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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

Office of Legislative Counsel

OLC 79-0113/L

15 March 1979

Mr. G. Robert Blakey
Chief Counsel and Director
Select Committee on Assassinations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Bob:

Herewith are comments on the draft paper on "Evolution and Implications of the CIA-Sponsored Assassination Conspiracies Against Castro."

First, it is noted that no footnotes are attached, so we are unable to comment on the kind of modifications that have been required for security reasons in earlier instances.

Next, as we are nearing the end of this phase of things, it is noted that we have seen no graphics, and therefore assume that there will be none of interest or relevance to CIA.

As a preliminary observation — to avoid the endless listing of instances of recurring citation in the draft — the names of James O'Connell, Tony Varona, and Juan Orta, should be deleted or replaced wherever they occur. Substitutes will be suggested where they first appear. Cubela, of course, should be referred to as AMLASH.

Page 1. First paragraph. I would like to raise a personal question on the presentation in this paragraph. These are my views, to you; not necessarily shared by my colleagues. There is as much, if not more, simplistic rhetoric here as there is mature moral principle, and you may wish to modify the language. First, it is not clear whether the draft states categorical opposition to all assassinations, whatever and wherever, or whether it is directed only to those considered by CIA — however ineffective the plans.

Murder is reprehensible, and contrary to the principles of civilized society (although lawyers make a variety of technical distinctions between different kinds of homicide). However, western culture has a parallel, if necessarily subordinate, line of philosophy on the subject of tyrannicide. Writings of church philosophers, as well as other reputable thinkers, recognize the principle, given special considerations. These writers fail to

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provide a set of standards or rules for how the principle is to be applied should the question present itself. This uncertainty adds to the complexity of the question, introducing subjective tests of perception and degree, aspects of life that make life uncomfortable already for those tidy minds that feel compelled to deal with everything in blacks and whites.

Let me pose the problem thus. Had anyone foreseen the extremes of Hitler, a truly demonic man, would there have been a basis for seriously considering his assassination? Had he been murdered, at least six million Jews would have survived, not to mention the many millions more who died as a result of the war. Who can confidently balance the scales on that question, between the rights of humanity, in the larger sense, and the life of Hitler? I recall the reports of an attempt on Hitler's life during World War II, and the general approbation of American society for the heroes that tried and failed. It really isn't all that simple, at least not as stated in your draft introduction.

Obviously it is too complex a subject for a full and considered discussion here, and my comment is intended only to suggest that you may wish to review the presentation on how the Committee finally speaks on this.

I personally happen to feel that the perceived desirability of giving the Cuban people a more enlightened government — shared by the overwhelming majority of Americans at the time — was unlikely to have been served by Castro's death. Quite frankly, I have similar doubts on the others considered as possible targets for elimination in the 1950s and 1960s. And that is why I asked my first question about whether your draft categorically includes all political assassinations, regardless of whatever and wherever, or if it is directed at those considered during the late 1950s and early 1960s. My point is that the HSCA draft is subject to improvement on this point.

Page 3. Insert the word "late" before the date 1960, sixth line from the bottom.

Page 3. Last sentence should read: "CIA records indicate that the operation was inactive from April 1961 until April 1962."

Page 4. Delete "James 'Big Jim' O'Connell" and replace with the phrase "Chief, Office of Security Operations Support Branch." Thereafter, he can be identified as "the Operations Support Chief" or "Support Chief."

Page 6. Change last sentence to commence as follows: "The 1967 IGR noted that...."

Page 7. End of the first complete paragraph. Substitute word "operation" for the word "plots".

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Page 11. Fifth line from bottom. Insert word "unsuccessfully" after "Harvey subsequently attempted...."

Page 12. Twelfth line from bottom, Insert year "1967" before the name of Ed Morgan.

Page 14. Second sentence should be rephrased as follows: "This report detailed the accounts of various CIA plans and operations against Castro...."

Page 15. It should be emphasized that CIA's concern was, narrowly, protection of intelligence sources and methods.

Page 16. Delete that portion of the last sentence of the first paragraph that reads as follows: "...on-going plots against the revolutionary government in Cuba and its...." The main thrust of the SSC report had to do with plotting against Castro and this tends to shift the emphasis to a broader range than the SSC report really supports.

Page 17. Second sentence, first complete paragraph. While it is correct to summarize the SSC report as stated, the SSC report is incorrect, and we should so note.

Page 17. Last paragraph. There was no "ripple effect". Nobody paid any attention to the SSC report after the first few days. It was quite some time afterwards, on a time-available basis that the CIA Task Force took up the problem. In any event, it was not intended to "answer" the SSC report in the usual sense of the word so much as it was intended to research the general problem. We did not know what we would find.

Page 18. The subparagraph (1), second line. The word "as" should be replaced by "on."

Page 18. Fifth to the last line. TFR for IGR.

Page 19. Fifth line. "Operative" for "operation".

Page 21. Next to last line. TFR for IGR.

Page 23. Top paragraph. The reason there was no contact with AMLASH for the year preceding, from 1962 to 1963, was that he was in Cuba.

Page 23. Third line after indented quotation. It was not a question of a "commitment" to bring about change, but the "problem" in doing so. Suggest change accordingly.

Page 23. Next to last line right in middle paragraph. CIA did not say that any dispute was in the eyes of the SSC only.

Page 24. Second paragraph, first line. Substitute "cabled" for "called".

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Page 24. FitzGerald is spelled with capital "G".

Page 24. Second paragraph, ninth line. Substitute TFR for CIA.

The HSCA draft is imprecise in this treatment. The task force report gave a rather detailed recitation of what AMLASH was told as the basis for its view. While Book V of the SSC reported AMLASH's reaction as uncertain, the Task Force report made it clear that his reaction as to what he was told was exactly the same as the CIA record of what he was told.

Page 24. Second sentence, first full paragraph. Substitute the following:

"In October 1963 Desmond FitzGerald met AMLASH/1 outside the United States."

Page 26. Fourth line in the quotation at the top of the page. Substitute the word "reinforce" for the word "re-inform".

Pages 30-32. The following names (in case any of those mentioned elsewhere are overlooked here) should be removed or replaced with appropriate descriptions:

Varona (#3), Duque (#16), Alonso (#17), O'Connell (#27), Orta (#31).

Page 34. Remove the "s" from the CIA Inspector General Reports.

Page 35. The record is clearly documented in detail as to what the AMLASH operation was. The authors may not wish to choose between the record, and what the SSC has said about it (erroneously).

As for Langosch, he was not in charge of the component that was responsible for CIA operations against Cuba, as the sentence structure makes it appear. In fact he was neither responsible for nor familiar with the nature of the association with AMLASH, except peripherally. His views on the security aspects of the case, because of AMLASH/1's personality, are very different from what he knew about the actual nature of what was and was not going on.

Langosch's lack of familiarity with the details of the operation is quickly apparent if one takes the time to review what he has said on the subject, and how it matches the facts. We have already commented elsewhere how his comments to you about use of the polygraph betray his unfamiliarity with the case. The following is also relevant:

1. In his testimony before the SSC in 1975, he stated that FitzGerald's meeting with AMLASH/1 had to do with Castro's assassination. Had he read the papers preceding the meeting,

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with the specific limitations decided upon, and the report of the actual meeting (with the basic rebuff given by Fitzgerald, so far as support was concerned), followed by subsequent reports showing that AMLASH/1 had understood that he had been denied support, Langosch could have spoken differently than he did. As it is, he spoke in error, if quoted correctly in your draft.

2. Also, when testifying before the SSC in 1975, Langosch was unable to recall the time frame of developments in the AMLASH operation, a factor that is critical and central to any analysis and evaluation of what the operation was during the life of President Kennedy. This is directly relevant to your charter and the issue of the moment. The CIA Task Force Report documented this in detail.

3. And in 1975, when Langosch testified before the SSC, he was revealed as somewhat vague as to characterization of the AMLASH operation. In this respect, his testimony seems to have undergone a significant metamorphosis in terms of firm recollection.

It might be instructive to review Book V of the SSC Final Report at page 75. One would think that the man's credibility would be tested somewhere along the way, by at least quasi-legal standards:

1. Langosch was not knowledgeable on the AMLASH operation at the time it was going on. He admittedly did not know the time frame. His testimony on key details has been demonstrated to be inaccurate.

2. Langosch's testimony has evolved with the passage of time. As a witness, what he says does not warrant the emphasis given by your draft.

Page 36. Instead of describing Pollock as "from the CIA" he should be referred to as "a former CIA employee."

Page 37. First line. The word "object" should be "objective."

Page 37. Second line. The word "Cuba" should be "AMLASH/1".

Page 46. The draft's assertion that O'Connell and Maheu are lying about identification of the syndicate people with whom they were dealing; this is unsupported by the evidence.

The record is somewhat longer than the association of the HSCA investigators with it, and the only thing they add to it is this unfounded subjective judgment. I was one of the two CIA officers who debriefed O'Connell on his part in the operation, when another inspector and I did the original 1967 IG report on assassinations. At that time O'Connell was forthright and did not dissemble, although he experienced difficulty in recalling some details.

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At the time of the 1967 interviews, O'Connell related the discovery of the actual identity of the persons with whom they were dealing primarily as an interesting development in the unfolding events of the operation. He related his role in a factual manner; he had been given an assignment and carried it out. He related it without explanation or apology. If he was pressed by HSCA investigators he may have been asked questions that posed the various considerations in terms of rationale, etc., but that was not his presentation when he was speaking inside the Agency in 1967 -- then under strict terms of security -- when he originally recorded himself on the matter. He is not a philosopher, and I doubt that he would have volunteered much on this score. Quite frankly, my impression from 1967 (and I interviewed him again in 1975) was that he was impressed by the high-level attention the syndicate gave the matter, rather than being embarrassed by it. It is more accurate to see him viewing it as a sign of the serious attention given by the syndicate, possibly reinforcing the chances of achieving the objective. O'Connell knew from the beginning that he was dealing with the syndicate, and that there had to be high-level approval was a foregone conclusion. No real thought had been given as to what sort of person would be assigned to the job, and whomever it was there was little that could be done about it if the operation was to proceed. The interpretation of O'Connell's thought processes are far fetched.

Page 48. O'Connell's name appears several times in the preceding pages, but it appears here with Edwards. We might suggest that the word "they" be substituted. All the other places it can be "Operations Support Chief".

Page 57. Second sentence in last paragraph. Request deletion of entire sentence. It reveals the CIA relations with the Cuban exile organizations, which we wish to protect. The deletion does not impair the basic story.

Page 58. First complete paragraph, fifth line. Propose following to be substituted for sentence starting there:

"Moss had previous CIA associations. He also was supposedly acting as conduit for funds supplied by the Cellini brothers with the understanding that this group would receive privileged treatment in the Cuba of the future."

Page 68-71. I recall the introduction to the HSCA draft report that it would not impugn the reputation of innocent by-standers. The identities of Dan Rowan and Phyllis McGuire fall into this category. The simple and correct story is that Giancana felt that he was being cuckolded by Rowan and took advantage, in his jealousy, of his new and novel relationship with CIA. O'Connell should not have gone along with him, but he did, unfortunately. With the advantage of 20-20 hindsight it may look easy today to have turned it aside then. Remember, when

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O'Connell first told the story in some detail (with some error in dates), inside the Agency for the record (1967), he told it in just those terms. He had no reason then to conceal concern, if any, and current speculation really doesn't alter the basic facts of that simple story. There really was no concern at that time about Giancana leaking

Suggest we remove all references that identify Rowan and McGuire and clean up the presentation to fit the facts.

Page 74. Second line TFR for CIA.

Page 76. A little confusion in the sequence of events between Phase I and Phase II. When the first access to Castro failed, and a viable new one did not develop, Roselli went to the Cuban exile leader. That contact and the apparent uncertainties that it offered is what was terminated at the end of Phase I. That is where it started when it was reactivated in April 1962 for Phase II.

Page 77. There are many operations in the Clandestine world in which the instruments of action are not known in detail to the case officer. In the Phase II operation, Roselli served as cut-out between CIA and the Cuban exile leader. In a sense, the Cuban ran his own net and did not reveal the identities of his people or any specific plans. In the absence of direct access to the target his operatives had to go in and develop a way in which to carry out their mission. Had it succeeded, it would have been possible to reconstruct events after the fact in the absence of ultimate action it may seem uncertain to some individuals unfamiliar with the tenuous nature of some clandestine action. The real question today, in my mind, is whether the Cuban exile leader really dispatched "teams" with the mission they were supposed to have.

Page 77. It may seem extraordinary to the investigators that CIA operated as it did. First, as mentioned above, there are a number of uncertainties in the world of clandestine operations. There are numerous instances in which individuals throughout an operational chain are unknown to CIA. In this particular case, dealing with representatives of the underworld, labored under certain practical inhibitions about how far he could press individuals using their resources to carry out a mutual objective.

Page 88. Top line. Delete "station personnel in"

Page 89. Third line. Delete "to"

Page 89. Second paragraph, second line. Delete "in"

Page 89. Next last line. Delete "to"

Page 90. Seventh line. Substitute "CIA" for

Page 90. Twelfth line. Substitute "abroad" for "to"

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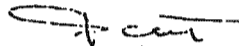
Page 90. Sixteenth line. Delete "in"

Page 92. Suggest retain the designation of "A" for Victor Spiroza Hernandez, rather than using his full name.

Page 93. Top paragraph. We cannot contribute positively to the question of a real link between the syndicate and "A". However, the SSC final report, Book V, at pages 78, 79, and 105 seems to make it clear that what "A" knew about AMLASH post-dated the 1963 period.

We are now going forced draft to comment on the long and unexpected Nosenko draft. I hope to have it to you Monday afternoon.

Sincerely,



S. D. Breckinridge
Principal Coordinator, HSCA

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