered the leaking stopped. Shortly after that, press secretary Ron Nessen fired his assistant, Louis Thompson Jr., the man who had been overseeing the White House press bureaucracy. Then Nessen wrote a memo to Kissinger, reportedly telling him that the leak problem had been solved.

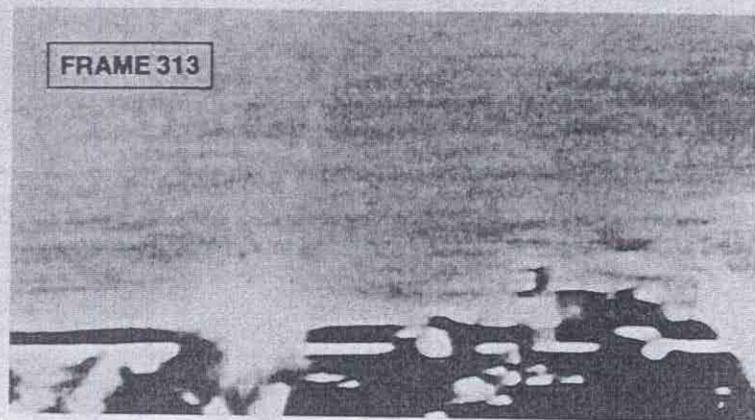
**Tracks:** It might well have ended there, with Kissinger triumphant and Nessen adequately humbled. But Thompson, a transplanted Iowan, was angry enough to protest that he was only "a fall guy"—he told The Des Moines Tribune that "it's widely known among the White House press corps that Ron Nessen was the source" of Schieffer's story. Nessen reacted to that by first denying that Thompson had been fired at all and then saying he had been asked to leave when his reorganizing job was done. But simultaneously Nessen's aides were saying that Thompson had indeed leaked the Kissinger story, and countless others as well. "There were scenes of reporters sitting in his office for an hour at a time and then running to their telephones," said one Nessen partisan. Nessen himself furiously denied writing a memo to Kissinger or leaking anything, terming the allegations "fiction." But Thompson's version was widely believed: NEWSWEEK learned that Nessen had chuckled at a recent staff meeting that he hadn't done a good job of covering his tracks on one of the Kissinger leaks.

At the weekend, Thompson had retreated into silence and the overt sniping in the West Wing had stopped. "Ron and Henry have made up," said a Nessen man. But the publicity had frayed other powerful nerves—"Whoever leaked those stories," said a senior official, "was either malicious or dumb or both"—and a new leak was making the rounds: that Nessen himself might soon be replaced by his newest deputy, William Greener.

FRAME 312



FRAME 313



The mystery of the mortal wound: Kennedy, still clutching at his throat wound, is hit with explosive force from behind . . .

## Dallas: New Questions and Answers

They are a breed apart—an odd-lot assortment of skeptics and ideologues, rationalists and fanatics who have never believed that Lee Harvey Oswald alone killed John F. Kennedy and have invested up to a dozen years of their lives in trying to disprove it. They flowered first in the middle '60s, then fell into discouraged retreat with the collapse of former New Orleans D.A. Jim Garrison's jerry-built attempt to prove their case in court. But the true disbelievers are back now, more numerous and insistent than ever, with their three-Oswald and four-assassin scenarios and their dizzying exegeses of every scrap of paper and every frame of film on the JFK shelves in the National Archives. And this time, in a nation still traumatized by the crimes and lies of Watergate, they have found their widest audience yet for their demand that the inquest be reopened.

Their doubts, reasonable or not, have inspired at least two dozen nonfiction books, four novels, three feature films, several national conferences and a recent feshet of articles in journals ranging from Penthouse to Rolling Stone. A bootleg copy of the famed Zapruder home movie of the assassination—blood, brain fragments and all—has played twice this spring on network TV and numberless times to smaller audiences around the nation. A group of Old New Leftists in Cambridge, Mass., embraced

the cause and booked 250 campus lectures (at \$780 each) in a single year. A Warren commission staff alumnus, who still believes that Oswald acted alone, has urged a review of the case—and now Texas's U.S. Rep. Henry Gonzalez has formally proposed that Congress undertake the rehearing.

The Warren verdict is indeed threaded through with unanswered questions and unresolved anomalies. What its detractors offer in its place is one or another alternative hypothesis far tidier than the commission's one-man, one-gun analysis. But their sort of tidiness has its own vices. Supposition is elevated into fact; evidence is accepted on faith if it fits a conspiracy theory and rejected as manufactured if it does not. The doubters, moreover, have never harmonized their own doubts about whether or not Oswald was involved at all, or how many assassins fired how many shots, or who might have put them up to it—the CIA, or the Mafia, or the Communists, or Texas oil, or some other party or parties unknown.

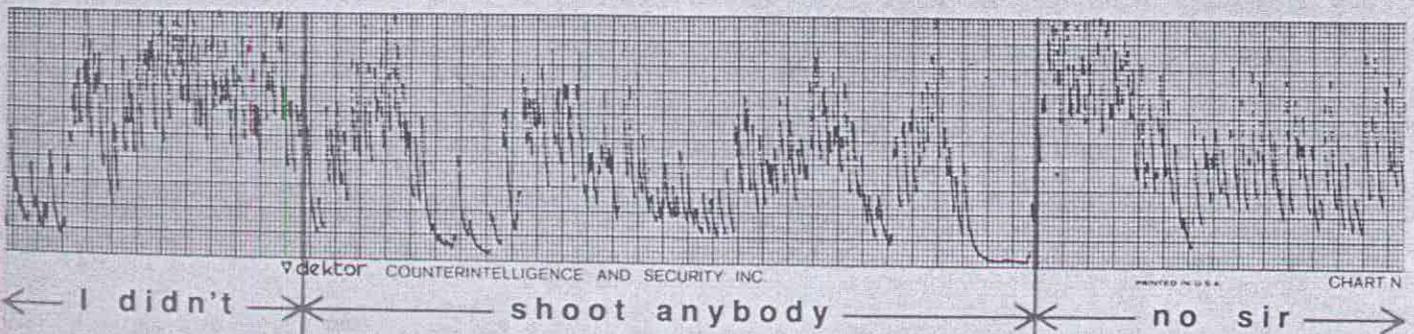
Still, amid the mélange of fact and guess, reason and imagination, there are provocative questions:

### DID OSWALD DO IT?

**The Voice Test:** "I didn't shoot anybody, no sir," Oswald told an interviewer at Dallas police headquarters, and many

doubters have always chosen to believe him. Now they have been joined by a sometime CIA computer analyst, George O'Toole, who played a tape of Oswald's denial to a Psychological Stress Evaluator—a device that supposedly measures and charts tension in a person's voice—and found none of the bunched-up, hedge-shaped clusters of squiggles that commonly accompany lying. In Penthouse and in a newly published book, "The Assassination Tapes," O'Toole rendered his unambiguous judgment: "Quite clearly, Lee Harvey Oswald was telling the truth."

**The Flaws:** The PSE, while gradually gaining acceptance, remains controversial among experts in lie-detection; neither the FBI nor the CIA uses it, and Dr. Joseph Kubis, a Fordham psychologist who tested it extensively for the Army, came away doubting its validity. There remains, moreover, the powerful circumstantial case that Oswald was involved, alone or not. The only known murder weapon, a 1940 Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, was traced to him and bore his palmprint; the only recovered cartridges and bullet fragments were traced to the rifle; the revolver that killed Dallas police patrolman J.D. Tippit was in Oswald's possession when he was arrested in a movie theater 80 minutes after the assassination. Even some conspiracy theorists concede the case, and David



Oswald's voice chart: Did the absence of stress signs amid the squiggles prove his innocence of murdering JFK?

FRAME 321

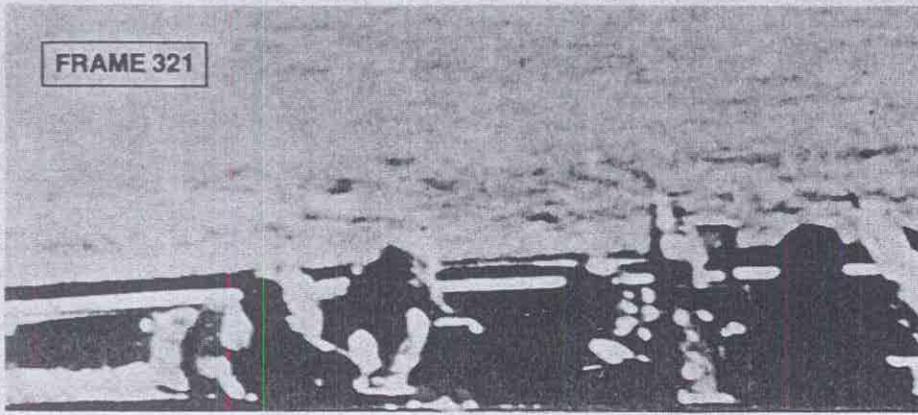


Photo © 1963 L.M.H. Company. All rights reserved.

...but did a second hit from up front drive him violently backward?

Belin, a Warren staff alumnus now directing the Rockefeller commission inquiry into the CIA, says flatly: "I have no doubt that Oswald killed Kennedy."

#### WAS THERE A CONSPIRACY?

**The Superbullet:** The Warren commission's one-man theory rested heavily on the hypothesis that Oswald's first shot struck JFK in the upper back, exited from his throat, tore through then Texas Gov. John Connally's torso and right wrist, and burrowed into his left thigh. To have conceded that the two men were hit by separate shots would have been to acknowledge a second gun; Oswald almost certainly could not have fired his clumsy bolt-action rifle that quickly. Yet the single bullet said to have caused all this damage came away miraculously unscathed. And ongoing studies of the Zapruder film—most recently by Robert Groden, 29, a New York optics expert currently touring with a pirated print—seem to the doubters to show Kennedy and Connally reacting to their wounds a half-second to one and a half seconds apart. The conclusion: they must have been hit by separate guns.

**The Flaws:** The nearly pristine condition of what critics call Superbullet is indeed hard to explain; the commission's defenders are mostly reduced to arguing that it could have survived intact because it did. But the doubters are stuck with the perplexing question of what *did* become of the bullet that hit Kennedy if it didn't strike Connally as well. And the film is at best ambiguous on the timing of their wounds. To some viewers, Connally seems to go stiff almost simultaneously with Kennedy's first visible reaction, and his right hand flies upward clutching his Stetson—reflexes that might support a single-bullet theory. Connally's major reaction to his wounds does come a half second or so later, when he begins sagging rightward, spins and then slumps heavily to his left. The commission called this a delayed reaction, and subsequent studies by UCLA physicist B.K. Jones tend

to buttress its case. Jones found that Connally's reaction was too exaggerated to be explained by the impact of the bullet; he suggests that Connally was reacting physiologically to his wounds.

**The Fatal Wound:** With gut-wrenching clarity, Groden's blowups of the Zapruder film show JFK's head snapping forward under the impact of a bullet that blew away one side of his skull; then, a split-second later, his hand and body lurch even more violently up, back and leftward into Jackie's arms. The doubters' theory: that Kennedy was hit by separate shots, one from the rear and one from the front, a single movie frame (or one-eighteenth of a second) apart.

**The Flaws:** The film itself shows an explosion of blood, brain and bone fragments spraying upward and forward, suggesting a hit from the rear. A second bullet striking Kennedy from up front might have been expected to produce a comparable burst backward, but none is visible. Physicist Jones's studies, moreover, concluded that a double hit would have required a "giant" second bullet with ten times the momentum of the first to drive JFK back and leftward so forcefully. His hypothesis: the movement was a neuromuscular reaction to the damage to Kennedy's brain.

**The Mystery Men:** The conspiratorialists have long been fascinated by a frame in a second amateur film shot by Orville Nix;

it shows—or so they believe—a figure aiming what could be a rifle over the top of what could be a station wagon on the grassy knoll ahead of the President's motorcade. And Groden, in the best "Blowup" tradition, thinks he has found two and possibly three more assassins in the Zapruder film: one, rifle still in hand, dimly visible through some low-hanging tree branches along the motorcade route, the other—perhaps with backup man—behind a fence on the grassy knoll.

**The Flaws:** The Nix "assassin," if he exists, could as easily be sighting a camera as a gun; if it is a rifle, he appears to have the wrong arm propped on the car roof. Groden's "gunmen" are too gauzy even to be identified positively as human beings, let alone assassins, and are accordingly regarded as dubious even among some diehard conspiratorialists.

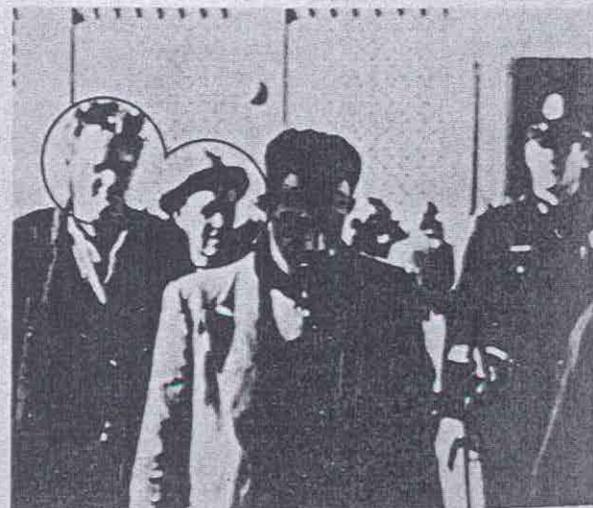
#### WAS OSWALD A GOVERNMENT AGENT?

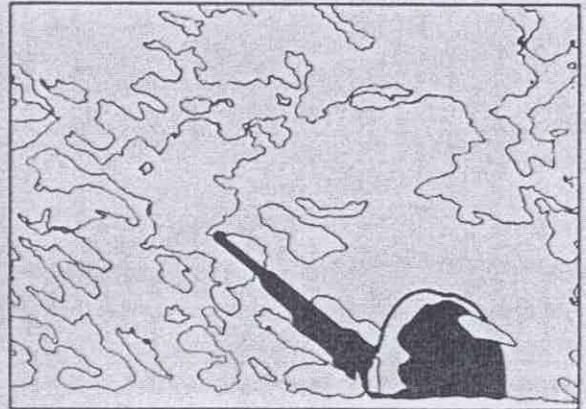
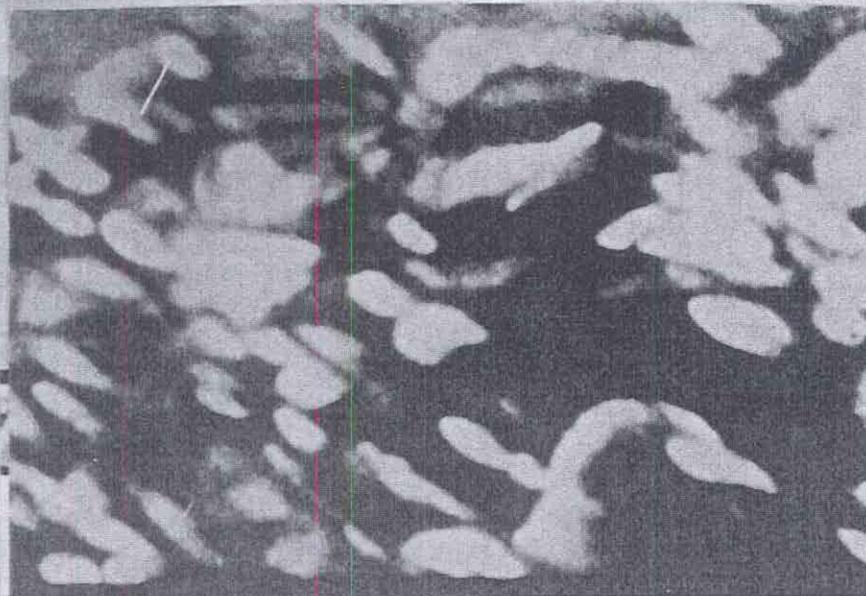
**The FBI-CIA Connection:** The conspiracy literature is shot through with speculation that Oswald was an operative or at least an informer for one or both agencies, which were then heavily involved in trying to penetrate domestic radical groups. The CIA links are largely suppositious, based on some striking oddities in Oswald's record (the ease with which he got a Marine Corps discharge, then defected to Russia, then came home on a government loan) and some thready connections with various people and places thought to be in the CIA's ambit. The FBI story had rather more body: Oswald in fact was carrying the name and phone number of Dallas agent James Hosty in his pocket notebook, and there were rumors—now often quoted as fact—that he was on the bureau payroll as informant number S-179 at \$200 a month.

**The Flaws:** The CIA connection remains speculative, pending further inquiry by the Rockefeller commission and the two Congressional committees inquiring into the agency's operations. The FBI's Hosty insisted he had contacted Oswald only as a matter of routine surveillance of a returned defector. And the embellishments about his informant status and his payroll number apparently



Photo play: Some conspiracy theorists profess to recognize Watergate conspirators Sturgis and Hunt (above) among the three tramps in police custody near the scene of the Kennedy assassination





Blowup: Was the shadowy form under the tree leaves the head of an assassin holding a rifle?

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originated in a hoax, hatched in December 1963 by two Texas newsmen and a Dallas assistant D.A. who suspected the bureau of tapping their phones. As one of the reporters, Alonzo Hudkins, recounted it, the three set out to prove their suspicion by staging a conference call, referring to Oswald as an informant and debating what his number was—S-179 or 172. Sure enough, said Hudkins, an agent materialized within a half hour, dropped a few off-the-point questions, then asked casually: "Say, have you heard anything about a secret payroll number Oswald may have had?" Hudkins played dumb, and heard nothing more of the tale until a New York newspaper printed Hoover's denial—before the charge had ever reached print.

**The 'Dirty Rumor':** The commission's critics maintain that, whatever the merits, it did not pursue the agency connections hard enough, and instead took the FBI and CIA denials at face value. Their exhibit A is a lately surfaced transcript of a closed-door commission meeting in January 1964, at which staff director J. Lee Rankin began unhappily: "We do have a dirty rumor [about Oswald as informant S-179] . . . and it must be wiped out insofar as it is possible to do so by this commission." What follows is a long, unflattering debate in which the commission wobbles indecisively between offending Hoover by mounting its own investigation, or merely accepting his word—even on the advice of former CIA director Allen Dulles that Hoover would probably lie if it were so. They settled on a "marriage" of the two approaches, but critics charge they did precious little independent inquiry.

**The Flaws:** The "rumor" was an insubstantial one to start with, as the commission staff may have sensed from the first; one of the Texas lawmen who reported it to them, in any event, was the assistant D.A. who had helped make it up. Most accounts of the meeting, moreover, unkindly omit a second sentence from Rankin's opening remarks, in which he admonishes the commission that the country will expect it "to try to find out the facts . . . [so it] can fairly say, 'In our

opinion, he was or was not an employee of any intelligence agency of the United States.'" If the ensuing inquiry did not go much beyond Hoover's flat denial, it did substantially undercut the tale that Oswald drew down \$200 a month. The commission published an exhaustive 100-page anatomy of Oswald's finances over his last seventeen months, during which he earned \$3,655 and pinched every penny of it; it uncovered no evidence that any hidden benefactor was doubling his income under the table.

**The No-Oswald Theory:** For years, various conspiracy theorists have posited the possibility that there may have been two or even three Oswalds, one the real article, the other (or others) assigned by unknown conspirators to prepare weeks and months ahead for his frame-up by planting incriminating clues about him. In the new wave, Peter Dale Scott, a Berkeley medievalist and assassination buff, has added an ingenious new wrinkle: that there may have been no real Oswald at all. One principal source of this speculation is that Oswald's height—5 feet 9 at his death—fluctuates in various physical-examination records over four years between 5 feet 8 and 5 feet 11. Says Scott: "I'm really intrigued that the only reality of Lee Harvey Oswald is some documents, a passport which was used by different people. Who was Lee Harvey Oswald? Whoever

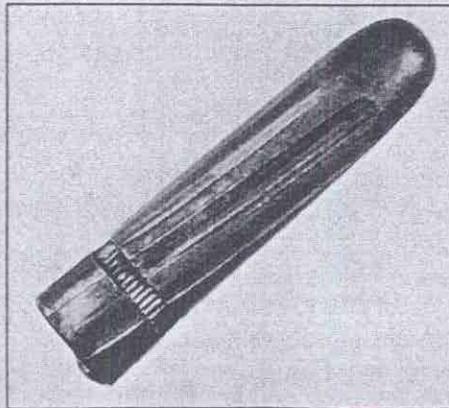
happened to be carrying the passport."

**The Flaws:** Such records are often carelessly made; the one that says Oswald was 5 feet 8, for instance, is accompanied by a photograph of Oswald standing against a wall grid on which his height is 5 feet 9. In any case, if there was no Lee Harvey Oswald, who is the woman who for 35 years has been claiming to be Lee Harvey Oswald's mother?

**The Plumber Connection:** A number of conspiratorialists, notably comedian Dick Gregory, have promoted the theory that Watergate conspirators E. Howard Hunt and Frank Sturgis may have been present—and in fact briefly detained—at the assassination scene. Their "evidence" is a press photo of the Dallas police with three unidentified "tramps" in tow; the shortest of the three looks to some doubters like Hunt, the tallest like Sturgis. The implication: the plumbers-to-be were somehow associated with the events that bloody noonday in Dallas.

**The Flaws:** The look-alikes, on close inspection, don't. The "Hunt" figure seems older in 1963, when he would have been 45, than he does now at 56, and the "Sturgis" Doppelgänger is craggier and fairer than his real-life incarnation.

What the doubters have confirmed, after a dozen years' labor, is that the Warren inquiry was a flawed and at critical moments a timid one. What they have yet to provide is a satisfying alternative to the official theory—a hypothesis that does not require whole squads of assassins vanishing into thin air and whole platoons of lawmen conspiring successfully over a decade and more to protect them. The conspiracy theorists may, as they claim, have raised enough reasonable doubt to warrant reopening the case, in a committee of Congress or some other open and independent forum. But it would be perilously wishful thinking to expect such an inquiry to lay all doubts to rest—to make order of the chaos of Dallas, Nov. 22, 1963, or to promulgate some final, symmetrical "truth" about the death of John F. Kennedy.



Superbullet: Both JFK and Connally?

—PETER GOLDMAN with JOHN J. LINDSAY in Washington and bureau reports