WHO KILLED JFK?

There Were Two Conspiracies in the Kennedy Assassination: The First Was to Murder the President. The Second Was to Pretend There Was a Full and Complete Investigation. This Is the Story of Government Investigator Gaeton Fonzi and His Three-Year Search for the Truth, His Efforts to Track Down a Mysterious American Spymaster Seen in Dallas with Lee Harvey Oswald in September 1963, His Work for the House Assassinations Committee That Was Supposed to Tell the American People What Really Happened on November 22, 1963.

Fed Up with the Politicizing of This Last Investigation, He Breaks His Oath of Silence to Tell What the Insiders Know About the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy. It Is a Suspenseful Spy Story. It Is a Clear-Eyed Account of How Washington Handles Serious Issues, and It Is History.

BY GAETON FONZI

A very hot day in Dallas in the summer of 1978. I could see the city's 106-degree fever shimmering from the gray macadam. I waited on the south curb of Elm Street for a break in the traffic and then walked out into the center lane. The street is not as wide as it appears in photographs. *Right about . . . here.* I looked over at the grassy knoll. There was only a stillness there now, a breezeless serenity. On my right was the familiar red brick building, flat, hard-edged, its rows of sooty windows now dull. In my mind, I dropped into a well of time and fell against that instant of history.

A man was killed here.

Here, in an explosively horrible and bloody moment, a man's life ended. That realization—a man was killed here—had been oddly removed from the whirlwind of activity in which I had been involved. A man was killed here, and what had been going on in Washington—all the officious meetings and the political posturing, all the time and attention devoted to administrative procedures and organizational processes and forms and reports, and now all the scurrying about in a thousand directions in the mad rush to produce a final report—all of that seemed detached from the reality of a single fact: A man was killed here.

I had been working as an investigator for the House Select Committee on Assassinations for more than a year and a half. Now I was one of the few investigators remaining on the staff. The rest had been fired after less than six months of a formal investigation. And now I was standing in Dealey Plaza, on the spot where President John F. Kennedy was killed on November 22, 1963, and wondering what the hell had gone wrong.

I stood in Dealey Plaza on that hot day in 1978 and could not help thinking that the powers that controlled the Assassinations Committee would have searched much harder for the truth if they had remembered that instant of time when a man's life ended here.

I

The Historical Imperatives

Years ago, in reviewing a book about the Warren Commission, author and critic Sylvia Meagher wrote: "There are no heroes in this piece, only men who collaborated actively or passively—willfully or self-deludedly—in dirty work that does violence to the elementary concept of justice and affronts normal intelligence."

It didn't take long for most of those who examined the 1964 report of the Warren Commission and its volumes of published evidence to conclude that its investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy was deficient. Considering the Commission's resources and the opportunity it had at the time to do a thorough investigation, its failure was, indeed, a "violence to the elementary concept of justice." With its strained case for a lone-nut assassin, the Warren Commission report became hard for most Americans to swallow. By the early '70s, polls showed that only a small percentage of people still believed it. Its legacy was a nagging, burning scar on the psyche of America.

Finally, on September 17, 1976, the US House of Representatives passed House Resolution 222, which established a Select Committee to "conduct a full and complete investigation and study of the circumstances surrounding the assassination and death of President John F. Kennedy. . . ."

The politicians may have given it legal status, but the mandate came from deep within the conscience of a nation fed up with the deceptions and confusions and crazy theories spawned in the wake of the assassination of a President.

When the House Assassinations Committee expired more than two years later, it issued a report that appeared to have more substance and depth than the Warren Commission's report.

But, like the Warren Commission, what the House Assassinations Committee did not do was "conduct a full and complete investigation."

What the House Assassinations Committee did do about that murder of a young President in Dallas was play political games, Washington-style.

On Tuesday morning, July 17, 1979, the chairman of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, Ohio Democrat Louis Stokes, called a press conference to release the Committee's final report.

The resulting front-page headline in the *Washington Post* was MOBSTERS LINKED TO JFK DEATH.

The Committee's chief counsel and staff director, G. Robert Blakey, wanted to be certain that the reporters at the press conference would accurately interpret the report's interlinear message. "I am now firmly of the opinion that the Mob did it," he told them. "It is a historical truth." Then—to use an expression pop-

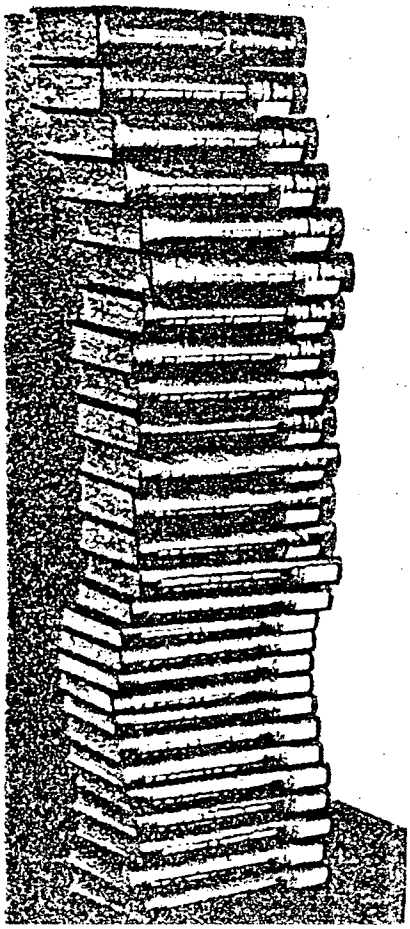
Before a horrified national television audience, Jack Ruby kills Lee Harvey Oswald and silences the man who could best have answered the still-unresolved questions about the Kennedy assassination.

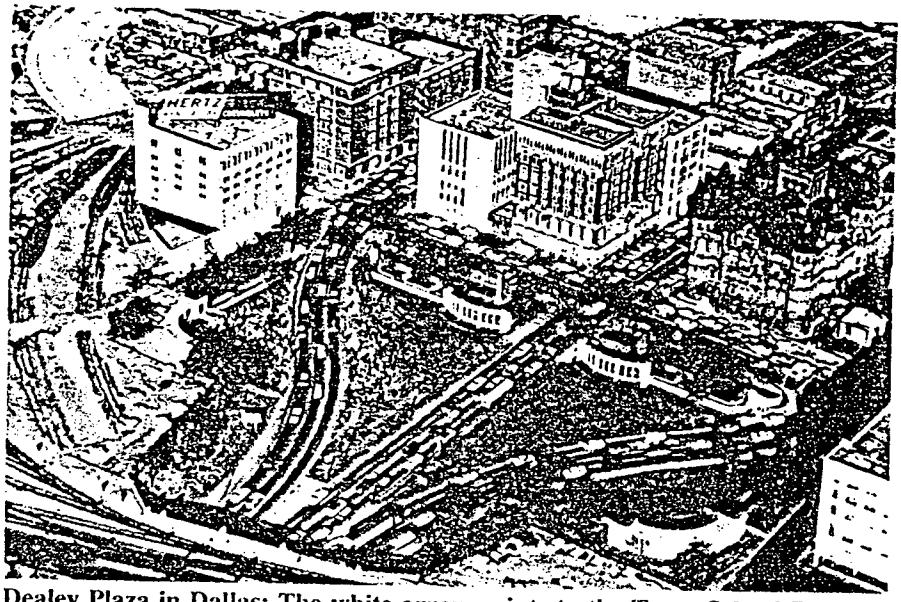
My area of investigation threatened to open more doors than the Committee cared to open. It dealt with a mysterious CIA spymaster linked to Lee Harvey Oswald.

ular among Committee staffers, "covering his ass"—he quickly added: "This Committee report does not say the Mob did it. *I* said it. I think the Mob did it."

I don't know if the Mob did it, but I doubt it. From my experience as a Committee investigator, I do know this: The Committee's investigation was not adequate enough or honest enough to produce any firm conclusions about the nature of the conspiracy to kill President Kennedy. To give the impression that it was is a deception, a particularly

Ten months after the 1963 assassination, the Warren Commission produced its report and 26 accompanying volumes of testimony and exhibits, much of which contradicted the Commission's conclusion that Oswald had acted alone.





Dealey Plaza in Dallas: The white arrow points to the Texas School Book Depository, where Oswald reputedly fired the fatal shots on November 22, 1963. Circled is the grassy knoll from which a second gunman may have fired the shot that blew Kennedy's head off.

Washington kind of deception.

There were areas of the Committee's investigation that, if pursued, could have negated "the Mob did it" implications of the Committee's final report. My area of investigation threatened to open more doors than the Committee cared to open. It dealt with a mysterious CIA spymaster linked to Lee Harvey Oswald.

When the Committee's report was released in the summer of 1979, it was long overdue. After spending more than $5.4 million over a two-year period, the Committee had legally ceased to exist in December 1978. At that time, however, Chief Counsel Blakey wasn't satisfied with the report. He felt it had to be rewritten. So he had himself and a few staff members temporarily attached to the office of the Speaker of the House for administrative and pay purposes. It took them almost seven months to reconstruct a new final report.

That reconstruction was necessary because of evidence that emerged in the last days of the Committee's life. Acoustics experts, analyzing a tape recording of the sounds in Dealey Plaza when Kennedy was shot, concluded that more than one rifle had been fired.

The presence of more than one gunman meant there must have been a conspiracy; yet the Committee had not nailed down the character of that conspiracy. That wasn't good enough for Blakey. He had earlier determined he was going to produce an impressive document. "This, I can assure you, will be the absolutely *final* report on the Kennedy assassination," he had told the staff. "This will be the *last* investigation. After us, there ain't gonna be no more."

Thus, he felt he had to restructure and weight the report toward a conspiracy theory. The question then became: Who to blame?

seemed obvious. G. Robert Blakey was a 41-year-old criminal-law professor and head of Cornell University's Organized Crime Institute when he was asked to take the reins of the Assassinations Committee. Blakey was one of the top organized-crime experts in the country, was regularly called to testify as an "expert witness" in that area, and was a fixture at the organized-crime seminars held by law-enforcement agencies.

As soon as he was appointed, Blakey drew upon his contacts in that organized-crime-fighting fraternity to select key senior counsels for the Committee. The lawyer he picked to head the Kennedy investigation task force was a Texan named Gary Cornwell. As chief of the Federal Strike Force in Kansas City, Cornwell had achieved notable trial victories against key Mafia figures in the Midwest. When Blakey was finished hiring, the House Assassinations Committee was stacked to find an organized-crime conspiracy in the John F. Kennedy assassination.

Chief Counsel Blakey also knew how Washington operates. He had worked not only at the Department of Justice but also with previous congressional committees. He knew what the priorities of his job were by Washington standards.

The first priority, he announced in his inaugural address to the staff, was to produce a report. The second priority was to produce a report that looked good, one that appeared to be definitive and substantial.

The final report—686 pages thick, with thirteen volumes of appendixes—appears to have substance. And yet it makes few definitive statements. Used in abundance are such terms as "on the basis of evidence available to it" and "the Committee believes" and "available evidence does not preclude the possibility" and such words as "probably."

The Warren Commission was made up of the cream of the American establishment: from left: former CIA chief Allen Dulles, Representative Hale Boggs (Democrat from Louisiana), Senator John Sherman Cooper (Republican from Kentucky), Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, Senator Richard Russell (Georgian Democrat), New York lawyer John J. McCloy, and Representative Gerald Ford (Republican from Michigan).

have been."

The point is that the Committee report does not say that organized crime was involved in the conspiracy to kill President Kennedy. The report says this: "The Committee believes, on the basis of evidence available to it, that the national syndicate of Organized Crime, as a group, was not involved in the assassination of President Kennedy, but that the available evidence does not preclude the possibility that individual members may have been involved."

The latter part of that conclusion referred to two key Mob bosses: Carlos Marcello of New Orleans and Santos Trafficante of Florida. (Lee Harvey Oswald's uncle, the Committee discovered, was a numbers runner for the Marcello organization, and Jack Ruby may have had some contact with Trafficante in Cuba.)

However, after making that allegation in its "Summary of Findings and Recommendations," the report in its body says "it is unlikely" that either Marcello or Trafficante was involved in the assassination of the President.

That is an example of the contradictions in the report. Another of the report's key conflicts came from Blakey's insistence that the Committee come to some conclusion about Oswald's motivation. But like the Warren Commission, the Committee never did define who Oswald really was, what he really believed, the nature of his relationships with an odd assortment of people, the reasons for some of the mysterious things he did, or why there are no traces of his actions over certain periods of time. The Committee, because of its limited investigative plan, did very little original work in this area.

After an inadequate investigation, Blakey swept aside the objections of his staff and insisted that the Committee conclude that Oswald killed Kennedy because of left-wing motivations.

Then, when a conspiracy explanation was needed, Blakey contended that Oswald had been a tool of organized crime. Thus the largest number of pages in the Committee's final report was devoted to building a conspiracy case against the Mob.

But in order to create the impression that organized crime was involved, the Committee had to contradict its own staff's findings concerning the Central Intelligence Agency.

I spent a large part of three years delving into that area of evidence. For history's sake, the questions raised by the evidence deserve to be fully defined and honestly explained.

I can still hear the sound of Vincent Salandria's voice, with its low, velvet intensity. He was leaning back in his chair, his hands clasped behind his head, speaking slowly. We were in the paneled basement office of his home in Philadelphia. It was late in 1964, and what Vincent Salandria was telling me was that the Warren Commission report was not the truth.

I thought he was crazy. You have to remember what a discordant thing it was in 1964 to hear that an official government report might be wrong—especially a weighty one issued by a panel of men of public stature. People then believed what government leaders said. If a guy like Salandria came along and suggested that this kind of government report wasn't truthful . . . well, Salandria was crazy.

After the Warren Commission report was released in September 1964, Salandria had written a critique of it for the *Legal Intelligencer*, Philadelphia's legal newspaper. Salandria was then a 38-year-old Penn Law graduate and ACLU consultant. His critique was a detailed analysis of the Warren report's findings on the trajectories and ballistics of the bullets that killed President Kennedy. The first time I read Salandria's article, I didn't understand it. It was complex and technical. But I did grasp Salandria's contention that the Warren Commission report might be wrong.

I wrote an article for *Philadelphia* magazine about this oddball young attorney who was saying these crazy things about our government. Salandria said his interest in the Warren Commission had begun long before its report was issued. "If this had happened in Smolensk or Minsk or Moscow," he said, "no American would have believed the story that was evolving about a single assassin, with all its built-in contradictions. But because it happened in Dallas, too many Americans were accepting it."

Salandria began a watch of the Warren Commission's activities. He spent his vacations in Dallas to familiarize himself with the murder scene. He ordered the Commission's report and its accompanying 26 volumes of evidence as soon as they were issued and plunged into a page-by-page study.

"My initial feeling," Salandria said, "was that if this were a simple assassination, as the Warren Commission claimed, the facts would come together very neatly. If there were more than one assassin, the details would not fit."

Salandria said the details did not fit. There were, he contended, contradictions between the Commission's conclusions and the details of the evidence in the 26 volumes. Salandria gave me a copy of the Warren report and the 26 volumes and suggested I take the time to study them carefully. I did, and was surprised to discover he was right.

Salandria became one of the pioneers in the burgeoning number of Warren Commission critics. He was one of the few who never commercialized his research. And, over the years, as he continued analyzing new evidence, he went beyond criticism and began to reach theoretical conclusions about the nature of the assassination itself. He was the first to suggest that details of the evidence indicated not only a conspiracy but also the pattern of an intelligence operation. That's when a young columnist named Joe McGinniss wrote about Salandria in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. McGinniss thought Salandria was crazy.

I left Philadelphia in 1972 to live in Flor-

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ida and, by late 1975, when I began working as a government investigator on the Kennedy assassination, I had not spoken with Vince Salandria for years. He had faded into the background among Warren Commission critics.

I returned to Philadelphia because I wanted to draw upon Salandria's knowledge of the evidence and get his opinion on fruitful areas of investigation. Salandria was cordial, said he would be glad to help, and we spent a long winter Sunday talking. Yet in his attitude I sensed a feeling of disappointment in what I was about to begin. Eventually, he explained it and why he was no longer pursuing an investigation of the assassination.

"I'm afraid we were misled," Salandria said. "All the critics, myself included, were misled very early. I see that now. We spent too much time and effort analyzing the details of the assassination when all the time it was obvious, it was blatantly obvious, that it was a conspiracy.

"The tyranny of power is here. We are controlled by multinational forces. I suggest to you, my friend, that the interests of those who killed Kennedy now transcend national boundaries and national priorities.

"We must not waste any more time micro-analyzing the evidence. That's exactly what they want us to do. They have kept us busy for so long. And I will bet that is what will happen to you. They'll keep you very, very busy and eventually they'll wear you down."

It had been almost ten years since the time I first interviewed Salandria. Flying back home to Miami that evening, I sat in the dark plane and brooded. As when I first spoke with him, I didn't quite grasp what he was talking about, but had the uneasy feeling he was advancing some awesomely frightening theories. It crossed my mind that this time for sure Salandria was crazy.

That was late November of 1975. A few weeks earlier, I had received a call at my home in Miami from Senator Richard S. Schweiker of Pennsylvania. I had never met Schweiker, but I had spoken with his administrative assistant, Dave Newhall, a few times. Newhall, a former newspaper reporter, was familiar with my early interest in the Kennedy assassination and thought I might help Schweiker check out some leads in Miami's Cuban exile community.

At the time, Schweiker was a member of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, headed by Idaho Senator Frank Church. The Church Committee, as it became known, had been making headlines since early 1975 by revealing how the FBI abused its power by harassing dissident political groups and conducting illegal investigations; how the CIA, Army Intelligence, and the National Security Agency were involved in domestic snooping; and how the intelligence agencies had planned assassination attempts on foreign leaders. For Schweiker, despite his long service in both houses of Congress, these were revelations. "I've learned more about the inner workings of government in the past nine months than in my fifteen previous years in Congress," he said.

Schweiker had never been moved to take a special interest in the details of the Kennedy assassination. He had assumed, as did most Americans, that the Warren Commission report reflected a comprehensive, objective investigation. He had never been inclined to question the report because that inclination would have had to include the assumption that government officials and agencies could have been involved in—at the very least—a cover-up. Schweiker did not want to believe that. However, when the Church Committee discovered that United States government officials—specifically CIA agents—had made alliances with the Mafia and other members of organized crime in planning assassinations, Schweiker was shaken. "That was so repugnant and shocking to me that I did a backflip on any number of things," he recalled.

One of the backflips included his old assumption about the validity of the Warren Commission report. It was particularly upsetting to Schweiker when he discovered that CIA Director Allen Dulles had been aware of CIA assassination plots against Cuban Premier Fidel Castro and yet had withheld that information from his fellow members on the Warren Commission.

While the Senate and the Church Committee took their summer vacations, Schweiker spent most of his time sifting through the volumes of evidence and the available agency documents relating to the murder of John F. Kennedy. Then, in September, he issued a public statement calling for a reopening of the Kennedy assassination investigation.

Schweiker felt the Church Committee could, in keeping within its mandate, focus initially on the role of US intelligence agencies in investigating the assassination. "We don't know what happened," Schweiker concluded from his study of the case, "but we do know Oswald had intelligence connections. Everywhere you look with him, there

"We don't know what happened," Schweiker concluded from his study of the Kennedy case, "but we do know that Oswald had intelligence connections. Everywhere you look with him there are the fingerprints of intelligence."

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The Church Committee was one of the larger select committees formed by the Senate. It employed more than 100 full-time staffers, mostly attorneys. Its mandate, however, was broad. It was to investigate all illegal domestic intelligence and counterintelligence activities on the part of the CIA, the FBI, and the military intelligence agencies.

The Church Committee had been formed in January 1975, and its report was scheduled for release by that September. That meant that the report had to be, considering the Committee's broad mandate, a predetermined exercise in superficiality. To Chairman Frank Church, it was important that the Committee finish its work quickly. He had already told intimates that he was going to run for the presidency but said he would announce it only after the Committee finished its final report.

Despite the pressure from Church to finish in September, the Committee staff got its deadline extended to March 5,

1976. Then Schweiker came up with his proposal to throw the Kennedy assassination into the investigative pot. That upset Church. He knew that looking into the Kennedy assassination, even from the focus of its relationship to the intelligence agencies, could extend the Committee's work for months and months. Church, however, did not want to oppose the suggestion publicly, so he came up with a compromise. He said he would permit Schweiker and a Democratic counterpart, Colorado Senator Gary Hart, to set up a two-man Kennedy assassination subcommittee, provided that it, too, would wrap up its work when the Committee finished in March.

Schweiker wasn't happy with the limitations but decided to take what he could get. He figured that if he could develop enough solid information or stumble upon a new revelation, the Committee as a whole could then be pressured into tackling the Kennedy assassination, regardless of deadlines. Schweiker jumped in with both feet. Because Church said he could spare only two members of the Committee staff for Schweiker's subcommittee—he would get more later as the Committee wound up its individual projects—Schweiker geared up his own personal staff for a Kennedy inquiry.

Although Kennedy was murdered in Dallas, a rash of leads and tips relating to Miami popped up within hours of the assassination.

Schweiker had his operation going for about a month before he called me. Although he himself never detailed all of them, I later learned there were several reasons that he felt he needed an outside staff investigator who would report directly to him and not to the Committee. He wanted someone who knew something about the Kennedy case, and he wanted to do some original probing, not just work with the FBI and CIA.

Another reason Schweiker decided to hire his own investigator was this: Although he was struck by the newly discovered evidence that Kennedy's murder might have been an act of retaliation by Castro for the CIA assassination plots against him, Schweiker wasn't ready to rule out other possibilities. The subcommittee staff was obviously concentrating on the retaliation theory because, from the pragmatic viewpoint of its paper investigation, it was the easiest one to structure into a report within the time limitations. Yet Schweiker was struck by what he termed "the fingerprints of intelligence" on Oswald's activities, as well as Oswald's associations with anti-Castro Cubans. So while his subcommittee staff was heading down one road, Schweiker wanted the opposite one also checked out.

Finally, there was this factor: Although Kennedy was murdered in Dallas, a vast amount of information about the case relates to a city 1,300 miles away. Within hours of the assassination, a rash of leads and tips related to Miami popped up. Schweiker decided that if there was a relationship between the Kennedy assassination and Castro elements—either pro-Castro or anti-Castro—or if one of the intelligence agencies was involved, Miami was the place to look for clues. He decided he could use a man on the street in Miami's Little Havana.

I was in the right place.

Knowing something about Miami is important in attempting to understand John F. Kennedy's murder.

Miami Beach is an unrelated island strip of high-rise condominiums, kitschly elegant hotels, expensive restaurants, and peacock tourists. But Miami—just across Biscayne Bay—is something else.

Like other big cities during the '50s, Miami felt the effects of urban sprawl as the white middle-class took off for the suburbs. And although area population was booming, Miami itself was relatively old and few newcomers to south Florida wanted to move back into an urban environment—despite the fact that Miami really had a small-town feeling about it. Never blighted with high-rise tenements, Miami was a city of streets lined with modest old homes of white clapboard, cinderblock, or coral rock, rear "Florida rooms," and front porches. With the middle-class exodus and the deterioration of its traditional neighborhoods, the city of Miami began more and more looking like a neglected waif. Its downtown began going downhill and its poor black sections like Overtown and Liberty City began oozing their blight through the rest of the city. Despite the tropical clime, Miami's future wasn't sunny.

Until the Cubans came.

The first small flock came in the early '50s, the *anti-Batistianos*, those who opposed the military dictatorship of General Fulgencio Batista. A young lawyer named Fidel Castro was among them. He stayed briefly and gave fiery speeches at an old movie theater on Flagler Street. Another was the wealthy former president, Carlos Prio, who ensconced himself in an elegant home on Miami Beach and dispensed millions in setting up arms and supply lines to the rebels while staying close to the American racketeers who were running the Havana gambling casinos. Then, when it appeared that the end of the Batista reign was inevitable, came the *Batistianos* themselves and the nonpolitical wealthy who got out with their nest eggs. That's when Miami first began to feel the tone of Cuban culture and social activity as the monied class began moving into the business world, setting up private clubs and restaurants.

Then, beginning on January 1, 1959, came the deluge. The seizure of power by Fidel Castro wrought as profound a change in Miami as it did in Cuba. At first the flow of exiles into the city was a slow stream moving through Miami's International Airport; then, as it became apparent that the ranting *barbudo* was taking his country toward Communism, the stream became a torrent.

"They were new types of refugees," wrote reporter Haynes Johnson in a book on the Bay of Pigs. "Instead of a home, they were seeking temporary asylum. They found it along the sandy beaches and curving coastline of Florida. They arrived by the thousands, in small fishing boats, in planes, chartered or stolen, and crowded into Miami. Along the boulevards, under the palms, and in hotel lobbies, they gathered and plotted their counterrevolution. Miami began to take on the air of a Cuban city. Even its voice was changing. Stores and cafés began advertising in Spanish and English. New signs went up on the toll roads slicing through the city, giving instructions in both languages. Everyone talked of home only 100 miles away. And everyone talked about the great liberation army being formed in the secret camps somewhere far away."

Within a year after Castro took power, Cuban exiles were arriving in Florida at a rate of 1,700 a week. And as the Cuban exile population grew, so did the presence of the CIA.

And with the exiles and their passion for a counterrevolution came the Central Intelligence Agency. Well before the US Embassy in Cuba closed down in January 1961, the CIA had stepped up its Cuban activities. It had not only increased the personnel operating out of the embassy in Havana, but also placed covert operatives as businessmen, ranchers, engineers, and journalists—among other covers—in order to recruit and establish liaison with anti-Castro dissidents. As counterrevolutionary groups began to form within Cuba, the CIA began supplying arms and communications equipment and, for those threatened with exposure, help in escaping.

Within a year after Castro took power, more than 100,000 Cuban exiles had settled in and others were arriving at a rate of 1,700 a week. As the Cuban exile population of Miami grew, so did the presence of the CIA. Although

PHOTOGRAPH BY UPI

Richard Bissell (right), head of CIA covert operations, confers with Senator Frank Church, chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities. Bissell was revealed during Senate hearings as a key man in the Bay of Pigs invasion and secret plots to assassinate Fidel Castro.

government agencies dealt with exile reception, the CIA had its contacts in every one, including the mother agency, the Cuban Refugee Center. It also used the Immigration and Naturalization Service to set up and maintain a debriefing facility at the Opa-Locka air base in northern Dade County. More important, the Agency began assigning case agents and keeping tabs on the many anti-Castro groups that had begun spreading through the exile community like mangrove roots. At one point, the Agency had a list of almost 700 such groups, some of which had begun active military operations with CIA support. One veteran recalls that the boat traffic on Biscayne Bay got so heavy "you needed a traffic cop." It confused the US Coast Guard, which didn't always know whether it was chasing a "sponsored operation" financed by the CIA or just "crazy Cubans."

The invasion of Cuba's Bahía de Cochinos—the Bay of Pigs—occurred in April 1961. It was the brainchild not of the Cuban exiles but of the CIA. It was spawned at a meeting of the Agency's top brass in January 1960. Originally, it was not going to be a massive operation. No more than thirty Cuban exiles were to be trained in Panama to serve as a cadre for bands of guerrillas recruited within or infiltrated into Cuba. However, by the time the plan had moved through the Agency's bureaucracy and was adopted and nurtured by its covert operations chief—a lanky, stooped-shouldered Groton-Yale man named Richard Bissell—it had grown into a major project. The plan President Dwight Eisenhower approved in March 1960 called for a "unified" Cuban government in exile, a "powerful propaganda offensive," and a large paramilitary force. The White House project officer was Vice President Richard Nixon.

Years later the Senate Intelligence Committee was to discover, from files voluntarily given to it by the CIA, that a few of the Agency's top officers—including Richard Bissell—had in that spring of 1960 begun setting in motion, as an adjunct to the Bay of Pigs operation, plans to assassinate Castro. The CIA told the committee that it had been involved in nine Castro-assassination plots in all, including those with the Mafia. Castro himself later produced a list of 24 CIA plots against his life.

As soon as John F. Kennedy was elected President in November 1960, CIA Director Allen Dulles and his covert-plans deputy, Bissell, flew to the Kennedy estate in Palm Beach and sold their new President on the Cuban operation. They did not tell him that the plans had recently been upgraded within the Agency to include an even larger paramilitary force and air strikes by US Navy planes.

In his recent book, *Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story*, Peter Wyden wrote:

"If the CIA, acting out of control and independently, had not escalated its plans against Fidel Castro from a modest guerrilla operation into a full-fledged invasion, President Kennedy would have suffered no humiliating, almost grotesque defeat."

Yet despite the defeat, what the Bay of Pigs plan provided was the historic opportunity for the CIA to begin domestic field operations on an unprecedented scale. For instance, although the main Cuban exile brigade was trained at a secret base in Guatemala, other special units were prepared within the United States by both military and CIA personnel. That was minor compared with the dimensions to which the CIA's presence in Miami grew. The Agency's officers, contract agents, informants, and contacts reached into almost every area of the community. The Bay of Pigs invasion gave birth to a special relationship between CIA operatives and the Cuban exiles. That relationship would intensify into a mutuality of interests that transcended presidential directives and official United States policy.

One of the factors that led the CIA to believe it could topple Castro was the success it had enjoyed in Guatemala in 1954. Using a force of only 150 exiles and a handful of World War II P-47 fighters flown by American contract pilots, the CIA brought down the Communist-leaning Guatemalan government in less than a week, firing hardly a shot, and installed the CIA's hand-picked leader, Castillo Armas. When covert-operations boss Richard Bissell was selecting Agency personnel to run the Bay of Pigs, he told them that the plan was based on "the Guatemala scenario."

Because of the success of that scenario, Bissell picked its veterans for the Cuban operation. Named as the Agency's political-liaison chief and given the job of bringing together Miami's Cuban exile groups into a united political front was a pipe-smoking author of spy thrillers, E. Howard Hunt.

Among Agency personnel, Hunt had—and still has—a curious reputation. To some he is the caricature of the Hollywood spy—Hunt did serve a stint as a Hollywood scriptwriter—given to overplaying the cloak-and-dagger role. One

A shadowy presence in CIA clandestine operations in the 1960s was long-time CIA operative and Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt. Hunt coordinated the activities of Cuban exiles in Miami prior to the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion.

of the more earnest of the Agency professionals liked to say that Hunt was consistent in his judgment: "Always wrong." Yet down through the years and right up through Watergate, Hunt was chosen to be on the front lines of dirty-trick operations. Despite the many failures among those operations, Hunt's star rose. He remained close to the shrewdest and most coldly professional of all CIA heads: Richard Helms.

It didn't take long for Hunt to inject himself into Cuban exile politics in Miami. With his faithful sidekick (and later Watergate conspirator) Bernard Barker, Hunt set up a series of "safe" houses for clandestine meetings, moved through the shadows of Little Havana, and doled out packets of money. (Hunt carried as much as $115,000 in his briefcase.) Although Hunt attempted to keep a separate identity—"Just call me 'Eduardo,' " he told the Cubans—and tried to keep the source of the funds a mystery, the exiles began referring to their benefactor as "Uncle Sam."

It was Hunt's job to form La Frente, the coalition of Cuban exile groups that would serve as the political umbrella for the military invasion. It was early apparent, however, that Hunt's own right-wing views colored his handling of the exile groups, and he and Barker, wheeling and dealing among the politicians, started as many squabbles as they mediated. Immediately before the invasion, Hunt was removed—he says he quit—as the Agency's political liaison because he wouldn't go along with including in the exile coalition a democratic socialist named Manolo Ray. Hunt called Ray a Communist.

Hunt's principal contribution to the Bay of Pigs invasion was his selection of the military brigade's political leader, a fiery physician-turned-politician named Manuel Artime. Artime helped stop a political insurrection at the exile training camp. Years later he would become wealthy as a business partner of former Nicaraguan dictator Luis Somoza. His relationship with Hunt would grow into close friendship. They bought homes across the street from each other in Miami Shores and Hunt was the godfather of one of Artime's children. (In 1975, an informant called the office of Senator Schweiker and said that a friend of Artime in Mexico City claimed that Artime had "guilty knowledge" of the Kennedy assassination. Artime, moving in and out of the country on business, could not be interrogated before Schweiker's mandate expired. Later, as an investigator for the House Assassinations Committee, I contacted Artime to take his sworn statement. Before I could, Artime went into the hospital and was told he had cancer. Two weeks later, Artime died. He was 45.)

Another contribution Hunt made to the Bay of Pigs operation was his help in selecting an old friend from the Guatemala scenario for an important Agency role. Pulled from his post as a covert operative in Havana was a tall, charm-

PHOTOGRAPH BY WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

"We are honorable men. You will simply have to trust us," declared Richard Helms in explaining the CIA's refusal to cooperate during congressional investigations. As deputy director of the CIA in 1961, Helms was intimately involved in the Bay of Pigs and Castro-assassination plots. Later he was convicted of lying to Congress about the CIA's role in the overthrow of the Chilean government.

ingly diffident counterintelligence expert named David Atlee Phillips. Phillips was a former actor and newspaperman. It was Phillips's job to set up a propaganda shop, to blend the rantings of the exile groups into an effective symphony, to set up broadcast stations that would rally guerrillas within Cuba to join the invaders, and to establish communication links that would trigger the actual invasion. Most of all it was Phillips's job to create the worldwide impression that the invasion was a spontaneous action by anti-Castro forces and that neither the US nor the CIA had anything to do with it.

What went wrong at the Bay of Pigs is history. President Kennedy told the world that he assumed "sole responsibility" for the debacle. Privately, he turned to his special counsel, Theodore Sorensen, and asked: "How could I have been so stupid to let them go ahead?" But many top CIA people involved in the Bay of Pigs felt strongly that Kennedy was responsible for its failure. There would have been no slaughter of the exiles, no 1,200 brave men captured, if Kennedy had not at the last moment rejected massive air support. That was the word that filtered down to the CIA field operatives, the Cuban exile community, and the remnants of the invasion brigade. It produced bitterness at every level.

Agency operatives who had led the exiles were inconsolable. E. Howard Hunt, monitoring the defeat at CIA head-

David Atlee Phillips, about 1960: He was recruited by E. Howard Hunt to be propaganda chief of the Bay of Pigs operation, responsible for creating the false impression that the invasion was spontaneous and not a CIA covert operation. When the invasion failed, Phillips got drunk and went for two hours

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLES L. TRAINOR/MIAMI NEWS

Dr. Manuel Artime, the fiery physician-leader of the anti-Castro forces in Miami, stands with John and Jackie Kennedy in the Orange Bowl after the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco. The President promised continued support for the exiled Cubans against Castro but withdrew the support after the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, angering anti-Castro guerrillas and their CIA controls.

uarters until the end, later noted: "I vas sick of lying and deception, heartick over political compromise and miltary defeat. . . . That night, laced hrough my broken sleep, were the words ir Winston Churchill had spoken to a 3ritish Minister of Defense: 'I am not ure I should have dared to start; but I m sure I should not have dared to stop.' . . I saw in his words a warning for hose Americans who had faltered at the 3ay of Pigs."

David Phillips would also reveal, years ater, the emotional impact of the defeat. n his memoirs, *The Night Watch,* he, oo, detailed the end:

"I went home. I peeled off my socks ike dirty layers of skin—I realized I adn't changed them for a week. . . . I bathed, then fell into bed to sleep for several hours. On awakening I tried to eat again, but couldn't. Outside, the day was sheer spring beauty. I carried a portable radio to the yard at the rear of the house and listened to the gloomy newscasts about Cuba as I sat on the ground, my back against a tree.

"Helen came out from the house and handed me a martini, a large one. I was half drunk when I finished. . . . Suddenly my stomach churned. I was sick. My body heaved.

"Then I began to cry. . . .

"I wept for two hours. I was sick again, then drunk again. . . .

"Oh shit! Shit!"

Following the Bay of Pigs, word went out from the White House that Kennedy was disillusioned with the CIA, that he was angry at his CIA advisers for pushing a scheme on him devised during the Eisenhower administration, that he had been ill-informed and misled and pressured by CIA brass who had an egocentric interest in pushing the plan. The President called for the resignation of CIA Director Allen Dulles and covert-plans boss Richard Bissell, and, according to one aide, threatened to "splinter" the Agency into "a thousand pieces and scatter them to the winds."

That was misleading. Kennedy was, indeed, mad at the CIA—not for planning the Bay of Pigs but for botching it. And he was mad at Castro who, in endless harangues and broadcast reviews of the battle, kept rubbing the young President's nose in the humiliating defeat. Kennedy's initial reaction was reflexive: Don't get mad, get even. Appointing his brother Robert to oversee the Agency's covert operations, Kennedy did not splinter the CIA but infused it with new life. The toughening up of policy toward Cuba and the infusion of money to the CIA's anti-Castro front groups became known as "the Kennedy vendetta."

Between the Bay of Pigs in April 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962, a secret war was launched against Castro. Kennedy's war, which made the preparations for the Bay of Pigs pale by comparison, slowly began altering the attitudes of the anti-Castro militants and the CIA operatives in the field, and although a good measure of bitterness and cynicism lingered, a more positive image of the President began taking shape.

Kennedy did his best to reinforce that image. "Cuba must not be abandoned to the Communists," he said in a speech shortly after the Bay of Pigs, and he spoke of a "new and deeper struggle." That was a euphemism for a campaign that eventually employed several thousand CIA operatives and cost more than $100 million a year.

Again Miami was the focus of the effort. On a large, secluded, heavily wooded tract that was part of the University of Miami's South Campus, the Agency set up a front corporation called Zenith Technological Services. Its code name was JM/WAVE and it soon became the largest CIA installation anywhere in the world, with the exception of the Agency's Langley headquarters.

At the height of its activities, the JM/WAVE station had a staff of more than 300 Americans, mostly case officers in charge of supervising and monitoring Cuban exile groups. Each case officer employed as many as 10 Cuban "principal agents." Each principal agent, in turn, would be responsible for as many as 30 regular agents. The Agency funded front operations throughout the area—print shops, real estate firms, travel agencies, coffee shops, boat-repair yards, detective agencies, gun shops, neighborhood newspapers—to provide employment for the thousands of case officers and agents operating outside JM/WAVE headquarters. It was said that if any Cuban exile wanted to open his own business, he had but to ask the CIA for start-up money. The CIA became one of the largest employers in south Florida.

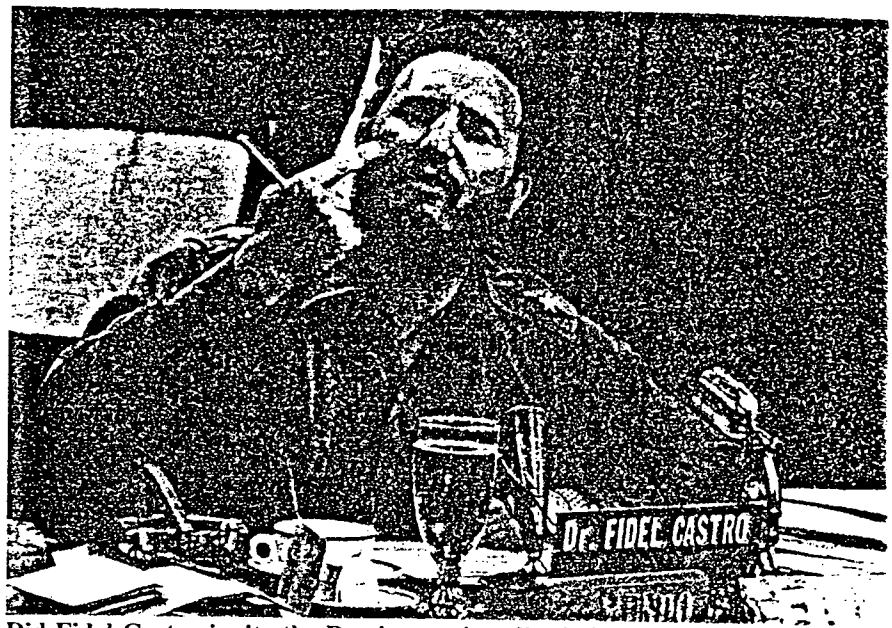
The JM/WAVE station was a logistical giant within itself. It leased more than 100 staff cars and maintained its own gas depot. It kept warehouses loaded with everything from machine guns to caskets. It had its own airplanes and what a former CIA officer called "the third-largest navy in the Western Hemisphere," including hundreds of small boats and yachts donated by friendly millionaires. There were hundreds of pieces of real estate, from dives to waterfront mansions, used as safe houses or assembly points for operations. In addition, there were paramilitary training camps scattered throughout the Florida Keys and deep in the Everglades. (One of the more active sites was a small, remote island north of Key West called No Name Key. One of the groups using it was called the International Anti-Communist Brigade, a collection of soldiers of fortune, mostly Americans, headed by a giant ex-Marine, Gerry Patrick Hemming. Like another ex-Marine, Lee Harvey Oswald, Hemming was trained as a radar operator in California. Hemming would later claim that Oswald once tried to join his IAB group. Co-founder of the IAB with Hemming was Frank Sturgis, a soldier of fortune who once worked in Cuba with Castro and later would become one of Howard Hunt's Watergate burglars.

Those were heady times for anti-Castro groups in Miami. With the CIA providing lessons in sabotage, explosives, weapons, survival, ambushes, and communications, the missions to Cuba began escalating in frequency and scale. Initially intent on infiltrating small guerrilla bands onto the island, the Agency was soon supervising raids aimed at blowing up oil refineries and sugar mills.

The JM/WAVE station in Miami became the international coordinating center for the secret war. Every CIA station

in the world had at least one case officer assigned to Cuban operations and reporting to the Miami station. The station also controlled an international economic strategy, pressuring US allies to embargo all trade with Cuba and supervising a worldwide sabotage program against goods being shipped to and from Cuba. The operational level of the Agency was also—without Kennedy's knowledge, it now appears, and even without the knowledge of his newly appointed director, John McCone—continuing its program of assassination attempts against Castro. In giving the CIA a new life, funding, and the power and influence to conduct large-scale secret operations, Kennedy had created a force over which, as he himself would discover, he could not maintain total control.

That realization came with the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962.



Did Fidel Castro invite the Russians to install missiles in Cuba—thus provoking the 1962 Cuban missile crisis—because of the CIA secret activities against him? Many Cuban exiles in Miami believed this—and were elated at the prospects of a Kennedy-Castro showdown.

It is not known whether Castro requested the installation of offensive missiles in Cuba or whether he accepted them at the suggestion of the Russians. There are many Cuban exiles in Miami who knew Castro well, who went to school with him, and who fought beside him in the mountains during the early days of the 26th of July Movement, and they believe Castro was driven to obtaining the missiles by the effectiveness of the secret CIA war against him. They think the unrelenting infiltration and sabotage operations created pressures that drove Castro to consider doing something bold.

The more fervent of the Cuban exiles were initially elated by the possibility that the missile crisis might provoke a showdown with Castro. President Kennedy himself boosted such hopes with hard-line reponses to the buildup of the Soviet presence in Cuba. In September 1962, Kennedy declared that the US would use "whatever means may be necessary" to prevent Cuba from exporting aggression "by force or threat of force." In Miami, the anti-Castro exiles and their CIA bosses appreciated such tough talk and looked forward to real action.

By October, Kennedy and Khrushchev were eyeball to eyeball. And then, suddenly, they started negotiating. The crisis ended on November 20, 1962. Kennedy announced that all IL-28 bombers were being withdrawn by the Soviets and that progress was being made on the withdrawal of offensive missiles. In return, Kennedy said he gave the Soviets and the Cubans a "no-invasion" pledge.

Those fighting the secret war against Castro were shocked by the "no invasion" settlement. To the men who had been risking their lives in a guerrilla war against Communism in the Caribbean, it was astounding that Kennedy should make a deal with Khrushchev. If the President's actions at the Bay of Pigs had raised doubts about his determination to bring down Castro, his handling of the missile crisis more than confirmed those doubts. Over *café cubano* at the back tables of luncheonettes in Miami's Little Havana, in the CIA safe houses in Coconut Grove, in the training camps in the Keys and the Everglades, wherever the exiles and their control agents gathered, the word "traitor" would be spoken.

And yet the anger at Kennedy for making the missile settlement was shallow compared with the reaction of the exiles and their CIA controls when it became apparent what the President's "no invasion" policy actually meant. Suddenly the United States government began cracking down on the very training camps and guerrilla bases its own agencies had established. Regular infiltration raids into Cuba by the exiles, which automatically had been getting the government's "green light," were disavowed and condemned. The Cuban Revolutionary Council, a united front of exile groups established by the CIA, had its subsidy cut off.

The crackdown continued over the next several months to the confusion and anger of the exiles. On the one hand they were being encouraged and supported by the US government—wasn't the CIA the US government?—and on the other hand they were being handcuffed and arrested. It was crazy.

The Coast Guard announced it was throwing more planes, ships, and men into policing the Florida straits. The Customs Service raided the secret camp at No Name Key and arrested the anti-Castro force in training there. The FBI seized a major cache of explosives at an exile camp outside New Orleans. Then the Federal Aviation Administration issued "strong warnings" to six American civilian pilots—including soldier-of-fortune Frank Sturgis and a few who had worked directly with the CIA—who had been flying raids over Cuba. The Secret Service arrested a prominent exile leader for conspiring to counterfeit Cuban currency earmarked for rebel forces inside Cuba—a plan that had all the hallmarks of a CIA operation.

Against this pattern of crackdown by federal enforcement agencies, there emerged a counter-grain of incidents relevant to the Kennedy assassination. These incidents involve a series of raids by anti-Castro groups that took place, despite the crackdown, between the time of the missile crisis in October 1962 and the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963. At the height of the missile crisis—the most politically inopportune moment for Kennedy—one of the largest and most militant of the Cuban groups, Alpha 66, launched a strike at a major port in Cuba, killing at least twenty defenders, including some Russians. A week later the same group sunk a Cuban patrol boat. On October 31, the day after Kennedy lifted his blockade of Cuba as a sign of peaceful intentions, Alpha 66 struck again. Then after the crisis ended in November, Alpha 66 pledged further raids.

There were at least a dozen other actions that, despite the President's orders indicated that some Cuban exile groups were continuing the secret war. The CIA denied it had any association with these continuing actions.

There were indications that Kennedy was confused. At a press conference in May 1963, in response to a question about whether the US was giving aid to the exiles, the President stumbled: "We may well be . . . well, none that I am familiar with. . . . I don't think as of today that we are." It was recently discovered that the CIA had been supporting at least one exile group under what the Agency termed an "autonomous operations" concept.

Few understood the significance of what was happening at the time, but one

who did was a Democratic congressman from Florida, Paul Rogers. Citing "serious kinks in our intelligence system," Rogers called for a joint congressional committee to oversee the CIA. "And what proof have we," asked Rogers, "that this Agency, which in many respects has the power to preempt foreign policy, is not actually exercising this power through practices which are contradictory to the established policy objectives of this government?"

That was in February 1963. That month, in Dallas, a czarist Russian migré, world traveler, and former French intelligence operative named George de Mohrenschildt decided to give a dinner party. He invited a young couple, Lee and Marina Oswald, who had returned from Russia the previous summer.

Twelve years later, with the call from Senator Schweiker, I began an odyssey into the Kennedy assassination that would be far more revealing that I ever anticipated. It was a journey into a maze that had grown, over the years, to bewildering proportions. Yet what emerged were similar images along many of the pathways, an indication—often only gossamer—of a concealed thread emanating from a common spool.

For instance, one of the first leads Schweiker asked me to check out came from a source he considered impeccable: Clare Boothe Luce. One of the wealthiest women in the world, widow of the founder of the Time Inc. publishing empire, a former congresswoman, and US ambassador to Italy, Clare Boothe Luce was the last person in the world Schweiker would have suspected of leading him on a wild-goose chase.

The chase began almost immediately after Schweiker announced the formation of the Kennedy assassination subcommittee. He was visited by Washington reporter Vera Glaser, who told him she had just interviewed Clare Boothe Luce and that Luce had given her information relating to the assassination. Schweiker called Luce, who confirmed the story she had told Glaser.

Luce claimed that in the early '60s she had financially supported an anti-Castro Cuban group running guerrilla raids into Cuba from Miami. On the evening of the Kennedy assassination, she received a call from one of the members of the group, who told her that Oswald had tried to penetrate his organization and had offered his services as a potential Castro assassin. He said that his group distrusted Oswald, kept watch on him, and eventually penetrated a Communist cell where Oswald was tape-recorded bragging about being, as Luce reported it, "the greatest shot in the world with a telescopic rifle."

Luce said she told her caller—whose name, she told Schweiker, was "something like" Julio Fernandez—to tell the FBI about the incident. However, when Schweiker checked the FBI files, he found no report of any such incident. There was a record of Oswald having approached an anti-Castro leader in New Orleans and then subsequently getting into a street squabble with him when the leader saw him distributing pro-Castro leaflets, but Luce's story was embroidered with different details and, Schweiker thought, was worth checking out.

PHOTOGRAPH BY UPI

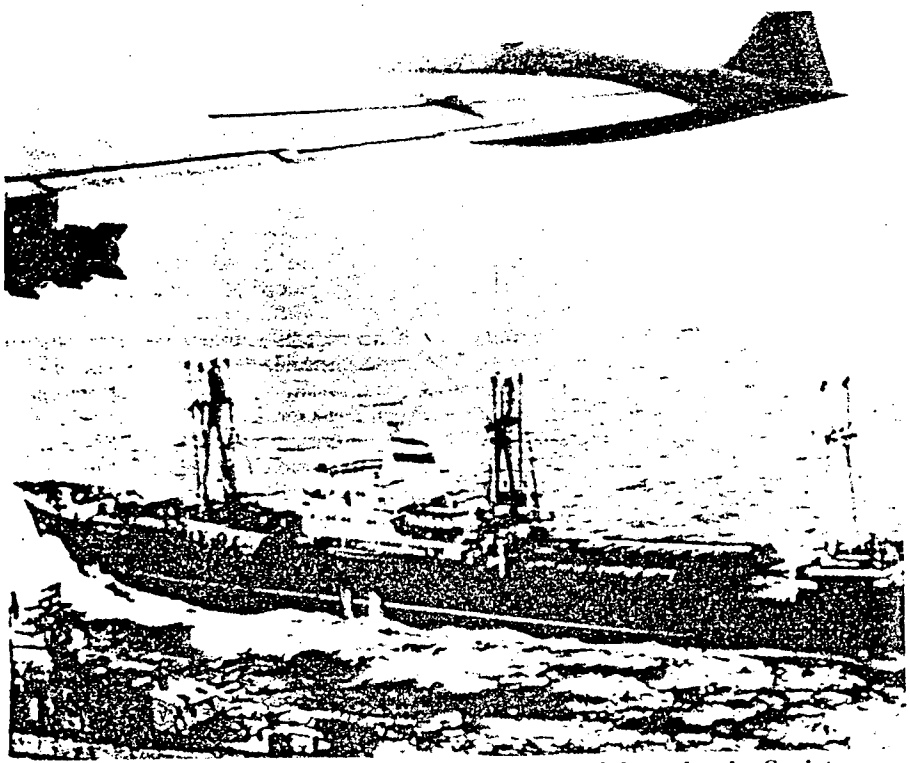
Did Clare Boothe Luce throw red herrings in the path of assassination investigators? Luce had strong ties to the CIA, and many fruitless hours were consumed tracking down leads she had given to the investigative staff.

I spent weeks—in Miami, New Orleans, and even Pennsylvania and New York—attempting to locate this "Julio Fernandez." To no avail. Later, with broader access to information as an investigator for the House Select Committee on Assassinations, I discovered why I could not find the right Julio Fernandez: The name, as Luce told then-CIA Director William Colby, with whom she was in touch at the time, was a concoction she had made up for Schweiker. Later, I interviewed Luce at her penthouse apartment at the Watergate and told her that her story reminded me of an Oswald incident in New Orleans in which he showed up at the store of an anti-Castro leader and volunteered his services. Luce said: "Why, yes, that's the same type of thing that happened to my boys."

When I walked out of the Watergate late that afternoon, I knew only one thing for sure: An awful lot of time had been spent checking out Luce's story and, in the end, it led nowhere.

The last time I saw Luce was shortly after my interview with her. I attended a luncheon meeting of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers. Luce was the guest speaker. Her speech was a vigorous defense of the intelligence establishment and a review of its successes. Clare Boothe Luce, besides being a guest speaker at that meeting, is on the board of directors of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers. That organization was founded in 1975 by David Atlee Phillips.

Time and again during the Kennedy as-



PHOTOGRAPH BY U.S. NAVY

Although the Cuban missile crisis resulted in a backdown by the Soviet Union and a withdrawal of their missiles from Cuba, the negotiations stunned the Cuban exiles. Kennedy pledged that the US would not invade Cuba, and after being encouraged, financed, and trained by the CIA, the anti-Castro fighters suddenly were targets of a US crackdown. 1961-1962

sassination investigation, the thread of an association with intelligence-agency actitivity would appear and reappear.

For instance, there was a man who called Schweiker's office with the information that he had seen Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby together at the Key West airport prior to the Kennedy assassination. They were with a group of young people, he said, going to Cuba to cut sugarcane for Castro. Yes, he said, he had reported the information to the FBI after Kennedy was killed. Again, Schweiker could find no record of it. But the man was a respected member of the community, a successful business-

One man with a history of muddying the Kennedy assassination waters showed up early in the investigations: Frank Sturgis, one of E. Howard Hunt's accomplices in the 1972 Watergate burglary.

man and, when I talked with him, very credible.

I spent days in Key West attempting to verify the man's story. I questioned everyone I could find who had worked at the Key West airport in the early '60s. A few people remembered that a group did go through Key West to Cuba to help Castro cut sugarcane. A Cuban plane did regularly fly into Key West at one time, but not during the period the man said he recalled Oswald, Ruby, and the group waiting for it in the airport terminal. I checked every record, file, and newspaper clip available and came close to confirming bits and pieces of the man's story, but I could not pin down even one factor. Yet the man insisted his recollection was accurate. He took me to the exact spots where he said he had seen Oswald and Ruby in the airport terminal.

In checking out his story, I spent dozens of hours with this fellow. We got friendly. I met his family and was invited to dinner. One day he happened to show me the photo lab he had at the rear of his business. I was amazed at the collection of photographic and electronic gear stocked there. I was doubly amazed when I noticed sitting on the floor in a corner what appeared to be the housing of an aerial reconnaissance camera.

I began probing him about his use of such equipment. Well, he said, he had made a number of trips into Cuba after Castro took over, in order to find out a few things. He told about once being suspected of spying by Castro's police and how he was retained and beaten. He spoke of how he hated Castro and how he thought Batista, whom he had known personally, was "one of the best friends the United States ever had."

When I asked him about the reconnaissance camera, he said he had flown a number of aerial photographic missions and proudly explained that he had designed a special device to permit him to trigger the camera, installed in the belly of his plane, from the cockpit. He said he had taken shots of the Russian missiles in Cuba long before Kennedy announced they existed.

For whom, I asked, was he working? "I was told," he said, smiling, "I was working for the United States Information Agency." I asked if he thought it possible that he was really working for the CIA? "Yes," he said, "I would think so."

I asked who had paid for all his sophisticated photo and electronic equipment. He looked at me as if I were playing a game with him and didn't answer directly. Finally he gave me a wide grin and said, "No comment."

Could there be a pattern of misinformation to the tips that Schweiker was being fed? The long ride from Key West to Miami along the Overseas Highway is one of scenic splendor, the sky blue and endless, the ocean a vista of whitecaps, the bay a glistening expanse of crystal serenity. The beauty escaped me as I drove home that evening. I kept thinking of Vince Salandria telling me how busy I would be kept.

Many of the early tips that Schweiker received contained elements similar to reports that sprung up immediately following the assassination of President Kennedy. These reports all indicated that Lee Harvey Oswald was tied to pro-Castro elements or was a Castro agent.

I've come to believe that a few of those early reports may have some relationship to what I later uncovered. Take the reports linked to Mexico City. Clare Boothe Luce maintained that she had received the telephone call from one of her young Cubans on the evening of Kennedy's assassination. She remembered that she had been watching television with her husband in her New York apartment when the call came through. The caller told her, she said, about Oswald and how he had left New Orleans to go to Mexico City before returning to Dallas. Yet, on the evening of November 22, Oswald's visit to Mexico City was known by a very few people, perhaps Marina Oswald and a handful of CIA officials—most notably, a few in the Agency's Mexico City station.

Another attempt to link Oswald to Castro came out of Mexico City immediately after Oswald was murdered by Jack Ruby. A young Nicaraguan named Gilberto Alvarado walked into the American Embassy and insisted he had a story to tell the American ambassador, Thomas Mann. Alvarado claimed that he had gone to the Cuban embassy in September and while waiting to conduct business had seen three persons talking on a patio [illegible]

Harvey Oswald, a tall, thin Negro with reddish hair, and a Cuban from the consulate. Alvarado said he saw the Cuban give the Negro a large sum of money and then heard the Negro tell Oswald "I want to kill the man." According to Alvarado, Oswald replied, "You're not man enough; I can do it," and the Negro then gave Oswald $6,500 in large-denomination American bills.

Alvarado, it was later discovered, was an agent of the Nicaraguan intelligence service. Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza was a strong anti-Castroite and a cooperative ally of the CIA, having permitted the Agency to use his country as a training camp and assembly area for the Bay of Pigs invasion. At the time of the Kennedy assassination, Manuel Artime, dubbed by his fellow anti-Castro leaders as the CIA's "golden boy," still had two training bases in Nicaragua and a huge arsenal of equipment.

The Alvarado fabrication strikes some researchers as having the hallmarks of a counterintelligence scenario, another stone thrown in to muddy the already murky waters.

One man with a history of muddying the Kennedy-assassination waters showed up early in the Schweiker investigation: Frank Sturgis, one of E. Howard Hunt's accomplices in the Watergate burglary.

The names of both E. Howard Hunt and Frank Sturgis had been in the news in connection with the Kennedy assassination long before I joined Senator Schweiker's staff. A group of assassination researchers had contended that two of the three men in photographs taken in Dallas's Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963, bore "striking resemblances" to Hunt and Sturgis. The men were reportedly derelicts—or "tramps," as the press came to call them—who were discovered in a boxcar in the railroad yard behind the grassy knoll. Taken to police headquarters, the tramps were escorted across Dealey Plaza, where news photographers took photos of them. The tramps were questioned and released, without a record of their identities being kept.

The Sturgis-Hunt contention was examined in early 1975 by the Rockefeller Commission, which was appointed by President Gerald Ford to probe illegal CIA activities in the United States. Relying on comparative photo analysis performed by the same FBI expert who did all the Warren Commission's analyses, the Rockefeller Commission concluded that the men in the tramps photographs were not Sturgis and Hunt.

About the time Schweiker began his investigation, a new book again raised the Sturgis-Hunt story. Titled *Coup d'Etat in America*, it was written by Michael Canfield and Alan J. Weberman, with a foreword by Texas Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez. The book incorporated a novel device: It came with film-positive photos of Sturgis and Hunt designed to be overlayed on photographs of the

Frank Sturgis: trusted Castro confidant in the early days of the Cuban revolution, militant anti-Castroite and CIA operator in Miami, finally a Watergate burglar.

bear striking similarities.

I would later discover that photo comparison and analysis is an exceptionally nonconclusive technique. The House Assassinations Committee spent $83,154 on it. Among the photographs we submitted to a panel of experts for analysis and comparison were not only those of Sturgis and Hunt but also those of other individuals who resembled the tramps. The panel concluded that Sturgis and Hunt were not the tramps in the photographs. It did conclude that one of the tramps—the one who resembled Hunt—was most likely a man named Fred Lee Chrisman, a right-wing activist. When those results came in, Committee investigators were sent out to find out where Chrisman was on November 22, 1963. (Chrisman had since died.) They came back with official records and eyewitness affidavits that Chrisman was teaching school in the state of Washington the day Kennedy was assassinated. So much for the conclusiveness of photo analysis.

What was interesting, however, was the panel's conclusions in its comparison of photos of Frank Sturgis with those of the tramps. It used two comparative techniques. One it termed "metric traits" and the other "morphological differences." One was a comparison of the measurements of six facial features and their metric relationships; the other was simply whether or not various facial features were shaped the same. The panel

The FBI found Sturgis at home in Miami. They said, "Frank, if there's anybody capable of killing the President of the United States, you're the guy."

concluded that the average deviation between the tramp's features and Sturgis's features was "low enough to make it impossible to rule out Sturgis on the basis of metric traits alone." However, the panel said, it was the morphological differences that indicated that Sturgis was not the tramp. In other words, Sturgis just didn't look like the tramp.

The House Committee's staff in charge of the photo panel's work was an attorney named Jane Downey. One day she came to me and asked me to help gather some of the photographs that would be sent to the panel members for analysis. I recall asking her at the time to find out whether or not the experts would take into consideration the possibility that the tramps might be wearing sophisticated disguises. That had to be the case if they were not just real drifters in the wrong place at the wrong time. (As a member of Nixon's White House plumbers, E. Howard Hunt had obtained disguises from the CIA's Technical Services Division and used them on more than one job.) Downey promised she would ask the photo analysts about the use of disguises.

Several days later Jane Downey told me she had checked with the photo analysts. "I'm told that there is no way they can tell if disguises were used," she said.

"In other words," I said, "if the tramps were in disguise there would be no way the analysts could tell who they really are?"

"That's what I'm told."

"Then why do a photo comparison at all?" I asked. Downey shrugged her shoulders. "Well," I said, "I hope that point is mentioned in the final report."

"I'm sure it will be," said Downey.

It wasn't.

My initial interest in both Frank Sturgis and E. Howard Hunt was not predicated on whether they were the Dealey Plaza tramps. When the Rockefeller Commission concluded that Sturgis and Hunt had not been in Dallas on November 22, 1963, it raised more questions than it resolved. Although the Commission report claimed that Sturgis and Hunt had alibis for their whereabouts on November 22, 1963, it concluded: "It cannot be determined with certainty where Hunt and Sturgis actually were on the day of the assassination."

It can be determined where Frank Sturgis was on the day after the Kennedy assassination. The FBI found him at home in Miami. "I had FBI agents all over my house," he has said. "They told me I was one person they felt had the capabilities to do it. They said, 'Frank, if there's anybody capable of killing the President of the United States, you're the guy who can do it.' "

Now in his fifties and putting on weight, Sturgis has led a thousand lives, maybe more. He was born Frank Angelo Fiorini in Norfolk, Virginia. His parents separated when he was an infant and he grew up with his mother's family in Philadelphia's Germantown. (He would later change his name to his stepfather's, Frank Anthony Sturgis, when his mother remarried.)

Frank Sturgis turned seventeen two days after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, and he dropped out of Germantown High to join the Marines. Sturgis was shipped to the Pacific jungles, where he volunteered for the toughest unit in the Marines, the First Raider Battalion, the legendary Edson's Raiders. He was taught how to kill with his bare hands, infiltrated into enemy encampments, air-dropped on commando raids. He saw Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, three serious combat wounds, malaria, jaundice, and, in the end, he was diagnosed as having "exhaustion and possible psychoneurosis." He had a stay at the Sun Valley Naval Medical Center before his discharge in 1945.

After World War II, Sturgis was a plainclothes cop in Norfolk, went to school part-time at William and Mary College, managed a few bars, trained as a radio gunner in the Naval Reserves, crewed as a merchant seaman, did a two-year stint with the US Army in Germany where he served with the Armed Forces Security Agency, was married, widowed, remarried, divorced, and married again.

Sturgis says he got involved in Cuban activities in the early '50s when he went to Miami to visit an uncle who was married to a Cuban. That's how he got friendly with exiled former Cuban President Carlos Prio, he says. Prio, close to the American mob who ran Havana's gambling casinos, was funding Castro's guerrilla war against General Batista. (Prio would later be convicted of arms smuggling with a Texan, Robert McKeown. After the Kennedy assassination, McKeown told the FBI that he was approached by Jack Ruby about a deal to sell military equipment to Castro. In 1977, a week before he was scheduled to interview Prio, he went to the side of his Miami Beach home, sat on a chaise outside the garage, and shot himself in the heart. He reportedly had financial problems.)

It was through Prio, Sturgis says, that he infiltrated Cuba to join Castro in the mountains. Soon he was a trusted Castro aide, an emissary on arms deals all over the United States and Latin America, a daring pilot who flew loads of weapons into mountain airstrips. He became friendly with another daredevil pilot, Pedro Diaz-Lanz, and when, after the revolution, Castro appointed Diaz-Lanz chief of the Rebel Air Force, Sturgis was named the Air Force's director of security. Nine months after Castro took power, Diaz-Lanz and Sturgis publicly condemned Castro's Communism and fled to Miami. A month later, they were dropping propaganda leaflets over Havana.

What struck me about that initial interview with Sturgis was his Archie Bunker-like directness. He said he thought the Kennedy assassination was definitely a conspiracy and that Oswald was a patsy.

Frank Sturgis says he was never an official, paid agent of the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA has confirmed this. Yet, before the Bay of Pigs and afterwards, during the height of the JM/WAVE's secret war against Castro, Sturgis used equipment, flew planes, and directed assault craft that were supported by the CIA. He has admitted that the B-25 he flew on his first leaflet-drop was maintained with $10,000 from E. Howard Hunt.

In terms of the Kennedy assassination, it was Sturgis's relationship with Hunt that drew my attention. Both testified under oath to the Rockefeller Commission that they first met just prior to the Watergate burglary—Hunt said in 1972, Sturgis said in late 1971 or early 1972. That seemed strange in view of their active involvement in Miami's anti-Castro activities in the early '60s. Sturgis claims that although he knew of "Eduardo" at the time, all his contacts with him and the funds that came from him were through Hunt's assistant, Bernard Barker.

In October 1972, writer Andrew St. George interviewed Frank Sturgis in his home in Miami while Sturgis was awaiting his Watergate sentence. It was before the tramp photos were publicized, before cries for another Kennedy-assassination investigation began to peak, before the Rockefeller Commission was formed. St. George was an old friend of Sturgis from their days with Castro in the mountains. Sturgis was glad to see the gregarious St. George and, stung by his arrest at Watergate and the headlines that made him appear a bungling burglar, Sturgis—according to St. George—blurted out the real story behind Watergate. A few months later, St. George visited Sturgis in the Washington, DC, jail. "I will never leave this jail alive," he says Sturgis told him, "if what we discussed about Watergate does not remain a secret between us. If you attempt to publish what I've told you, I am a dead man."

In August 1974, St. George published his interview with Sturgis in *True* magazine. In it, he quotes Sturgis as saying: "The Bay of Pigs—hey, that was one sweet mess. I met Howard Hunt that year; he was the political officer of the exile brigade. Bernard Barker was Hunt's right-hand man, his confidential clerk—his body servant, really."

Sturgis today denies he ever said that and curses St. George.

Today, Sturgis is not hesitant to admit his disgust with Kennedy after the President made the Cuban-missile arrangement with the Russians. Sturgis was one of the six pilots specially warned by the Federal Aviation Administration for making raids over Cuba at the time Kennedy was negotiating the delicate deal. Sturgis was also the co-founder of the International Anti-Communist Brigade, some of whom were arrested at their training site on No Name Key after the missile crisis.

My first interview with Frank Sturgis came not long after he was released from his Watergate sentence. For many months he remained a low-profile figure in Miami, not moving around much, not getting his name in the newspaper, not yet back in action. That night he talked effusively, chain-smoking and drinking Coke. (Sturgis is a heavy smoker, but never touches alcohol.)

What struck me about that initial interview with Sturgis was his Archie Bunker-like directness. He said he thought the Kennedy assassination was definitely a conspiracy, that Oswald was a patsy, and that the government agencies—the FBI, the Secret Service, and the CIA—were all involved in a cover-up. He spoke of the possible motivations of the anti-Castro groups and their dislike for Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs. ("I even hated him, too," he said.) He said he once refused to join the CIA even though it gave him an application because he thought it was infiltrated at its highest ranks with double agents—"possibly the same people who conspired to kill Kennedy." He said his theory was that the Kennedy assassination was a conspiracy involving intelligence agents in Russia's KGB, Cuba's intelligence service, and the CIA. Actually, as Sturgis rambled on, there wasn't a conspiracy theory he didn't espouse.

Several months later, Frank Sturgis made that initial interview more interesting. The Schweiker report had just been released. The Church Intelligence Committee staff had built it on the blocks of Castro-assassination plots that the Warren Commission had not been told about, thus making the Castro retaliation

·nator Richard Schweiker headed e Senate Intelligence Committee's vestigation into the assassination John F. Kennedy and urged a ·mplete re-investigation.

eory its strong theme.

The evening after the report was re-ased, Sturgis telephoned. He said he ıd just run across an old friend, a "guy ith the Company," who "revived" his ınd about something he had completely ɔrgotten to tell me. He now recalled ıat he had heard about a meeting in ſavana about two months before the ennedy assassination. At the meeting ere a number of high-ranking men, in-luding Castro, his brother Raul, Ramiro aldez, the chief of Cuban intelligence, hé Guevara and his secretary, Tanya, nother Cuban officer, an American nown as "El Mexicano," and—oh, eah—Jack Ruby. And the meeting dealt ith plotting the assassination of John . Kennedy.

That's what Sturgis had "completely orgot" to tell me. Just a bit of infor-nation, with names.

Suddenly Sturgis was pushing Castro-lid-it stories again.

mmediately after the Kennedy assassi-ıation, Sturgis was involved in other stories that proved to be without foun-dation. According to FBI documents, one involved a reporter named James Buchanan who had written an article for he Pompano *Sun Sentinel* that quoted Sturgis as saying that Oswald visited Miami in November 1962 to contact Miami-based supporters of Fidel Castro and that, while in Miami, was in tele-phone contact with Castro's intelligence service.

I was intrigued by why Frank Sturgis would inject himself into the Kennedy-assassination investigation. I was also intrigued by the character of the infor-mation he circulated, imbued as it was with just the right amount of detail and tenuous relation to some sort of docu-mentary evidence. I wondered if here, too, there was a counterintelligence ov-erlay to what was happening.

There were other moments that made me think I was taking Frank Sturgis too seriously. One evening I was chatting with him on the telephone. At the time I was checking into a fellow called "El Mono"—the Monkey—who had been described to me as "one of the CIA's best-trained Cuban operatives." Sturgis talked about him for a while and then said he had a friend who could tell me a lot more about El Mono. The friend, whom I'll call Paul, was an American who had spent seven years in Castro prisons. He was charged with plotting to blow up a building housing Russian agents. Paul had operated a small bar in Havana as a front, was married to a Cuban who worked for the CIA, and was deeply involved in Miami's anti-Castro Cuban activity. Sturgis said he would make arrangements for me to meet Paul, but he didn't want to tell Paul that he was setting him up. He said he would be having breakfast with Paul the next Saturday morning at the Westward Ho restaurant in Little Havana and that I should just stroll in. "He don't know you're gonna be there, so when you get there I'll just put him on a little bit," said Sturgis. "We're old friends; I've known him for years. It'll be funny. We kid with each other a lot. He's a funny guy."

I spotted Sturgis and his friend in a back booth when I walked into the Westward Ho. Sturgis had his back to the door. I strolled up and slapped him on the shoulder. "Hey, Frank!" I greeted him. "Howya been? What've you been doing? Haven't seen you around lately." Sturgis looked up with a surprised yet blank expression. "Hey, I know you," he said. "Sure you do!" I said, sitting down beside him. "Where do I know you from?" he wondered aloud. "Frank, how can you forget?" I said. "Now wait a minute, don't tell me," said Sturgis, "I'll think of it." He cupped his chin in his hand and thought hard. He was a very bad actor and I couldn't keep a grin from crossing my face. Paul just stared at us, wondering what was going on.

Sturgis kept the act up for about five minutes, pounding his forehead and tak-ing shots at different names. "Oh, I know I know I know," he would say in mock frustration, "but I'm drawing a blank wall!" I couldn't help laughing, more at his display at over-dramatics than at Paul's puzzlement. Finally, I reached across the table and introduced myself by name to Paul. He shook my hand and then turned to Sturgis. "Well, *now* do you remember who he is?" Paul asked him. Sturgis was feigning a mild con-vulsion. "Oh, sure, sure," he admitted, "I really know who he is. I was just puttin' you on!"

"Oh," Paul said, not getting the point of the charade.

"Gaeton here," Sturgis said, still laughing, "is a friend of mine who is with the, uh, whattaya callit, you know, the government committee that's look-ing into the assassination, you know, the assassination of John F. Kennedy."

"Oh," Paul said, "you mean the guy you killed."

Sturgis's face froze. The smile was gone. Then he shook his head and smiled again. "Oh, yeah, sure," he said. Paul laughed at catching Sturgis off guard.

I started laughing, too. He was right. Paul was a funny guy.

During the first few months I worked for Senator Schweiker, I spent a lot of time thrashing about in murky waters. Then, one afternoon early in January 1976, I received a call from Dave Marston in Schweiker's office. Marston was Schweiker's staff coordinator on the Kennedy investigation. "You can give up on Silvia Odio," he said. "The guys over on committee staff told me they got word she's in Puerto Rico. They're get-ting ready to track her down."

"Do we have to tell them, Dave?"

"Tell them what?"

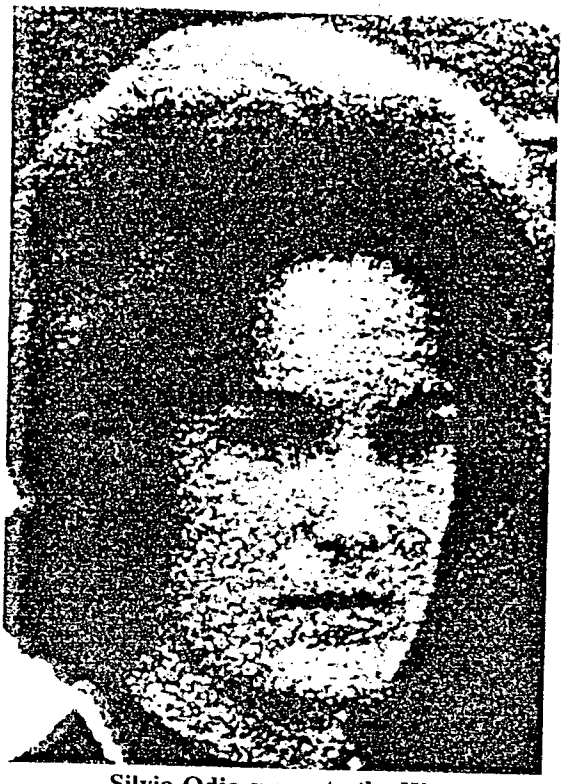
"I was talking with Silvia Odio this morning in Miami."

The Senate Committee staff had de-cided that their final report on the Ken-nedy assassination could be written from documents given them by the FBI and CIA. The staffers figured they didn't have time for any investigation in the field. But the "Odio incident" bothered them, just as it had bothered the Warren Commission.

If the Warren Commission had found that Silvia Odio was telling the truth, its final conclusion that Oswald was not part of a conspiracy would have been undermined. Odio claimed that Oswald was one of three men who came to the door of her apartment in Dallas one eve-ning in the last week of September 1963. The Commission dismissed Odio's tes-timony because, it said, it had "consid-erable evidence" that Oswald had not been in Dallas at all that September.

It had nothing of the sort. The Warren Commission's problem was that if Os-wald had gone to Dallas on his way from New Orleans to Mexico City, he would have had to have private transportation and, because he did not have a car and could not drive, that meant that others were involved with him. And the Warren Commission did not want to have to deal with that.

My discovery of Silvia Odio in Miami was important because in investigating her story I would open a new area of evidence with explosive potential. Silvia Odio's background is relevant. She was the oldest of ten children spirited out of Cuba when their parents became active in anti-Castro activity. Her father, Amador Odio, was among Cuba's weal-thiest men, owner of the country's larg-est trucking business and once described by *Time* as the "transport tycoon" of Latin America. But both he and his wife, Sarah, were idealists and had fought against dictators from the time of Gen-eral Machado in the '30s. They were among Castro's early supporters and among the first to turn against him when



Silvia Odio swore to the Warren Commission that she met Lee Harvey Oswald in the company of two Cubans in Dallas in September 1963. If she could be believed, that would mean a probable conspiracy. She was not believed.

"Fidel betrayed the Revolution," as Amador Odio would later say. With liberal leader Manolo Ray, they helped to form one of the first anti-Castro groups within Cuba.

Amador and Sarah Odio were arrested by Castro in October 1961 at their country estate outside Havana. (The Odios had once been hosts at the wedding of one of Castro's sisters on that estate.) Later Castro would turn it into a national women's prison and Sarah Odio would spend eight years incarcerated there.

When her parents were arrested, Silvia Odio was 24 years old, living in Puerto Rico with her husband and four young children. She had attended law school in Cuba for a while. After her parents were arrested, her husband was sent to Germany by the firm for which he was working and subsequently deserted her and their children. Destitute, she began having emotional problems. By that time, Silvia's younger sisters, Annie and Sarita, were settled in Dallas. Sarita, a university student, had become friendly with a Dallas clubwoman named Lucille Connell, who was active in both the Cuban Refugee Center there and the Mental Health Association. When Sarita told Connell of Silvia's plight, Connell made arrangements to have Silvia and her children move to Dallas and for Silvia to receive psychiatric treatment.

Lucille Connell became Silvia's closest confidante. Connell would later tell me that Silvia's emotional problems resulted in attacks of sudden fainting when, according to Connell, "reality got too painful to bear." Connell said she witnessed Silvia suffer these attacks when she first arrived in Dallas, but with psychiatric help they ended—until the Kennedy assassination.

Silvia Odio had moved to Dallas in March 1963. She wanted to lead a quiet life, but her desire to do something to help get her parents out of prison led her and her sisters to maintain contact with Cuban exiles who were politically active and to join the anti-Castro group called JURE, which was founded by her father's old friend, Manolo Ray. (This was the same Manolo Ray who clashed with E. Howard Hunt before the Bay of Pigs.)

By September 1963, Silvia Odio was established in Dallas's Cuban-exile community. She had a decent job, had her emotional problems under control, and was planning to move into an apartment more comfortable than the rental unit in which she and her four children were squeezed. Moving day was set for Monday, October 1, 1963. The week before she was scheduled to move, her sister Annie, then seventeen, came to the apartment to help her pack and to babysit. When the doorbell rang early one evening in that last week of September, Annie went to the door to answer it.

Later I would talk with Annie Odio, who is now also living in Miami. She is married to an architect and has two children. She remembered the evening at Silvia's apartment in Dallas. One of the men asked to speak to Sarita. He initially spoke English, but when Annie answered him in Spanish he spoke Spanish. Annie told him that Sarita didn't live there. "He then said something—I don't recall exactly what, something about her being married—which made me think that they really wanted my sister Silvia. I recall putting the chain on the door while I went to get Silvia."

Annie told me that two of the men were Latin-looking and that one was shorter than the other and heavyset, had dark, shiny hair, and "looked Mexican." She said the third man was an American.

Annie Odio recalled that Silvia was initially reluctant to talk with the visitors because she was getting dressed to go out, but she remembers Silvia coming out of the bedroom in her bathrobe to go to the door.

Silvia Odio had told me she had been getting dressed to go out when the three men came to the door. The men were standing in the vestibule just inside the small front porch. Both the porch and the vestibule had bright overhead lights. Silvia said the men told her they were members of JURE and spoke as if they knew both Manolo Ray and her father. Her conversation, she said, was exclusively with the taller Latin, who identified himself as "Leopoldo," although he admitted he was giving her an alias or a "war name," the use of which was common among anti-Castro activists at the time. She said she was less certain of the other Latin's name—it might have been "Angelo"—but she described him as her sister did, "looking more Mexican than anything else." The third visitor, the American, was introduced to her as "Leon Oswald." She said "Leon Oswald" acknowledged the introduction with a very brief reply, perhaps in idiomatic Spanish, but she later decided he could not understand Spanish because of his lack of reaction to her Spanish conversation with "Leopoldo."

The third visitor, the American, was introduced to her as "Leon Oswald." She said the three men appeared tired, unkempt, and unshaven, as if they had just come from a long trip.

There is no doubt in Silvia Odio's mind that this visitor was Lee Harvey Oswald: She was with the men more than twenty minutes and, although she did not permit them in her apartment, she was less than three feet from them as they stood in the well-lit vestibule. She said Oswald and the other two men appeared tired, unkempt, and unshaven, as if they had just come from a long trip.

"Leopoldo" told Silvia Odio that the reason they had come to her was to get her help in soliciting funds, in the name of JURE, from local businessmen. "He told me," she recalled, "that he would like for me to write them, in English, very nice letters and perhaps we could get some funds."

Silvia was suspicious of the strangers and avoided any commitment, and the conversation ended with "Leopoldo" giving her the impression he would contact her again. After the men left, Silvia locked her door and went to the window to watch them. She saw them pull away in a red car that had been parked in front of the apartment.

The following day or the day after—Silvia was never certain about that—she received a call from "Leopoldo." She is relatively certain about the gist of what "Leopoldo" told her in that telephone conversation, and it is consistent with her testimony to the Warren Commission. She said that "Leopoldo" told her that "the gringo" had been a Marine, that he was an expert marksman, and that he was "kind of *loco*." She recalled: "He said that the Cubans, we did not have any guts because we should have assassinated Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs."

On the day President Kennedy was assassinated, both Silvia and Annie re-

Warren report dated 24 September 1964.

membered the visit of the three men. Before she saw a photograph of Oswald or knew that he was involved, the news of the President's death brought back to Silvia's mind what "Leopoldo" had said about assassinating Kennedy. She had just returned to work from lunch, was told that everyone was being sent home, suddenly felt frightened, and, while walking to her car, fainted. She remembers waking up in the hospital.

Across town, Annie Odio was watching television at a friend's house. She and some friends had gone to see the President's motorcade pass several miles before it reached Dealey Plaza. "When I first saw Oswald on television," she told me, "my first thought was, 'My God, I know this guy and I don't know from where!' I kept thinking, 'Where have I seen this guy?' Then, I remember, my sister Sarita called me and told me that Silvia had fainted at work and that she was sending her boyfriend to take me to the hospital. When I walked into the room Silvia started crying and crying. I think I told her, 'You know this guy on TV who shot President Kennedy? I think I know him.' And she said, 'You don't remember where you know him from?' I said, 'No, I cannot recall, but I know I've seen him before.' And then she told me, 'Do you remember those three guys who came to the house?' " That's when, Annie said, she knew she had seen Lee Harvey Oswald before.

Based on background and character, Silvia and Annie Odio were highly credible. The subsequent checking I did of their story absolutely convinced me they were telling the truth. One of the major factors was that Silvia Odio had told more than one person of the incident *before* the Kennedy assassination.

She wrote to her father, Amador, in prison and told him of the visit of the three strangers. The Warren Commission obtained a copy of his reply, which warned her to be careful because he did not know them. I spoke to Amador Odio. He and his wife were released from Cuban prison a few years ago and are also living in Miami now. No longer wealthy—he works at night for an airline—he confirmed receiving the letter from Silvia and his reply.

Another confirmation came from Dr. Burton Einspruch, the psychiatrist counseling Silvia at the time. He recalled that she had told him prior to the assassination of the visit of the two Latins and the American, and he remembered calling her on the day of the assassination. He said she mentioned "Leon" and, in "a sort of histrionic way," connected the visit of "Leon" to the Kennedy assassination.

Also of relevance, I thought, was the fact that the FBI found out about the visit only inadvertently. Both Silvia and Annie had immediately decided, in the hospital, not to say anything to anyone about what they knew. "We were so frightened, we were absolutely terrified," Silvia remembered. "We were both very young and yet we had so much responsibility, with so many brothers and sisters and our mother and father in prison. We were so afraid, not knowing what was happening. We made a vow to each other not to tell anyone."

They did not tell anyone they did not know and trust. But their sister Sarita told Lucille Connell, and Connell told a trusted friend, and soon FBI agents were knocking on Silvia Odio's door. She says it was the last thing in the world she wanted to do but that when they came she felt she had to tell the truth.

Even before I met Silvia and Annie Odio and could evaluate their credibility, I was intrigued by two aspects of the FBI documents and the Warren Commission records of the Odio incident. First, they seemed to contain the potential of something of keystone significance in any attempt to grasp the truth about Lee Harvey Oswald and the Kennedy assassination. If the incident did occur as Odio contended, then any plausible theory of the assassination would have to account for it. Second, this was the very point the Warren Commission itself quickly recognized. The Commission was therefore forced, by its own conclusions, to pummel the facts about the incident into conforming lies.

What I recall best about meeting Silvia Odio in Miami was the fear. It was still with her after all these years.

The Warren Commission was hampered, of course, by the FBI's initial bungling in investigating the incident. Silvia Odio had provided good physical descriptions of her visitors and details about their car. The FBI did not vigorously pursue those leads but instead spent most of its time questioning people about Silvia's credibility and her emotional problems. The Bureau's first interview with Silvia Odio was on December 12, 1963. On August 23, 1964, with the first drafts of the Warren Commission report being written, Chief Counsel J. Lee Rankin wrote to J. Edgar Hoover: "It is a matter of some importance to the Commission that Mrs. Odio's allegations either be proved or disproved." A month later, with the report in galley form, the Odio incident was still a concern to some staffers. In a memo to his boss, staff counsel Wesley Liebeler wrote: "There are problems. Odio may well be right. The Commission will look bad if it turns out that she is. There is no need to look foolish by grasping at straws to avoid admitting that there is a problem."

The FBI did attempt to alleviate that "problem" when it interviewed a soldier of fortune named Loran Eugene Hall on September 26, 1964. Hall claimed he had been in Dallas in September 1963 trying to raise anti-Castro funds with two companions, one of whom might have looked like Oswald. The Warren Commission, grasping at a straw, cited the Hall interview in its final report, giving the impression that Hall and his companions were Odio's visitors. It then concluded: "Lee Harvey Oswald was not at Mrs. Odio's apartment in September 1963."

The Warren Commission did not mention that Loran Eugene Hall was one of the anti-Castro guerrillas arrested at No Name Key after Kennedy's Cuban-missile crackdown and also was a member of the International Anti-Communist Brigade, whose members and leaders had fed a series of phony stories to Kennedy-assassination investigators. Neither did the Warren Commission note in its final report—even though it knew—that the subsequent FBI interviews revealed that Hall's two companions denied having been in Dallas, that neither looked like Oswald, that Silvia Odio, shown their photographs, did not recognize them, and that Loran Eugene Hall, when requestioned, admitted he had fabricated the story.

What I recall best about meeting Silvia Odio in Miami was the fear. It was still with her after all those years. She was

For J. Lee Rankin, chief counsel to the Warren Commission, Silvia Odio's story posed problems, for it cast in doubt the ultimate finding that there had been no conspiracy. "We are supposed to be closing doors, not opening them," he said in refusing to credit her testimony.

working as an assistant in the legal department of a large firm, but she had remained home that morning so we could talk. Her husband, Mauricio, who is involved in Spanish-language publishing, had also remained home until he saw that his wife felt comfortable. Silvia, then in her late thirties, still youthful and attractive, was nervous but bright and morning-fresh when we began talking. After several hours of discussing the incident and her experiences with the Warren Commission, she looked older.

Silvia Odio had been reluctant to talk at all. She kept asking, "Why? Why are they bringing it all up again? What good will it do? I told them the truth but they did not want to hear it. Why do they want to keep playing games with me? *Why?*" Her voice had a nervous edge but she was articulate and rational. "Why didn't the FBI investigate immediately? Why did they wait so long after first talking with me before they came back? Do you think they really want to know what the answer to the Kennedy assassination is?"

She admitted that she had become disillusioned with the US government because of the way the FBI and the staff of the Warren Commission treated her and because, in the end, she was officially termed a liar.

"It gets me so mad that I was just used," she told me. I gave her my assurances that this time it would be different. I told her that I believed that it was necessary for Americans to learn the truth about the Kennedy assassination. I told her I believed that Senator Schweiker was an honorable man and would not be involved in anything but an honest investigation. We spoke on the telephone several times before Silvia Odio finally agreed to visit with me. Eventually she came to trust me.

In the end the House Committee on Assassinations was forced to conclude that Silvia Odio was telling the truth—reluctantly, in its final report: "The committee was inclined to believe Silvia Odio."

Waffling as that admission is, it meant that Silvia Odio, in the Committee's opinion, was telling the truth. As if once that was acknowledged, it could be put aside—a curtsy to truth—and the dance could go on.

Yet the Odio admission hammers cracks in the foundation of the House Committee's conclusions that elements of organized crime were the probable conspirators in the Kennedy assassination. The report was forced to cross the bounds of rationality: "It is possible," it noted, "despite his alleged remark about killing Kennedy, that Oswald had not yet contemplated the President's assassination at the time of the Odio incident, or if he did, that his assassination plan had no relation to his anti-Castro contacts, and that he was associating with anti-Castro activists for some other unrelated reason."

The Committee did not speculate on that "other unrelated reason." That would have opened a door marked CIA.

"It's a queer thing to hear the chief Senate investigator talking as if he and the CIA were partners in the search for the truth. It does not seem to have occurred to him that the CIA is in the business of deception."

But all that was to come long after my first talk with Silvia Odio. And although I sensed her story was important to understanding the truth behind the Kennedy assassination, I didn't realize how significant the pursuit of it would be in my own investigation.

About the time I found Silvia Odio in Miami, an independent researcher named Paul Hoch sent Senator Schweiker a copy of an article that was going to appear a few weeks later in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He had written it with George O'Toole, a former CIA computer specialist and the author of *The Assassination Tapes*, which revealed that psychological-stress analysis of Oswald's voice indicated he was telling the truth when he denied killing President Kennedy. Hoch, a physicist at the University of California at Berkeley, was a Warren Commission critic known for his plodding, analytical research of government documents.

The article was titled "Dallas: The Cuban Connection" and it dealt with the Odio incident. "The *Saturday Evening Post* has learned," said the article, "of a link between the Odio incident and one of the many attempts on the life of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency and Cuban émigrés in the early 1960s."

In his research, Hoch had discovered that Silvia Odio's parents had been arrested by Castro because they had harbored a fugitive named Reinaldo Gonzalez, who was wanted for plotting to kill Castro in October 1961. The plotters had planned to use a bazooka, which would have been fired from an apartment near the presidential palace when Castro was making one of his marathon speeches. The apartment was rented by the mother-in-law of the principal plotter, Antonio Veciana. The plot failed: The bazooka never was fired, the potential killers were arrested, and Gonzalez was later picked up on the Odio estate. However, Veciana, the organizer of the plot, escaped to Miami, where he founded Alpha 66, which came to be one of the largest, best-financed, and most aggressive of the Cuban-exile groups.

The article pointed out that Alpha 66 had chapters all over the country, that Veciana made frequent fund-raising trips to these chapters, and that one of the chapters he visited was in Dallas at 3126 Hollandale. In the mounds of Warren Commission documents, Hoch found a report by a Dallas deputy sheriff saying that an informant had told him that a person resembling Oswald had been seen associating with Cubans at "3128 Harlendale."

The article concluded: "Like the two Cubans who, with 'Leon Oswald,' visited Silvia Odio in September, 1963, Antonio Veciana was: 1) an anti-Castro activist, 2) engaged in raising funds for the commandos, and 3) acquainted with Silvia Odio's father. While this falls short of proving it, a real possibility exists that Veciana was one of the two Cubans who visited Silvia Odio, or that he at least can shed some light on the Odio incident."

I was intrigued by another possibility, which Paul Hoch raised in a separate memorandum to Schweiker. In analyzing one of the early Church Committee reports on assassination plots against foreign leaders, Hoch wondered why the 1961 Veciana attempt against Castro was not mentioned. Hoch was contending, in effect, that because the Veciana plot did not appear in the Church report, it was one the CIA was trying to hide.

At about that time there appeared in *Esquire* a column by its Washington watcher, Timothy Crouse, who suggested that the CIA, in revealing such flashy "secrets" as its deadly shellfish toxin and toxic dart gun, was taking the Church Committee through a primrose maze. Crouse was disturbed because the committee's chief counsel, F.A.O. Schwarz Jr. ("He has the innocent look of one of the trolls they sell at the toy store his great-grandfather founded"), was accepting at face value the CIA's own enumeration of its misdeeds. "It's pretty unusual," Schwarz admitted to Crouse, "to find that the defendant has developed large parts of the case. It's very helpful."

Wrote Crouse: "It's a queer thing to hear the chief Senate investigator talking as if he and the CIA were partners in the search for the truth. . . . It does not seem to have occurred to Schwarz that the CIA was, is, and always will be in the business of deception."

I found Antonio Veciana listed in the Miami telephone directory. When I called I spoke to his wife, Sira, and there was a nervous edge to her voice when she told me her husband wasn't home. I said I was working with Senator Schweiker and asked the best time to reach her husband. She said I should talk to her son Tony. A college student and the oldest of Veciana's five children, Tony told me his father was in Atlanta. I asked when he would return. Tony had a muffled conversation with his mother. "Well, he's in Atlanta and he won't be home

for a while," he said. I asked if I could reach his father in Atlanta. Another muffled conversation with his mother. He asked why I wanted to talk with his father. I said I was a staff investigator for Senator Schweiker and that Schweiker was a member of the Church Intelligence Committee and that I wanted to learn the relationship between federal agencies and anti-Castro Cubans during the early 1960s.

There was another muffled conversation with his mother. "Well, you see," he said, "he's in Atlanta." The third time Tony told me his father was in Atlanta it struck me that there was a federal penitentiary there. Was he trying to tell me his father was in prison? That, it turned out, was exactly what he was trying to tell me.

Tony would not tell me why his father was in prison. "I think there are some people who want him in there," he said, "but I would rather you get the details from him." He said if I could identify myself officially he would write to his father and ask him to have me put on the visitor list.

A few days later I went to show Tony my official identification. The Veciana home was small and modest, with a green stucco facade. It was on a quiet street on the northern edge of Miami's Little Havana. In the front yard was a small, white statue of the Madonna and Child.

It would be another month before I could talk with Antonio Veciana. Shortly after he put me on the prison's visitor list, he was told that he would be getting an early parole, so I decided to wait until he came home. I was in no hurry, because I didn't think the interview was of pressing importance.

While I was waiting to see Veciana, I tried to do what checking I could into him and Alpha 66. There was not much in the newspaper files about Veciana's early years, but I learned that he was an accounting graduate of the University of Havana and that in his early twenties he had been considered the boy wonder of Cuban banking and rose to become the right-hand man of Cuban's major banker, Julio Lobo, the millionaire known as the "Sugar King" of Cuba. Veciana was 31 when Castro took control of the country in 1959.

Alpha 66 emerged early in 1962, with Veciana its founder and chief spokesman. It seemed to receive more press attention than other militant exile groups because it appeared better organized, better equipped, and more successful in its guerrilla operations.

Alpha 66 seemed to taunt President Kennedy. Not content to limit its assaults to Cuba and Castro's forces, it attacked any foreign ships supplying Castro and conducted assassination raids against Russian troops in Cuba.*

At the height of the missile crisis, when Kennedy was conducting delicate negotiations with Khrushchev, Alpha 66 continued its raids into Cuba and assaults on Castro's patrol boats. "We will attack again and again," Veciana vowed.

II

The Secret Agent

That morning thirteen years later the incongruity of it struck me as I approached this cozy green home on a quiet street in Little Havana—to see the man who had been at the vortex of such international turmoil.

He was now 46, but the only image I had of the man was from an old newspaper clipping: much younger, the anti-Castro terrorist, his face contorted as he declared his defiance.

The man who opened the door appeared as little like a menacing terrorist as one can imagine. He was a soft-looking man, fairly tall, with a smooth, full face, wavy black hair, and dark eyes. He was not at all muscular but had a certain heft and a paunch. He was casually but neatly groomed, with pressed dark trousers and a fresh white *guayabera*—nondescript attire in Little Havana. What struck me most when I first met Veciana—something particularly striking in Miami—was his pallor. It was very much a prison pallor—something that comes from more than just not being in the sun, something that has to do with the spirit. The prison was still in Veciana's eyes.

We sat in the small front living room. There were two Spanish Provincial couches, one red and one green, fitted with clear plastic covers, large photographs of each child adorning one wall, a coffee table with a formal family portrait propped in the center, crocheted doilies on the end tables.

As soon as I saw Veciana, I decided he could not have been one of Silvia Odio's visitors, as Paul Hoch had speculated in his *Saturday Evening Post* article. Veciana has a large and noticeable mole or birthmark above his mouth, too prominent to go unnoted by anyone trying to identify him. When I asked Veciana about the Odio visitors, he said he knew Amador and Silvia Odio but knew nothing about the incident.

I told Veciana what I had told his son—that I wanted to talk with him in general about the relationship of US intelligence agencies and anti-Castro Cuban groups. I said nothing of my interest in the Kennedy assassination and, because Schweiker had gotten relatively little press in Miami compared to the headlines then being made by the Church Committee, there was little reason for Veciana to assume I was working on Kennedy.

Although Veciana said he would answer my questions, there was an initial defensiveness. "I will tell you what you want to know," he said, "but I am worried about certain things that can be used against me." He said he had gone to prison on a drug-conspiracy charge. He said he would talk with me only if I could assure him that anything he told me would not be used against him.

That puzzled me, but I assumed he was concerned about United States laws he may have broken during the course of his anti-Castro activity. I assured him our talk would be confidential and would not be made public. I felt I could trust Schweiker to back me and keep that promise, and he did. But I didn't realize then that anything sent to Washington went into files and might be used for somebody's political ends.

I asked Veciana how he had gotten involved in anti-Castro activity. He said that as president of the association of certified public accountants in Cuba he had been interested in politics. He had been among the leaders of a group of professional association presidents who had secretly worked on Castro's behalf during Batista's dictatorship. As a result, when Castro took over he was asked to join the government as a finance minister. He turned down the offer, he said, because he had a good position in Cuba's major bank, but he did know and worked closely with high-ranking officials in the Castro government.

It was his knowledge of what was going on within the government, Veciana said, that gave him an early indication that Castro was not an idealistic reformer but a Communist. Veciana's disillusionment grew, and soon he was talking with close friends about working against Castro. Then, he said, people came to him and started talking about eliminating Castro.

For some reason, the way Veciana put that made me think of the letter Paul Hoch had sent to Schweiker raising the possibility that the CIA may have been involved in the planned bazooka attempt on Castro's life, which Veciana planned. I asked him if any of the people who spoke about eliminating Castro were representatives of the US government. Well, said Veciana, that was something he had never spoken about before, but there was an American he had dealt with who had very strong connections with the US government.

For the next hour and a half, I ques-

tioned Veciana about this American, who eventually became the secret supervisor and director of all Veciana's anti-Castro activities. He said the American, who went by the name of Maurice Bishop, directed not only the Castro assassination attempt in Cuba in October 1961 but also a plan to kill Castro in Chile in 1971.

Bishop, said Veciana, was the person who suggested the founding of Alpha 66 and guided its overall strategy. Bishop was the person who pulled the strings in the US government when financial and other support was needed and who involved Veciana not only in anti-Castro activity but in anti-Communist activity in Latin America as well. Veciana said he worked with Bishop for thirteen years—until 1973.

I realized I had stumbled onto something important: a US intelligence-agency connection—a direct connection—with an anti-Castro group. The CIA had always denied—and still does—a supervisory role in the activities of anti-Castro groups *after* the Bay of Pigs. The Agency claimed it only "monitored" such activity. Here was Veciana, the key leader of the largest and most militant anti-Castro group, revealing much more than just a monitoring interest on the Agency's part—revealing, in fact, an involvement in two Castro-assassination attempts the CIA had not admitted to the Church Committee. I wondered how the Committee would handle this one—if they gave a damn at all, now that they were frantically trying to wrap up their final report.

It was all fascinating but not especially relevant to the Kennedy assassination. I could see no connection between Veciana's activities in Miami and what had happened in Dallas, although Veciana did say his meetings with Bishop took place over the years in cities besides Miami, including Dallas, Las Vegas, and Washington, and in Puerto Rico and Latin America. When Veciana started talking about chapters of Alpha 66 he had set up across the country, it gave me the opportunity, without making reference to the Kennedy assassination, to ask him about the one in Dallas. He told me he had spoken at some fund-raising meetings at the home of the Alpha 66 delegate there.

I asked him if he knew a "Jorge Salazar." That was the name mentioned in the Dallas deputy sheriff's report about the gathering of Alpha 66 members at "3126 Hollandale." But I did not mention this or that Lee Harvey Oswald had reportedly been seen there.

"No," said Veciana, "I do not know the Salazar that is mentioned in the magazine article on Dallas. And I never saw Oswald at that home where we met."

I was taken aback that Veciana should mention Oswald, but then I realized, as Veciana himself would point out to me after he went to his bedroom and returned with the magazine, that the Hoch and O'Toole article had been published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Veciana

Cuban exile leader Antonio Veciana (left) with fellow anti-Castro leader Cecilio J. Vazquez during the height of CIA-inspired commando raids against Cuba in the early 1960s. Veciana's report of seeing a CIA operative named Maurice Bishop with Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas two months before the assassination was a major breakthrough in the investigation.

said he had just read the article the day before.

"No," he was saying, "I never saw Oswald at that place where we held the meetings . . ."

I was jotting that down in my notebook and was not looking at him, but I heard him continue.

". . . but I remember once meeting Lee Harvey Oswald."

I did not look up, and tried not to react. "Oh, really?" I said in a forced monotone. "How did you meet him? Where? When?"

Veciana said he met Oswald with Maurice Bishop in Dallas sometime near the beginning of September 1963.

There, in a modest green house in Little Havana, almost thirteen years after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the reality of what I was involved in struck me. The killing of a President was no longer a series of lingering TV images, bold black headlines, thick stacks of documents, books and files. It was something that had actually happened, and there were living people with direct strings through time to that moment. As much as the substance of the information itself, it was the absolutely coincidental way it came up that stunned me. First impressions are inherently circumstantial, but I had no doubt then—and have none now—that Veciana was telling the truth.

The details are what make the case.

One morning in the late summer of 1960—about a year and a half after Castro took power—Antonio Veciana's secretary at the Banco Financiero in Havana handed him a business card from a man waiting to see him. The name on the card was Maurice Bishop. Veciana does not remember the name of the business imprinted on the card but now believes it may have been a construction firm headquartered in Belgium. Veciana's first thought was that his caller was a possible customer for his bank.

The man who said he was Maurice Bishop did not lead Veciana to think otherwise initially. Although he spoke excellent Spanish, Bishop said he was an American and wanted to talk with Veciana about the state of the Cuban economy and where it appeared to be going. They talked awhile, and around noon Bishop suggested they continue over lunch. Bishop took Veciana to an expensive restaurant, the Floridita, once one of Ernest Hemingway's favorites.

During their conversation at the restaurant, Veciana recalls, Bishop began to express concern about the Cuban government's leaning toward Communism and let it be known that he was aware of Veciana's feelings toward Castro. That surprised Veciana because he had told only a few close friends about his disillusionment with Castro's government. (Among those he told, however, were two who, it later became known, had direct contact with the CIA. One was his boss, Julio Lobo, who later in exile was designated to set up an "independent" front committee to raise $20 million for the return of Bay of Pigs prisioners, and the other was Rufo López-Fresquet, who,

not true

olution, was Castro's Minister of the Treasury and the CIA's liaison with the new government.)

As their conversation continued, it became obvious to Veciana that Bishop knew a good deal about him personally. It also became obvious that Bishop was not interested in Veciana's banking services but, rather, in recruiting him as a participant in the growing movement against the Castro government. "He tried to impress on me the seriousness of the situation," Veciana recalls.

Veciana was ripe for recruitment. Through contacts high in government, he had come to the conclusion that Castro, by moving toward tighter control than even Batista, had betrayed the revolution. Veciana had come to despise him. He told Bishop that he was willing to work with him. Bishop offered to pay him for his services. Veciana told him that he did not need payment to fight against Castro but they could settle accounts when the job was over, if Bishop insisted. In the summer of 1960 Veciana did not think it would take long to topple Castro.

There were several more meetings, and Veciana and Bishop got to know each other better. Finally, Bishop told Veciana that he would like him to take a "training program" to prepare him for the work ahead. This turned out to be a series of nightly lectures and instruction in the nondescript office of a building that Veciana recalls as being on El Vedado, a commercial strip. He remembers seeing the name of a mining company in the building and, on the ground floor, a branch of the Berlitz school of languages.

Although he was given technical training in the use of explosives and sabotage techniques, Veciana's lessons dealt mainly with propaganda and psychological warfare. "Bishop told me several times," Veciana recalls, "that psychological warfare could help more than hundreds of soldiers, thousands of soldiers." Veciana was also trained in techniques of counterintelligence, surveillance, and communications. The thrust of his training was to make him proficient not as a guerrilla operative but as a higher-echelon planner. As Veciana put it, "The main purpose was to train me to be an organizer, so I was supposed to initiate a type of action and other people would be the ones who would really carry it out."

The training sessions lasted only a few weeks. By that time Bishop and Veciana were concocting schemes to undermine Castro's regime. With Veciana's contacts in the Cuban government, several plots were evolved to discredit key Communists and funnel the government's own money into the hands of anti-Castro guerrillas. In one instance, Veciana successfully schemed to get Castro's top aide, Ché Guevara, to sign a $200,000 check, which, unknown to him, went to the underground. Veciana also set in motion a propaganda program that resulted in destabilization of Cuban currency and public distrust in its value.

At Bishop's direction, Veciana began taking a more active role in the organized underground movement. "Bishop always wanted to be kept informed about what was going on with the various groups," Veciana told me. With his supervisory training and technical expertise, Veciana soon became chief of sabotage for one of the largest underground groups, the Movimento Revolucionario del Pueblo, which was formed by Manolo Ray and was the predecessor of JURE. Like others in the underground movement, Veciana used "war names." One he used frequently was "Carlos."

Although Maurice Bishop refused to acknowledge to Veciana any connection with the US government, he was familiar with personnel in the American Embassy in Havana. Before the embassy was closed in January 1961, Bishop suggested that Veciana contact specific individuals there to get direct assistance and supplies for the anti-Castro movement. Bishop, however, asked Veciana not to mention his name or the fact that Veciana had been sent by an American. Nor did Bishop indicate whether these individuals were intelligence agents.

Although he was given technical training in the use of explosives and sabotage, Veciana's lessons dealt mainly with propaganda and psychological warfare.

One of the American Embassy personnel Bishop suggested Veciana contact was a "Colonel Kail." Kail, who was in the Army, told Veciana the US government could not directly support him in any way. But Kail said that he could assist with the issuance of passports and visas for plotters who wanted to escape. The American Embassy closed down shortly after Veciana last talked with Kail.

According to Veciana, Bishop left Cuba before the Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961. He says he had not met with Bishop for some months prior to the invasion. However, after the Bay of Pigs, Bishop returned to Cuba (probably, Veciana learned, with a Belgian passport). Veciana recalls that he and Bishop had long discussions about what had happened during the invasion. He says Bishop told him that Kennedy's failure to provide air support was the key to the failure of the operation. Bishop felt a frustration about that because, according to Veciana, "at that time Bishop decided that the only thing left to be done was to make an attempt on Castro's life."

It was decided to have Castro killed during a scheduled public appearance on the balcony of the presidential palace in early October 1961. Veciana had his mother-in-law rent an apartment on the eighth floor of a building within range of the balcony and then made arrangements for her escape to the US by boat the day before the assassination attempt. (He had flown his wife and children to Spain as a precaution as soon as he began plotting.) He then recruited the men to do the actual shooting and obtained the weapons. (Availability of weapons was not a major problem to the anti-Castro underground as a result of the supply air-dropped by the US prior to the Bay of Pigs.) The apartment was stocked with automatic rifles, grenade launchers, and a bazooka. A massive attack was planned so that all the key Castro aides on the balcony would also be killed.

Shortly before the scheduled attempt, Veciana learned that he was considered suspicious by Castro's intelligence agency, the G2. His cousin, Guillermo Ruiz, a high-ranking G2 officer, asked him why he had been visiting the American Embassy. Veciana said it was only to see about obtaining passports for some friends. Ruiz said if that was the case, he had been using the wrong entrance. Veciana took this as a warning that he was still being watched. Bishop also told Veciana that Castro's intelligence agents suspected Veciana of subversive activity and that he should consider leaving Cuba.

The assassination attempt never came off because the triggermen, fearing that the G2 had learned of the plot, fled the apartment. (The G2 did know that something was going to happen, but it was only later that it found the apartment and seized the weapons.) The night before the planned attack, when Veciana was to have put his mother-in-law aboard the escape boat, it was discovered that the landing site was under surveillance and the boat could not dock. Because his mother-in-law couldn't swim, Veciana said later, he had to push her into the water and swim out to the boat with her. At that point, he decided that it was too dangerous to return to shore and that he would go with her to Miami.

Shortly after Veciana arrived in Miami, Maurice Bishop was back in touch with him. Soon they were meeting regularly and planning strategy to continue the fight against Castro. The result was the founding of Alpha 66—which, according to Veciana, was Bishop's brainchild. The name was a collaboration: Alpha was meant to symbolize the beginning of the end of Castro and 66 represented the number of fellow accountants Veciana recruited at the start of his anti-Castro activities.

While Veciana established himself as Alpha 66's chief executive officer and fund-raiser, he recruited as military leader a former Rebel Army officer, Major Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo. A daring soldier, Menoyo had the reputation among Cuban exiles of being a Socialist. Veciana says Bishop expressed some doubts about his loyalty, but Veciana convinced Bishop

source of info?

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oct.-Nov. 1961

he could be trusted.

With strong management, clever propaganda, influence with the media, skill in fund-raising, and expertise in locating weapon caches and planning military operations, Alpha 66 soon was in the forefront of the anti-Castro exile groups. Veciana was all over the place, buying guns and boats, recruiting and organizing training sites, making speeches, issuing public communiqués claiming successful raids into Cuba. At one point Veciana announced he had a war chest of $100,000 and that all the major exile organizations were backing Alpha 66's efforts. Except for one minor slip, which no one paid any attention to at the time, Veciana gave not a hint to Alpha 66 associates that there was an American guiding his strategy. At a press conference recorded in the *New York Times* on September 14, 1962, Veciana announced a series of forthcoming Alpha 66 attacks and, in passing, added that the planning was being done by those "I don't even know."

According to Veciana, the headaches that Alpha 66 created for President Kennedy before and during the Cuban missile crisis were planned by Maurice Bishop. The timing of the raids on Cuba at the height of the missile crisis, when Kennedy was negotiating with Khrushchev, was Bishop's idea. So was a press conference in Washington after the crisis when Veciana announced that Alpha 66 had just attacked a Russian ship in a Cuban harbor and engaged in a firefight with Russian troops. The conference was planned at the time Kennedy was in Costa Rica trying to gain support for his new Cuban policy. "The purpose was to embarrass Kennedy publicly and force him to move against Castro," Veciana now admits.

Although Maurice Bishop often suggested specific tactical moves, he was more concerned with the overall strategy of Alpha 66 and Veciana's anti-Castro activity. He was not in constant contact with Veciana. In fact, Veciana never saw him more than a dozen or so times in any one year.

The understanding between them—arrived at early in their relationship—and the arrangement they had for meetings were right out of a covert-operations manual. Although an unspoken trust developed, there was no true personal relationship between Bishop and Veciana; no matters were discussed that did not bear upon their mutual anti-Castro mission.

Every meeting was instigated by Bishop. Bishop would call and set the time and place. Usually it was in a public place, on a corner or in a park, and they would walk and talk. Veciana remembers meetings in Havana, however, that took place at a country club and, once, in an apartment across the street from the American Embassy. Later, if Veciana was in another city, Bishop would come to his hotel. The majority of his meetings with Bishop over the years were in Miami and Puerto Rico. Veciana assumed that Bishop flew in for these meetings because often Bishop would meet him in a rented car. Over the years, meetings with Bishop took place also in Washington, Las Vegas, and Dallas and, during a period when Veciana had a job in South America, in Caracas, Lima, and La Paz.

During the most active period of Alpha 66's operations, Veciana was constantly on the move and, for security reasons, not very visible. At that time, Veciana told me, he made arrangements whereby Bishop could find out where he was at any moment. A third party, someone Veciana trusted, was designated as the link.

It took me three years to learn her identity and location, but when I did, the House Assassinations Committee did not permit me to interview her. Eventually, a journalist did and confirmed what Veciana had said.

Shortly after Veciana left Cuba, he had a revealing meeting with Maurice Bishop. They met on a downtown Miami street corner. Bishop spoke about how the fight against Castro might be more difficult and last longer than they had envisioned, how he and Veciana would have to work together closely, and how they must develop mutual trust and loyalty. Veciana agreed. Would Veciana, Bishop asked, be willing to sign a contract to that effect? Of course, said Veciana. Bishop then led Veciana to the Pan American Bank Building, a five-story office structure in the heart of Miami's business district. Veciana recalls that they took an elevator and that Bishop had the key to an unmarked office door. The office was spartanly furnished with a desk and a few chairs, and an American flag stood in one corner.

There was no one in the office when Bishop and Veciana entered. Bishop went through another door and returned with two men and some documents, which he asked Veciana to read and sign. Veciana believes the documents he signed were contracts and loyalty oaths. He was not given copies. He recalls that in the contract was a space for a salary figure, which was left blank. Veciana now believes the incident was a "commitment" ceremony. "It was a pledge of my loyalty, a secret pledge," he says. "I think they wanted to impress on me my responsibility and my commitment to the cause."

The arrangement they had for meetings was right out of a covert-operations manual. Every meeting was instigated by Bishop. He would call Veciana and set the time and place—on a corner or in a park—and they would walk and talk.

Veciana had considered the possibility that Bishop worked for an intelligence agency other than the CIA. Among the most active US organizations monitoring anti-Castro activity was Army Intelligence. Veciana recalls being contacted in 1962, in Puerto Rico, by an American who called himself Patrick Harris. After several long conversations with him, Veciana came to the conclusion that he was in Army Intelligence. Harris told Veciana that he might be able to provide some support for Veciana's anti-Castro activities but first wanted to inspect Alpha 66's operational base in the Bahamas. Veciana came to trust Harris and provided him and several associates a tour of the base, over military chief Menoyo's objections. Harris never came through with any aid. "I told Bishop about that," Veciana now says, "and he told me not to bother with them, that they could not help me. He was right."

In 1968 Maurice Bishop helped Veciana get a job with the US Agency for International Development (AID) in La Paz, Bolivia, as an adviser to Bolivia's Central Bank. The job paid well, and his checks came directly from the Treasury Department in Washington. "I was very surprised I was hired, because I was a known terrorist," Veciana says today. "The State Department, which hired me, once ordered me confined to Dade County because of my anti-Castro activity. Then in La Paz they put my office in the American Embassy. For sure, Bishop had very good connections."

Veciana worked for AID for four years, receiving more than $31,000 a year to provide advice to Bolivia's banking industry. (It has since been learned that the CIA has used AID as a front in other instances, once getting one of its own proprietary companies a multimillion-dollar AID contract to train Thailand's border police.) Veciana says he did very little financial advising during the four years. Instead, he spent almost all his time in anti-Castro and anti-Communist activities directed by Bishop.

Bishop was interested in more than assassinating Castro. With Bishop's blessing and financial support, Veciana traveled around Latin America, involving himself in propaganda ploys aimed at the character assassination of leading Communist politicians and weakening the financial stability of left-leaning governments. (Once, when I was questioning Veciana about Bishop's apparent incompetence based on the latter's failures to assassinate Castro, Veciana simply smiled and said, "No, we did not kill Castro, but there were many other plans, many other plots that did work." He would not elaborate.)

PHOTOGRAPH BY WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

alvador Allende, Marxist President Chile, was overthrown by a secret sk force from the CIA headed by avid Atlee Phillips.

Early in 1971 Bishop told Veciana that astro would probably be making a state sit to Chile late that year. He suggested at Veciana begin planning another assassination attempt. "He told me," Veciana says, "that it was an opportunity o make it appear that anti-Castro Cubans illed Castro without US involvement."

Veciana set up his planning headquarters in Caracas, where the Venezuelan bureaucracy is deeply infiltrated by both anti-Castro Cubans and the CIA, and where Veciana knew an experienced group of terrorists. Among them were two gunmen willing to do the killing. On its surface, the plan was relatively simple. It had become known that toward the end of his visit to Chile, Castro would hold a press conference attended by as many as 400 journalists. Press credentials for the two gunmen would be obtained from a Venezuelan TV station and, although there would be tight security, their weapons would be smuggled into the conference room inside a television camera.

Maurice Bishop had a major role in setting up the operation, according to Veciana: Bishop provided the weapons and made arrangements with officers in the Chilean military—which would be providing Castro security at the conference—for the assassins to be grabbed after killing Castro and arrested by Chilean soldiers before the Cuban premier's bodyguards could kill them. According to Veciana, Bishop said he would arrange the assassins' escape from Chile later.

At that time the head of the Chilean government was leftist President Salvador Allende. Two years later, in September 1973, Allende would be overthrown in a coup d'etat. The overthrow of Allende was supported and largely financed by the CIA and several American multinational corporations, chiefly International Telephone & Telegraph. At one point the CIA set up a secret task force to work with Chilean military brass who opposed Allende. The chief of the task force was David Atlee Phillips.

The attempt to assassinate Castro in Chile failed because at the last moment the two gunmen decided they would never get out of the conference room alive; they did not believe that Veciana had made arrangements for their capture. Veciana could not tell them of Bishop or how the arrangements had been made.

Other anti-Castro Cubans whom Veciana had recruited in Caracas as part of the assassination plot had also not believed that Veciana had arranged an escape for the shooters and had developed a subplot, without Veciana's knowledge. The subplot was based on the assumption that the gunmen would themselves be killed immediately after assassinating Castro. When the existence of this subplot came to light, Veciana says, it produced the crack that eventually led to the end of his relationship with Maurice Bishop, in 1973.

Among the associates Veciana says he recruited in Caracas were two veterans of the war against Castro—Lucilo Peña and Luis Posada. Both have backgrounds as men of action.

Peña, the general director of a major chemical firm, had once been involved in Alpha 66's "Plan Omega," a plot to invade Cuba from a base in the Dominican Republic. When I interviewed Posada in 1978, he was in jail in Caracas—having been arrested, with a well-known exile terrorist, Dr. Orlando Bosch, for blowing up a Cubana Airlines plane and killing 73 persons, including many Russians. He was a veteran of the Bay of Pigs, a member of JURE, a former lieutenant in the US Army (where he was trained in intelligence), a former agent for the CIA, and, until his arrest, the owner of a successful private-detective agency in Caracas. In 1971, when Veciana was working with him, he was chief of security and counterintelligence in the Venezuelan secret police.

According to Veciana, it was Peña and Posada who provided the necessary credentials and documents that enabled the two gunmen to establish false identities and get into place in Chile in 1971. What they also did—without telling him, says Veciana—was plant phony documents so that the trail of the two men who were going to assassinate Castro would lead, if they were caught and killed, to Russian agents in Caracas.

Lengthy false surveillance reports were slipped into the files of the Venezuelan secret police, indicating that the Cubans had been seen meeting Russian agents, one of whom was a correspondent for *Izvestia* and another a professor at the University of Central Venezuela. Also in the file were manufactured passports, diaries, and notes allegedly found in one gunman's hotel room, confirming his contact with Russian agents. Intended to be the most damaging evidence was a photograph showing what appeared to be one of the gunmen leaning into a car window and talking with one of the Russian agents. Actually, the photo was of another Cuban who resembled the gunman. Without being told the reason for it, this Cuban had been instructed to stop the Russian agent's car as he left his home in the morning, lean in, and ask him for a match. A telephoto shot was taken of this encounter.

More than two years after failure of the plot to assassinate Castro, Maurice Bishop learned of the subplot. He was furious, Veciana says. He accused Veciana of taking part in the planning of it or, at the very least, knowing about it and keeping it a secret from him. Veciana insisted then, as he does now, that he had been unaware of the secondary scheme. He says Bishop later said that he believed Veciana but that in any future operations the scar of his early suspicion would linger. Considering the type of operations in which they were involved, Bishop said, a relationship that was less than totally trustworthy would be no good. He suggested that they sever their relationship.

The overthrow of Salvador Allende was supported and largely financed by the CIA and several American multinational corporations, chiefly International Telephone & Telegraph.

At the time, Veciana was insisting on further terrorist action—he may already have instituted some himself—and calling for more dangerous assassination attempts. Perhaps Bishop feared that Veciana was getting out of hand. Then, in December 1973, Veciana was sent to prison, and at the time Veciana believed that Bishop had had something to do with it.

At the time of my first interview with Veciana, he had just spent 27 months in a federal prison on a charge of conspiracy to import narcotics. He was convicted in a New York federal court, largely on the testimony of a former partner with whom he had been in the sporting-goods business in Puerto Rico. The former partner, arrested with ten kilos of cocaine, implicated Veciana. In doing so, he avoided a long jail term himself. He was the only witness against Veciana, who maintains his innocence.

There is no indication from any source, including the confidential records of several law-enforcement agencies, that Veciana had any association with narcotics

prior to his arrest. In the bitterly competitive world of Cuban exile politics, Veciana's reputation is unspotted.

At the time of the first interview, Veciana was defensive in his attitude and somewhat confused. He hinted that what had happened to him was directly connected with his relationship with Maurice Bishop. He suggested the possibility that his final disagreements with him might have caused Bishop to take steps to put him out of action. That's why, he said, he wanted to find Bishop and confront him with that possibility. Then he would know.

Over the months following that interview I watched Veciana change. Soon the tentativeness, the cautious wariness, the prison gray in his eyes began to fade as he resumed his patriarchal confidence, began moving in his old circles, and got back into anti-Castro activity. As he did, his feeling about Bishop's involvement in his going to prison began to change. One day he told me he was sure he had been set up by Castro's agents. He still wanted to find Bishop, he said, but now for a different reason: Bishop could again be of some help to him.

When Bishop told Veciana he would like to sever their relationship, he also said he thought that Veciana deserved compensation for working with him through the years. Because Veciana had initially rejected the idea of being paid to fight Castro, Bishop had only provided him with expense money. Now Bishop insisted that Veciana be compensated for the thirteen years he had worked with him.

It was July 26, 1973. Veciana recalls commenting to his wife that day on the irony of the date and its association with Castro's own movement. Bishop had called and asked Veciana to meet him in the parking lot of the Flagler Dog Track, not far from Veciana's home. The parking lot was crowded. Veciana spotted Bishop waiting in a car at the designated spot. Bishop got out of the car with a briefcase. With him were two clean-cut young men in dark suits. The men stood out of earshot while Bishop and Veciana spoke. Bishop said that he regretted that their relationship had to end but that it would be best for both of them in the long run. He shook Veciana's hand and wished him luck. Then he handed him the briefcase. In it, he said, was the compensation that was due Veciana. When Veciana got home he opened the briefcase. It was filled with cash. Exactly $253,000, says Veciana.

That, says Veciana, was the last time he saw or spoke with Maurice Bishop.

Lee Harvey Oswald was flamboyantly conspicuous in New Orleans during the summer of 1963, advocating a pro-Castro stance for the US through his "Fair Play for Cuba Committee."

It is not generally known but there is a period of Lee Harvey Oswald's stay in New Orleans that is largely undocumented. On August 9, 1963, Oswald was arrested after distributing pro-Castro leaflets and scuffling with anti-Castro activist Carlos Bringuier. On August 16, Oswald was seen again, passing out leaflets in front of the New Orleans Trade Mart; his activity was shown that evening on television newscasts. On August 25, Oswald had a radio debate with Bringuier arranged by New Orleans broadcaster William Stuckey, a self-styled "Latin-American-affairs expert." Despite the fact that Oswald seemingly went out of his way to court such public attention as a Castro supporter, as soon as he got it he immediately dropped out of sight. Between August 25 and September 17, there is no validated indication of Oswald's whereabouts.

Aside from a visit to the home of his aunt and uncle on Labor Day, Marina Oswald said her husband spent this time reading books and practicing with his rifle. Through the years, Marina Oswald's testimony has been inconsistent, contradictory, and sometimes false. The House Assassinations Committee found several credible witnesses who saw Oswald during this period in Clinton, Louisiana, about 130 miles from New Orleans, during a black voter-registration drive. With him were David Ferrie, who had been involved in anti-Castro activity, and New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw, who had intelligence-agency connections. The Committee could not determine what Oswald had been doing in Clinton, but there was no doubt he had been there.

The Warren Commission had found records that it said accounted for some of Oswald's activity during this period of late August and September. None of these records could be later authenticated and some were discovered to be false. He reportedly visited the unemployment office, cashed some unemployment checks, and withdrew a number of library books. The FBI could not authenticate Oswald's signature on the unemployment documents. Of the seventeen firms where he reported he had applied for work, thirteen denied it and four did not exist. Even if one trusts such records, there is one span of time, between September 6 and September 9, when his whereabouts are not known.

Initially, Antonio Veciana recalled that it was late in August or early September of 1963 when Bishop asked to meet him in Dallas. Later, after reflection, he said it was probably in early September, perhaps towards the end of the first week of the month.

It was not the first time that Bishop had asked Veciana to meet him in Dallas. He had met him there a number of times previously. Partially because of that, Veciana had come to suspect that Bishop was from Dallas or had family there. Moreover, he recalled the time in Havana when Bishop sent him to talk to a Colonel Sam Kail at the American Embassy. The last time Veciana saw Kail was prior to Christmas in 1960, when Kail said he would consider Veciana's request for support but would like to discuss it further with him when he returned from his Christmas leave. Kail told Veciana he was going home to Dallas for Christmas. When Veciana reported back to Bishop, he got the impression that Bishop knew Kail, or at least his background, and that they had something in common. In my very first interview with Veciana, he said, "I think that maybe Bishop is from Texas."

The meeting that Veciana recalls with Bishop early in September of 1963 took place in the busy lobby of a large down town office building. From Veciana description of its distinctive blue tile t

cade, it probably was the Southland Center, a 42-story office complex. Veciana says that when he arrived, he saw Bishop in a corner of the lobby talking with a young man whom Veciana remembers as pale, slight, and soft-featured. He does not recall if Bishop introduced him by name but does recall that Bishop continued his conversation with the young man only briefly after Veciana arrived. Together Bishop and the young man walked out of the lobby and stopped outside, behind Veciana, for a moment. Bishop and the young man had a few words there, and then the latter gestured a farewell and walked away. Bishop then turned to Veciana and they discussed the current activities of Alpha 66 as they walked to a nearby coffee shop. Bishop never spoke to Veciana about the young man, and Veciana didn't ask.

On the day that Kennedy was assassinated, Veciana recognized the news photographs and television images of Lee Harvey Oswald as that of the young man he had seen with Maurice Bishop in Dallas; there was no doubt in his mind. When I asked him if the man could have been someone who resembled Oswald, Veciana said: "Well, you know, Bishop himself taught me how to remember faces, how to remember characteristics. I am

On the day that Kennedy was assassinated, Veciana recognized the news photographs of Lee Harvey Oswald as the young man he had seen with Maurice Bishop in Dallas.

sure it was Oswald. If it wasn't Oswald, it was someone who looked *exactly* like him. *Exacto, exacto.*"

To anyone unfamiliar with the relationships among those who work in intelligence, government security, or some areas of law enforcement, it would seem incredible that Veciana did not ask or even mention Oswald to Bishop after the Kennedy assassination. Yet to those familiar with such relationships, it would seem peculiar if he had. One of the cardinal principles of security operations is that information is passed on or sought after only on a "need-to-know" basis. Many employees at Langley who have known each other for years, go to lunch together daily, and have become close personal friends may not know what the other actually does there—and would never ask. That's the way it is. Veciana did not ask Bishop about Oswald.

"I was not going to make the mistake of getting myself involved in something that did not concern me," he says. He

recalls, however, feeling very uneasy at the time. "That was a very difficult situation because I was afraid."

What increased Veciana's fear of his possibly becoming involved in the Kennedy assassination was a visit to his home by Cesar Diosdato within a few days of the murder. Diosdato ostensibly worked for the US Customs Service in Key West. He was a well-known figure among the anti-Castro activists in Miami because, technically, it was in the Custom's Service jurisdiction to prevent violations of the Neutrality Act, which occurred every time an anti-Castro raiding party took off from Miami or the Keys. With a radio-equipped patrol car, the pistol-packing Diosdato, a beefy, mustachioed Mexican-American, roamed the Keys like a traffic cop, monitoring the launching sites of the exile raiding groups. He didn't stop them all, and the word among anti-Castro raiders active during JM/WAVE's secret war was that no group could launch an attack from the Florida Keys without permission from Diosdato. "He gave us the green light," one former group leader told me. "Without word from him, we couldn't go." As a result, most of the Cubans thought Diosdato was really working for the CIA.

Veciana did. That's why he was apprehensive when Diosdato asked him if he knew anything about the Kennedy assassination or Lee Harvey Oswald. Veciana says he recognized him because he had frequently gone to Key West to get clearance from Diosdato. It was not an "official" visit, Diosdato now told Veciana. "He said he had been instructed to ask a few of the exiles if they knew anything, that's all," Veciana recalls.

Veciana did not ask himself why a US Customs agent would be investigating the Kennedy assassination among Miami Cubans and come from Key West to do it. It crossed Veciana's mind that he was being tested. In any event, he decided he was not going to tell Diosdato anything.

Several weeks later Bishop called Veciana to arrange a meeting in Miami. At that meeting Bishop never mentioned Oswald or the encounter in Dallas. They did speak about the Kennedy assassination, but their discussion was confined to the event's impact on the world and on their anti-Castro activities. Bishop, says Veciana, appeared saddened by the assassination. Yet he said something that suggested a strange sort of involvement.

The way Veciana recalls it is this: At the time, newspapers were carrying stories about Oswald's having met with a Cuban couple in Mexico City. Veciana recalls that the stories reported that the wife spoke excellent English. Bishop said he knew Veciana had a cousin, Guillermo Ruiz, who was in Castro's intelligence service and was stationed in Mexico City. Ruiz's wife spoke excellent English. Bishop asked Veciana if he would attempt to get in touch with Ruiz and offer him a large amount of money if Ruiz would say that it was he and his wife who had met with Oswald.

Veciana took it as a ploy that might work because, as he puts it, "Ruiz was someone who always liked money." Bishop, he says, did not specify how much Ruiz should be offered, only that it should be "a huge amount." Veciana, however, was never able to present the offer to his cousin because Ruiz had been transferred back to Havana and Veciana could not find a safe way to contact him. A couple of months later, when he mentioned his difficulties to Bishop, Veciana says that Bishop told him to forget it. "He told me it was no longer necessary," Veciana recalls. That was the last reference he and Bishop ever made to the Kennedy assassination.

Bishop asked Veciana to try to get in touch with Ruiz and offer him a large amount of money to say that it was he and his wife who had met with Oswald.

In May 1964, John A. McCone, then director of the Central Intelligence Agency, provided an affidavit to the Warren Commission in which he swore that, based on his personal knowledge and on "detailed inquiries he caused to be made" within the CIA, Lee Harvey Oswald was not an agent, employee, or informant of the CIA. In addition, McCone swore: "Lee Harvey Oswald was never associated or connected, directly or indirectly, in any way whatsoever with the Agency."

On March 12, 1964, Richard Helms, then deputy director for plans (DDP) of the CIA, met with Warren Commission General Counsel J. Lee Rankin. Helms was in charge of the Agency's covert operations. The minutes of that meeting show that Helms told Rankin that "the Commission would have to take his word for the fact that Oswald had not been an agent" of the CIA.

More than ten years later, in November 1975, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence issued a report which concluded that Helms had deliberately kept secret from his boss, McCone, the existence of certain covert operations.

In that light, the implications of what Antonio Veciana revealed on March 2, 1976, had historic relevance: That an individual—Maurice Bishop—apparently associated with the CIA, was in contact with Lee Harvey Oswald prior to the assassination of President Kennedy. And that this CIA operative was involved in Castro-assassination attempts in which, for some reason, the Agency was not admitting participation.

III

In Search of Maurice Bishop

Church as candidate 18.3.76 - 14.6.76

The discovery of Antonio Veciana could not have come at a worse time for Senator Church and the Committee staff. Church had told the staff, which had already gone beyond its deadline more than once, it was getting its absolutely final extension, another month to finish up the Schweiker report. Church was anxious to get into the 1976 presidential sweepstakes. The Church Committee had gotten attention with its reports on assassination plots against foreign leaders and illegal intelligence-agency snooping, and now he had other priorities.

Senator Schweiker had recognized the significance of Veciana's story both in relation to the Kennedy assassination and, as Paul Hoch had suggested, to whether or not the CIA had been honest with the Committee about all its Castro plots. Schweiker thought the new information was explosive enough to reopen hearings. On that, he ran into a stone wall with both Church and the staff leaders.

Schweiker was upset. In a letter to subcommittee co-chairman Gary Hart, but obviously directed at Church, Schweiker wrote: "I feel strongly Veciana should be called to testify under oath, to evaluate his credibility, create an official record of his allegations, and examine them. . . . I recognize that this involves some difficulty at this stage of our proceeding, but in view of Veciana's direct link to intelligence-community activities subject to the Select Committee's jursidiction, I do not believe we can responsibly refuse to evaluate his allegations."

That put the Committee on the spot. I called Dave Marston in Schweiker's office to ask him what was going to happen. "Well, I think they'll do something," he said. "I think what they'll do is screw it up. I think they'll go the most direct way—that is, make an official inquiry. So then there will be an official inquiry and if there is anything there, it'll be gone."

That's what the Committee staff did. I was asked to bring Veciana to Washington, where he was sworn in at a closed hearing and questioned by a staff attorney for less than an hour. Only the barest details of his story got on the record. A transcript of the hearing would go into restricted-security files. Not a word about it would be mentioned in any of the Intelligence Committee's reports. The question of whether the CIA was involved in Veciana's attempts to assassinate Castro in Cuba and again in Chile was not confronted. Veciana was not asked about them.

To my frustration and that of his other staff members, Schweiker was scrupulous about keeping from us the details of the Committee's work. Nevertheless I could deduce what the Committee's efforts to follow up the Veciana testimony were producing.

For instance, the CIA told the Committee it had no employee named Maurice Bishop and no record of any agent ever using that alias. I also deduced, from a discussion with an Army Intelligence "asset" I had been sent to interview in New Orleans, that the CIA told the Committee that Veciana and Alpha 66 had been monitored not by the Agency but by Army Intelligence. I thought this was a misdirection. I pointed out that Veciana had been aware of his contacts with Army Intelligence, that they covered only a limited period of his anti-Castro activities, and that they were distinct from his relationship with Maurice Bishop. After the CIA denied an interest in Veciana, the Committee pursued the Army Intelligence angle until the end.

Schweiker could see what was happening. It became apparent that if we left it to the Committee to pursue the Veciana lead it would die. Dave Newhall, Schweiker's administrative assistant and a former investigative reporter himself, called me. "We just don't seem to be able to get through to the Committee staff about the significance of this," he said. "They're good Wall Street-type lawyers but they don't have street smarts and they don't have enough background in this case. Besides, most of them are packing their bags and looking around for other jobs by now. I think we'd better start moving on our own."

It was the first indication I had that Schweiker was willing to pursue the Kennedy-assassination investigation beyond the life of the Select Committee and his own subcommittee. To his credit and against the grain of senatorial protocol, Schweiker chased the Veciana lead for months beyond his subcommittee's demise and even beyond the issuance of its final report. It was only after Reagan strategists lured him into a sacrificial role as a vice-presidential candidate that he decided to drop it.

Also to Schweiker's credit in pursuing the Veciana lead was the fact that it directly contradicted the thesis being pushed in his own subcommittee's report. The report revealed that the Warren Commission had not been told of the Castro assassination plots by the CIA, and suggested that it was possible that Castro killed Kennedy in retaliation for those plots. The Veciana lead ran counter to the Castro-retaliation theory. Rather, it linked Oswald to US intelligence.

What I considered a factor in judging Veciana's credibility was his own feelings about the Kennedy assassination. I had spoken to a number of anti-Castro exile leaders, most still dedicated and many fanatically determined to get rid of the Cuban dictator. None, I have come to believe, were more deeply committed than Veciana. Yet almost to a man these exile leaders touted the same theory about the Kennedy assassination: Castro did it. They knew little of the evidence or the facts; they knew only that Castro did it.

Except Veciana. Down through the years, I have discussed various theories about the Kennedy assassination with him and he has been consistent in his reaction: "I don't think Castro did it," he says. "I know Castro. He is crazy. Once, when he was down to his last twelve men in the mountains, he said, 'Now there is no way we can lose!' He is crazy, but he did not kill Kennedy. That would have been much too crazy. I think it was a plan, sure." By "a plan" Veciana means a conspiracy.

The office of a US senator carries, in itself, a certain amount of clout. But a senator does not have subpoena power, a punitive force, or the right to demand answers from anyone. Nevertheless, in terms of substantive investigation results, Schweiker's staff would accomplish more in the Veciana area in a few months than the House Assassinations Committee would in two years.

The question from the beginning: Was Veciana telling the truth? There were parts of his story that would be difficult, if not impossible, to corroborate. There were many other parts that could be easily checked. Confirmation of these would be an indication of his credibility.

His background checked out, as did his professional standing and his position in the Havana banking system. An official Cuban government newspaper detailed his role in the 1961 Castro assassination attempt and confirmed the details as Veciana had reported. His

founding of Alpha 66 and his anti-Castro activities were part of the records from that period.

There were a few pieces of special significance. One of the points that Veciana himself made about the influence of Maurice Bishop and his obvious connection with the US government was the fact that Bishop had gotten him a position with the US Agency for International Development despite Veciana's documented record as an anti-Castro terrorist. During this time, the Bishop plan to assassinate Castro in Chile was developed in Caracas. Schweiker asked the US State Department to check its files. The State Department wired its confirmation from La Paz: Veciana did work as a "commercial banking expert" for Bolivia's Central Bank, the telegram reported. His contracts were financed by AID. They were for the salary and for the time period Veciana said they were. During this period he claimed a legal residence in Caracas.

The State Department telegram also contained, in passing, an unusual revelation. Veciana's application for federal employment, it noted, had an unexplainable omission: It was unsigned.

There were many other aspects of Veciana's story that, as I checked into them, added to his credibility. For instance, a confidential source, a veteran of the US Customs office in Miami, told me that Cesar Diosdado, the Customs agent who had questioned Veciana briefly about the Kennedy assassination, was indeed working for the CIA in Key West, as Veciana had suspected. Customs was reportedly reimbursed for his salary by the CIA. This was confirmed by another source, who was close to the former head of the local Customs office. (Diosdado is now with the Drug Enforcement Administration in California.)

Another key factor in Veciana's story is his statement that he was given $253,000 in cash by Bishop at the termination of their relationship. When I asked if he could prove he had the money or what he did with it, he said that he could show how he disbursed it through several channels but that Senator Schweiker would first have to guarantee him immunity from action by the Internal Revenue Service. Schweiker could not do that. As a result, when Veciana's sworn testimony was taken before the Senate Select Committee, at Veciana's request that area of questioning was omitted. (He would later also refuse to show the House Assassinations Committee proof of his disbursement of the money without being given immunity from IRS action.)

Another point I thought could be readily checked was the existence of specific individuals at the American Embassy in Havana—the individuals Bishop had sent Veciana to see.

I was talking with the late Paul Bethel in Coconut Grove one day. Bethel was a right-winger, once a congressional candidate, an author, and the head of the US Information Agency in Havana when

Richard Schweiker's aide David Marston, later a controversial appointee of Jimmy Carter to be US attorney for Philadelphia, predicted what the Church Committee would do with Antonio Veciana's startling testimony: "They'll screw it up."

Castro took over. I asked Bethel if he recalled a fellow named Kail at the American Embassy. "Sure," said Bethel. "I knew Sam well. Military attaché. I believe he's retired now, probably back home in Dallas."

Sam Kail was listed in the Dallas telephone directory. When I told Veciana I had found him, Veciana said, "You know, I would like to call him. Perhaps he remembers Bishop." He suggested I listen to the call. "Do you remember me?" Veciana asked Kail after he had introduced himself. Kail seemed hesitant and cautious. "Well, I'm not sure," he said.

"Remember," coaxed Veciana, "the last time I saw you, in December 1960, you were going home for Christmas."

Kail said, "Yes, I did come home that Christmas."

"Then you remember me?"

No, Kail said, he couldn't remember.

"At any rate," Veciana went on, "I am trying to find a friend, the American who sent me to you. He was a big help to me in fighting Castro. Now I need to find him. Do you remember Maurice Bishop?"

Kail was silent for a moment. "Bishop?" he asked. More silence. "Bishop," he said again. Finally, Kail said that off the top of his head he didn't recall the name, but he would like to give it more thought. He said he would think about it for a day or two and then call Veciana back.

Kail never called Veciana. A couple of weeks later I suggested to Veciana that he call Kail again. He did and Kail said he had given some thought to the name of the American that Veciana had asked him about, but he couldn't recall knowing anyone named Maurice Bishop, or anyone named Bishop who fit the description Veciana had given. Sorry he couldn't be of any help, said Kail.

During the remaining months of Schweiker's investigation, I showed Veciana more than a dozen photographs of people who came close to fitting his description of Maurice Bishop. Some were sent by the staff of the Select Committee and, I assumed, were mostly Army Intelligence operatives. Most of the ones I dug up were people who, at some point or other—and usually at not more than one point—had been in the right place at the right time and had some association with the CIA or Oswald or investigations of the Kennedy assassination.

Part of the problem initially was that it was hard to get from Veciana a handle on Bishop's physical characteristics. Veciana had known and been in contact with Bishop over a period of thirteen years. The man had obviously changed and Veciana's current mental image of him was an amalgam of those changes. It had occurred to me in listening to Veciana describe Bishop as he appeared at the many meetings through the years that perhaps Bishop used small disguises, which changed his appearance only slightly but were enough to raise doubts about his identity in the mind of anyone who happened to see him with Veciana.

Although Veciana's general description of Bishop may appear to have been a bit blurred, he did provide discriminating details that made Bishop a specific character. He said, for instance, that Bishop was always a meticulous dresser, neat and well-groomed. In his later years, he wore glasses more often, but took them off to ruminate, putting the stem to his lips. He was usually tanned and under his eyes there was a blotch

ess, a spotty darkness, as if from being
the sun too long. He had brown hair,
ter given to some gray. He was a good-
oking man.

At our initial meeting, Veciana seemed
ncere enough when he said he wanted
find Maurice Bishop. He seemed de-
rmined then to find out if the reason
r his being in prison was a result of
is relationship with Bishop. Veciana
aid that as soon as he was settled down
nd out from under the restrictions of
arole and free to travel again, he was
oing to have an artist make a sketch of
Bishop from a description he would pro-
ide. That, he said, might help him in
ooking for Bishop.

I didn't think much about that idea
ntil I had shown Veciana a score of
hotographs and gotten negative results
o abruptly. Then I realized that although
ach of the suspects had at least one
haracteristic that fit Veciana's descrip-
ion of Bishop, a comprehensive image
vould have eliminated the suspects im-
nediately. Veciana agreed. A profes-
ionally drawn composite sketch of
Maurice Bishop would help narrow the
ocus.

Security was one of my main concerns
rom the beginning. Cuban-exile politics
n Miami has its share of fanatics as well
as professional assassins, as the pattern
of bombings and ambushes in Little
Havana through the years shows. A few
months before I first spoke with Ve-
ciana, an exile leader named Rolando
Masferrer, known as El Tigre when he
headed Batista's secret police, condoned
the rash of bombings in a local magazine
article. "You do not beg for freedom,"
he wrote, "you conquer it . . . In the
meantime, dynamite can speak in a
uniquely eloquent manner." A week later,
half of Masferrer was found in what re-
mained of his car when he tried to start
it. A uniquely eloquent retort.

Veciana agreed that it would be pru-
dent to have the composite sketch of
Maurice Bishop done outside the Miami
area. Through a contact in a police de-
partment in another city, I arranged for
Veciana to spend most of a day with its
best composite artist. I had given the
police artist a rough description of Bishop
by telephone before we arrived so that
he had been able to make some prelim-
inary sketches to use as a base. Veciana
then spent a couple of hours going through
about 300 police mug shots and picking
out individual features from those that
came closest to resembling Bishop's.
"The problem," Veciana sighed as he
flipped through the mug shots, "is all
these individuals look like criminals.
Bishop, he was a gentleman. He *looked*
like a gentleman."

Veciana's session with the police ar-
tist caused him to focus much more in-
tensely on Bishop's specific features. He
described, for instance, a distinctive lower
lip, a nose straight but not sharp, a face
longer than it was round, and—again,
perhaps the most striking feature—a
darkened area under the eyes. Veciana
said that all of Bishop's face appeared

a bit suntanned most of the time, but that the area under his eyes looked almost leathery.

It was late in the afternoon when the police artist finished a sketch that Veciana proclaimed was "pretty good." The artist had warned that composite sketches aren't meant to be exact resemblances of individuals. They are designed to elicit a chain of recall in witnesses and spark recollection of images that lead to some suspects and eliminate others. Veciana said the sketch of Bishop was not really what Bishop looked like, but he appeared to be satisfied that it was "close."

Veciana returned to Miami, and the next morning I took the Bishop sketch and copies of it to Schweiker's office in Washington. Dave Newhall looked at the sketch with a new fascination. "You know, it looks exactly like I thought it would from the description we were working on," he said. "I think the boss will want to see this right away."

Schweiker was attending a hearing of the Senate health subcommittee, one of his permanent posts. We got word to him and, during a break in the hearing, we huddled in a corner of the anteroom of the chamber. The health subcommittee chairman, Senator Edward Kennedy, glanced quizzically at the three of us hunched over the sketch as he hurried through the anteroom. (Schweiker, as a courtesy, had written a note to Kennedy prior to calling on the Church Committee to establish a special subcommittee to investigate President Kennedy's murder. Senator Kennedy's reaction was not negative, which Schweiker interpreted as a signal to go ahead.)

Schweiker looked at the sketch. At first he mumbled, "That's pretty good," as if commenting on the quality of the artwork. Then he said, "I've seen that face before."

Newhall and I laughed. For an instant we both thought he was being kiddingly glib. But Schweiker was serious. "That's a *very* familiar face," he said, staring at the sketch. "Perhaps . . . maybe it was someone from State who briefed me on something recently. We've been getting a lot of those." He paused and thought a bit. "No, maybe not." He kept staring at the sketch. "He's *very* familiar," he said.

"Does it look like Harvey?" asked Newhall. William Harvey had been cited by the Church Committee as the CIA's coordinator in its Castro assassination plots with the Mafia.

"No, it's not Harvey," Schweiker said. Finally he sighed. "I've got to get back to the hearing," he said. "Why don't you take a copy down to the Committee staff? I'll give it more thought later."

The Intelligence Committee staff worked out of a sprawling arrangement of cubicles on the ground floor of the old Dirksen Office Building. Newhall and I signed in at the security desk and a staff attorney who had been working with Schweiker on the Kennedy subcesses. We showed him the sketch. He looked at the photograph. "Fine," he said. "That's fine." He gave no indication that the sketch reminded him of anyone in particular. He took a copy of it and, I assume, stuck it in the Committee's classified files.

That night I flew back to Miami. It was a Friday early in April, about a month after my first interview with Veciana. During that interval I had spoken with him more than a dozen times. I had two

"The problem," Veciana sighed as he flipped through the mug shots, "is that all these individuals look like criminals. Bishop, he was a gentleman. He looked like a gentleman."

more interviews with him during which I tried to extract every possible detail he could recall about Maurice Bishop. More important, we began to establish a relationship. I would drop in at his home and call him on the telephone frequently just to ask a question or two about a minor detail. We also got to know each other better as we traveled back and forth to Washington and around Miami to the sites where he recalled meeting Bishop. From those interviews and discussions, I began to accumulate not only a structured image of Maurice Bishop as an intelligence operative—the hard data of his character and activities—but also a sense of the man himself as Veciana saw him.

At that point, this is what I knew about Maurice Bishop:

He was in Havana in the summer of 1960 when Veciana first met him. He was working undercover, probably using some business association or firm as a front. He may have had a relationship with some business in the building where Veciana was given his training instruction, maybe with the American mining company or the Berlitz language school. Bishop was familiar with personnel at the American Embassy. He appeared to be a specialist in propaganda, psychological warfare, and counterintelligence.

Considering the character of his Spanish, he probably had been formally schooled in the language and even before arriving in Havanna he probably had spent time in a Spanish-speaking country. He was very intelligent, very literate, very articulate. He was, as Veciana put it, a gentleman, perhaps from the South, more likely from Texas.

ered that there had been secret operations and ultra-sensitive missions conducted outside the CIA's normal chain of command. Given that, Bishop may have been among a select group within the Agency and, as such, trusted enough to be given an "unofficial" Castro-assassination mission. Because Veciana's activities in the late '60s began to broaden beyond Cuban affairs and encompass other anti-Communist operations in Latin America, it also appeared likely that Bishop had moved up the Agency's executive ladder.

At the time of the Kennedy assassination, Bishop appeared to be particularly knowledgeable about intelligence operations in Mexico City. He not only was aware of Oswald's activities there but also knew that Veciana's cousin was a Castro intelligence officer in the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City.

By the early '70s, Bishop had broadened his interests and contacts throughout Latin America. Bishop's role in the 1971 Castro-assassination attempt in Chile, his ability to reach key military personnel there, indicated he had a special relationship in that country. The week before we constructed the composite sketch of Bishop, I wrote a memo to Schweiker indicating what I initially thought would be primary areas of investigation. The memo noted: "Veciana strongly believes that Bishop had something to do with the downfall of Allende in Chile."

Finally, another indication of Bishop's position in more recent years derived from the large amount of money that Veciana said Bishop paid him at the end of their relationship in 1973. Bishop had to be in a position to have access to such funds and, perhaps, also have the power to cover them—or be in association with someone who did.

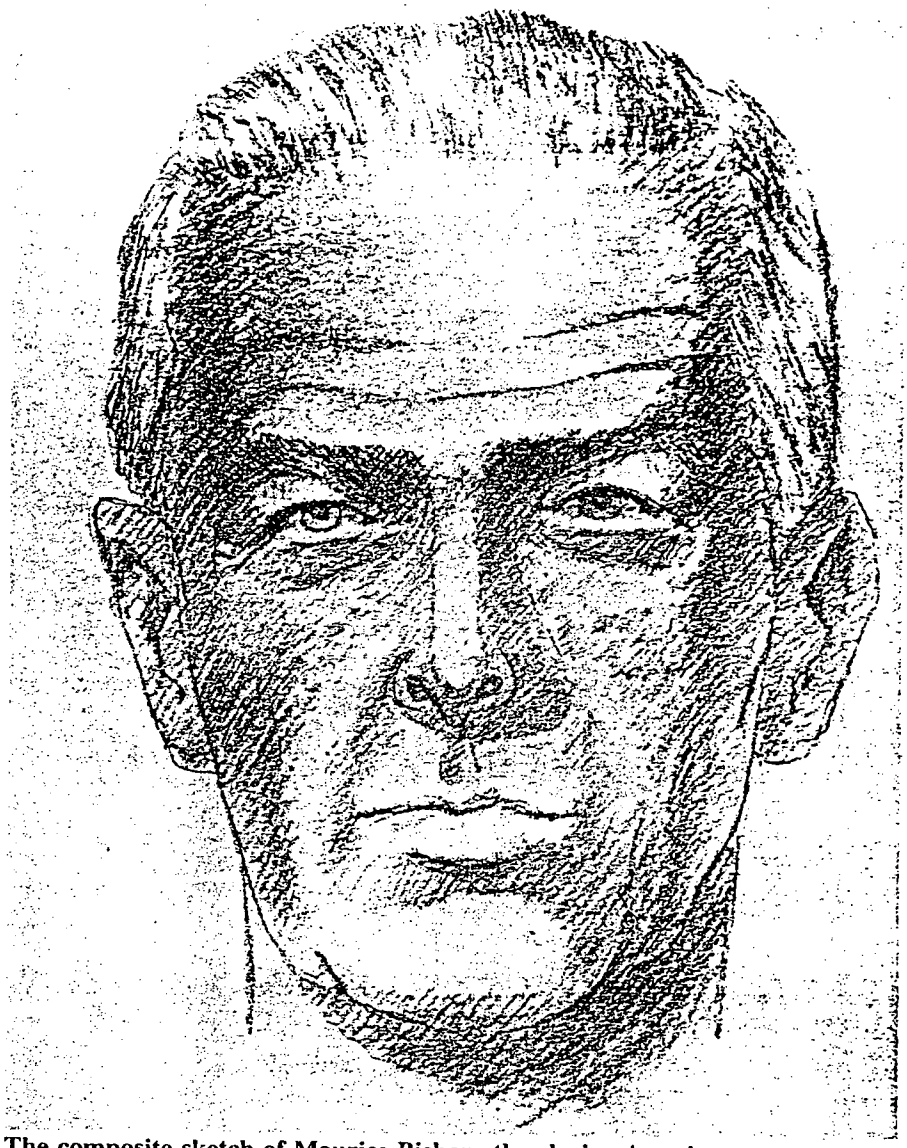
On Sunday evening the weekend I returned from Washington after the composite sketch was drawn, I received a call from Dave Newhall. He said he had just gotten a call from Schweiker in Pennsylvania. "The boss was driving home when he suddenly remembered who the guy in the sketch reminded him of," Newhall said. "He stopped the car and called me from a phone booth."

The sketch of Maurice Bishop reminded Senator Schweiker of David Atlee Phillips.

David Phillips had come before the Senate Intelligence Committee on more than one occasion. The Committee was interested especially in two phases of Phillips's career: One was as head of the CIA's task force to prevent the election of Salvador Allende in Chile; the other was his role as chief of the Agency's unit in Mexico City responsible for sending to the Warren Commission photographs of a man erroneously identified as Lee Harvey Oswald.

Phillips had announced his retirement after 25 years of service with the CIA

The Church Committee discovered that there had been ultra-sensitive missions conducted outside the CIA's normal chain of command. Given that, Bishop may have been given an "unofficial" Castro-assassination mission.



The composite sketch of Maurice Bishop, the elusive American spymaster. Senator Schweiker was the first to say whom he thought the sketch resembled: David Atlee Phillips.

nation was being stirred by a barrage of press revelations about the illegal activities of the intelligence agencies. Veciana was still in prison and not yet up for parole. Phillips called a press conference at his retirement and announced he would lead an association of retired intelligence officers in defense of the CIA.

According to Phillips, one of the major factors that led to his retirement was "the rash of sensational headlines in the world press that leave the impression the CIA is an organization of unprincipled people who capriciously interfere in the lives of US citizens at home and abroad." He said he wanted to "straighten out the record."

Newhall is usually a laconic man, but there was an edge in his voice that evening he called to tell me about Schweiker homing in on David Phillips. "The boss thinks the resemblance is pretty damn close," he said. He asked if I could dig up an old newspaper clip of Phillips's press conference and show the photo in it to Veciana.

The next morning I checked the date of the press conference, picked up a back issue of the *Miami Herald*, and went to Veciana's place. He wasn't home. His wife said she didn't expect him back until evening and didn't know how to reach him. I returned home to another call from Newhall.

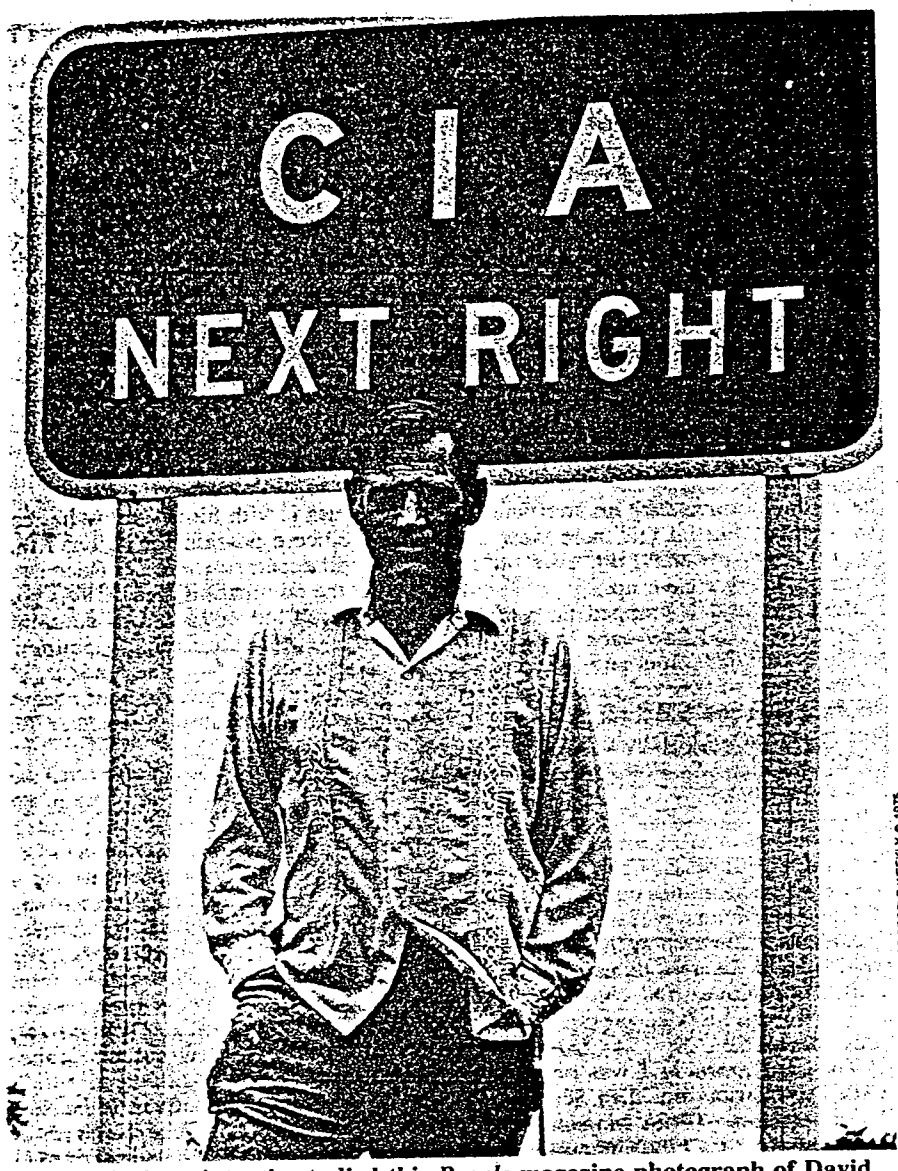
"We've found a good photo of Phillips in the June 23 issue of *People* magazine," he said. "It did a feature about his forming that retired-intelligence-agents group. Do you think you can pick up a copy?" I said I would try because the *Herald* photo, a wire-service reproduction, was a poor one. However, after trying several sources, I couldn't locate that back issue of *People*. The public library had already put it into a bound volume. Because it appeared that I wouldn't be able to get a reproduction of the article until the next day, I decided I would call Veciana and ask him to join me at the public library the next morning. We could look at the magazine in the bound volume together.

That evening, while waiting to talk with Veciana, I glanced at the story that appeared in the *Herald* when Phillips announced his retirement. There were scant details about his background. It noted that he had once been a professional actor, had been recruited by the CIA when he edited an English-language newspaper in Chile in the early 1950s, had been assigned posts in Mexico and Venezuela, and had been working undercover in Cuba when Castro took over. Later he was CIA propaganda chief for the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Phillips retired before the Church Committee was formed and before the CIA admitted to some of the activities that would later get the Committee its headlines. In defending the Agency at his press conference, Phillips vigorously denied charges about the CIA that were around at the time. The CIA did not financially support the strikes that led to Allende's overthrow, he declared. Also, he said, the CIA never plotted the assassination of Fidel Castro. Phillips's final point: He said he assumed that many would claim his retirement was phony and that the association he was forming was really a CIA operation. "It is *not*," he declared. The facts would later indicate he was wrong on at least two out of those three contentions.

When I contacted Veciana that evening he said he did not know the name "David Phillips" or remember seeing photographs of the man. He said he would come to the public library with me the next morning. "I will call Dr. Abella and ask him to come with us also," he said. "Then we can do two things."

In talking with Veciana over the previous weeks about the Kennedy assassination, it appeared that for the first time he was becoming interested in some of the details. One day he told me he had been talking with a close friend, Dr. Manuel Abella, about the assassination. He said Abella mentioned having seen a photograph of the crowd in Dealey Plaza just prior to the assassination. He thought the photo was in *Life* or *Look;* he wasn't sure. Abella said that in the crowd he recognized a man he knew from Cuba as a Castro agent. I had spo-



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN NEUBAUER/PEOPLE WEEKLY © 1975

Antonio Veciana intently studied this *People* magazine photograph of David Atlee Phillips to determine whether he was Maurice Bishop. He finally spoke: "It is close, but it is not him."

:en with Abella and checked back issues of the magazines he suggested, but didn't ind the crowd shot he described. Ve-:iana had said that someday he would ake Abella to the library and help him search for the magazine. Now Veciana saw our visit to the library as an oppor-:unity to do that also.

The next morning Dr. Abella, a cigar-chomping, pudgy little man, was wait-ing with Veciana at his home. We drove downtown to the Dade County Public Library in Bayfront Park, the site of the ever-burning Torch of Freedom donated by Miami's Cuban exile community. That morning there was a demonstration in progress at the Torch. A shouting group of masked Iranian students was calling for the ouster of the Shah. Veciana looked at them, smiled slightly, and shook his head. He was used to more forceful expressions of dissent.

At the periodical desk I asked for the bound volume of *People* with the Phil-lips article and for the volumes of *Life* and *Look* with issues that might have crowd photos of Dealey Plaza. We took them to an empty table at one end of the room. Veciana sat down and put on his glasses. I stood beside him and found the article about Phillips in *People*. There was a half-page black-and-white photo of him standing under a highway sign, near Langley. The sign said: CIA NEXT RIGHT. Phillips was depicted almost full-figure, casually dressed in a *guayabera*, standing with his hands in his pockets. The resemblance to the Bishop sketch was clear: The square jaw, the distinctive lower lip, the straight nose, the forehead, and, yes, the darkened area under the eyes. Only the hair was different.

Veciana looked at the photo. And looked at the photo. I watched his face for some reaction, but there was none. He kept staring at the photo. "Is it him?" I asked. Veciana didn't answer. His face was totally expressionless, but his eyes were intensely focused on the photo. Finally, he turned the page of the mag-azine. There were two more photos of Phillips, both smaller and both showing Phillips's face less directly. Veciana turned back to the larger photo. "Is it him?" I asked again. Almost half a minute had passed and the suspense was press-ing on me. Without taking his eyes from the photo, he said: "It is close."

I wanted to shout at him: *It is close? What the hell do you mean, it is close! Is it him or isn't it him?* I leaned closer and asked again softly: "Is it him?" Veciana did not take his eyes off the photo. "Does he have a brother?" he asked. The question took me aback. "I don't know," I said, "but is he Bishop?" Veciana finally shook his head. "It is close, but it is not him." I felt relief at the end of the suspense. "Are you sure it's not him?" I asked. "No, it's not him," Veciana said again. Well, I thought, that sounds pretty definite, and turned to the volumes that Dr. Abella was waiting to look through. Then Ve-ciana, still looking at the photo, added: "But I would like to talk with him."

"You would like to talk with Phil-lips?" I asked, not getting his point. "Do you think Phillips is Bishop?"

"No, he is not Bishop," Veciana said, "but he is CIA and maybe he could help."

Maybe he could, I thought, and turned to help Abella, who was leafing through the other volumes looking for the crowd shot with the Castro agent. Abella had described the photo precisely, but it was in neither *Life* nor *Look*. Then Abella said that maybe it was in *Argosy* or *True*, because he remembered articles about the Kennedy assassination in those mag-azines. So I went to get the bound vol-umes of those publications and we began looking through them. Again we had no luck. Veciana, meanwhile, remained seated at the table staring at the photo of David Phillips.

Before the Schweiker investigation came to a close, more than a dozen individuals had been considered, however fleet-ingly, as being the man who called him-self Maurice Bishop. Most of them came to our attention because of their involve-ment in anti-Castro activity. The staff of the Senate Intelligence Committee continued to look for Bishop mostly in the area of Army Intelligence, despite my trying to make clear to them that Veciana very much doubted that Bishop was with the military.

I continued to show Veciana photo-graphs of individuals sent to me by the Committee staff and others I dug up myself. Some bore a closer resemblance to the sketch than others, but none came as close as David Phillips. Occasionally, Veciana would mention that. Sometimes he would add, "Well, you know, maybe it would help if I could talk with him."

We began considering the possibility of bringing Veciana together with Phil-lips in a direct confrontation. The Com-mittee staff, however, had decided not to call Phillips back for additional ques-tioning under oath, so whatever we did we had to do on our own and unoffi-cially.

We did not have the opportunity to have Veciana confront Phillips until Sep-

As the Church Committee was winding down, it became clear that only a sensational new revelation could force it to reopen a full-scale investigation.

tember, just before Schweiker decided to close down his investigation. Between my first interview with Veciana and September, I felt I was on a fast-moving train trying to spot a smoking gun in the blur of passing woods. As the Church Committee was winding down, it became clear that only a sensational new revelation, simple and obvious enough for the public to grasp its significance instantly, could force the Committee to reopen a full-scale Kennedy investigation. The Veciana lead was a crack in the door, but it would take time and resources to develop it. I pursued it as best I could. Over the months. I tried to locate and talk with everyone Veciana had named. We had limited resources, because Schweiker's staff budget didn't include travel and expenses for a Kennedy-assassination investigation and he could not use Committee funds.

At the end of June 1976, the Senate Select Committee issued its "final report": *Book V—The Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: Performance of the Intelligence Agencies*. The press called it the Schweiker report. Dave Marston had air-expressed an advance copy to me the night before Schweiker was scheduled to release it at a press conference. I thought the report had historical significance as the first official confirmation of the invalidity of the Warren Commission report. I objected, however, to its over-emphasizing the possibility of the Kennedy killing being a Castro retaliation simply on the basis of the Warren Commission not having been informed of the CIA's Castro-assassination plots. I was discussing that with Marston on the telephone the next afternoon when Schweiker returned from his press conference. Marston asked Schweiker to pick up the line. "We've got one of your standard skeptics here, Senator," he said.

"I thought all our skeptics were at the news conference!" Schweiker said in mock anguish.

I congratulated him on the report but told him I thought that critics of the Warren Commission were going to have a legitimate objection. "How could the Committee have failed to pursue the possible relationship of Oswald to the intelligence agencies," I asked, "when the Committee discovered the intelligence agencies admitted a cover-up with the Warren Commission?"

"Because," said Schweiker, "they took the position that they had no relationship with Oswald. And there were no documents in their files, they said, which revealed that there was. We pressed them on that several times and each time they said they had nothing. We hit a blind alley. I don't disagree with you, but considering the type of probe the Committee was conducting and the limited access to the intelligence agencies' files, there was not much we could do about it."

Despite the direction that the Schweiker report had taken and the public attention it had received, Schweiker wanted me to keep quietly pursuing the Veciana lead. He said he didn't know how long he could continue such an unofficial investigation, but he felt there were still many things we could do, even on our own, before we gave up.

Late in July, I wrapped up a trip to Puerto Rico and flew back to Miami. I came back with some new information, found a few of the witnesses I had been looking for, and had a long and fruitful conversation with Manolo Ray, the head of the anti-Castro organization Veciana had originally joined in Cuba and, later, the founder of JURE, to which Silvia Odio had belonged. I was tired and dragging my way through Miami Airport when I noticed the headlines on the newsstand. The Republicans were holding their presidential convention in Kansas City. And Ronald Reagan, though not yet the party's nominee, had chosen Richard Schweiker as his vice presidential running mate.

The next morning I was on the line with Troy Gustavson, then Schweiker's press secretary. (With Marston getting ready to move to Philadelphia—Schweiker had him selected as US attorney for the region—Gustavson was taking over as the Kennedy liaison.) "I imagine you've seen the papers," he said. "Were you flabbergasted?" That was a good word. "We all were," he said. "Only Schweiker and Newhall knew about it since Tuesday. Schweiker was on vacation in New Jersey when he got the call from Reagan's campaign manager, who said he wanted to meet him in Washington. The Senator and Newhall kicked it around and decided it was the last chance for the moderate wing of the party. Schweiker's really psyched up about it."

I wondered what it meant in terms of Schweiker continuing a Kennedy-assassination investigation. "I don't know," Gustavson said. "I haven't had a chance to discuss it with him. I know he really has a sincere passion for it, but I think a lot will depend on whether Reagan and he get the nomination. I think he's going to question the propriety of continuing it because it's automatically politicized as soon as he becomes a candidate."

We decided we should continue with the investigation until Schweiker himself called us off.

By early September, however, there were indications that Schweiker's attempt to conduct a one-man investigation into the assassination had gone about as far as it could. Reagan had not received the Republican nomination in Kansas City, and Schweiker returned to Washington very depressed. I believe it led him to reevaluate his role in public life. Then, too, partially as a result of the Schweiker report, the ground swell for a new investigation into the Kennedy assassination was beginning to build in the House of Representatives. If the House wanted to investigate the Kennedy assassination, Schweiker had decided, he would end his efforts.

PHOTOGRAPH BY WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

When Ronald Reagan tapped Richard Schweiker to be his vice-presidential running mate in a desperate attempt to secure the 1976 Republican presidential nomination, Schweiker abandoned his one-man investigative efforts to unravel the Kennedy assassination.

IV

Confrontation in Reston

One morning toward the end of September 1976 I received a call from Sarah Lewis of Schweiker's office. Lewis, an assistant to Gustavson, had been handling a lot of the Washington research. She called to tell me she had learned that the Retired Intelligence Officers Association was going to have a two-day conference in Reston, Virginia, in the middle of the month. That was the organization founded by David Phillips about a year before. It had been a success and, within months, claimed a few hundred members. (It would later change its name to Association of Former Intelligence Officers.) David Phillips would, we assumed, be a visible figure at the conference in Reston. It would provide an opportunity for Antonio Veciana to tell us, for sure, whether Phillips was Maurice Bishop.

David Phillips knew we were coming. At least he knew I was coming. Sarah Lewis had called and made arrangements for three of us to attend the luncheon on the last day of the conference.

That morning, I met Veciana at Washington National Airport. He and his wife had driven his daughter to Tampa, where she was starting college, and he had flown from there. I missed the opportunity of traveling with Veciana, which I always enjoyed. It gave me the chance to chat with him casually, and I never failed to get additional insight into the man. I guess I enjoyed also knowing that this soft-faced, pear-shaped middle-aged man leaning comfortably back in the window-seat reading the real estate section of the paper and looking like a well-dressed, mild-mannered business executive was actually one of the most dedicated anti-Castro terrorists.

Sarah Lewis picked us up at the airport in her red Volkswagen. She was a tall woman with short blond hair and a pleasant smile. Her research abilities had been very useful in the Kennedy-assassination probe. "Phillips is expecting us," she said, "although I guess he was puzzled by Senator Schweiker's interest in the conference." Veciana smiled.

Reston had been born as a model community for the Washington suburbs, an escape from the blight of the urban core. Times change. Downtown Washington is now the classy, expensive place to live and Reston is a suburb with problems of its own. But it's still neat, pretty, and well manicured. It took us a while to find the Sheraton Inn where the conference was being held, and we arrived late.

There appeared to be no former spies lurking around the lobby. A bulletin board directed us to the meeting room down the center hallway.

The room was noisy with chatter and the rattle of tableware. It was a large crowd in a large room. We made our way toward Phillips's table, situated in a corner of the room farthest from the door. I was walking ahead of Sarah Lewis and Veciana. I recognized Phillips, sitting with his back toward us. I wanted to be in a position to see his face and to look at his eyes when he first saw Veciana. The fellow leading us tapped Phillips on the back. Phillips jumped up, turned around, looked directly at me and, smiling, extended his hand as he introduced himself. I watched his eyes as I shook his hand, told him my name, and said that I was with Senator Schweiker's office. His eyes never left my face.

I recognized Phillips, sitting with his back toward us. I wanted to be in a position to see his face and to look at his eyes when he first saw Veciana. Phillips jumped up and turned around.

I turned and said, "I'd like you to meet Sarah Lewis." Phillips smiled a greeting and shook her hand. "And this," I said, "is Antonio Veciana." Phillips smiled a quick greeting at Veciana, shook his hand, and immediately turned back to me. "I'm glad you could come," he said, "and I'm delighted that Senator Schweiker is showing an interest, but I must admit I don't quite understand why you're here." He said it with a smile, then added: "But, of course, you're most welcome." He gestured to the three empty chairs across the table. There was no hint that he recognized Veciana.

We sat down opposite Phillips at the three places reserved for us. I sat on Veciana's left, Sarah Lewis on his right. Between Phillips and me were his wife, Gina, a pleasant woman who, I later learned, was a former secretary at the CIA. (Phillips and his first wife, Helen, were divorced in 1967; he remarried in 1969). Sitting on her right, a United Press International reporter, a bluff, red-faced fellow just back in the US after 21 years as a foreign correspondent.

As soon as Veciana sat down, he reached into his breast pocket, pulled out his glasses, put them on, folded his arms across his chest, and began studying David Phillips. Subtle he wasn't. For almost the entire luncheon, Veciana remained in the same position: leaning back in his chair, arms folded across his chest, staring at Phillips. Occasionally he picked up his fork and dabbled at the food in front of him, then he would lean back again, fold his arms, and look at Phillips. It made Phillips nervous. His hands were shaking noticeably. He avoided Veciana's stare and remained in animated conversation with both his wife and the fellow to his left, a retired Navy officer.

The table was large and the room noisy, and so at one point when Phillips leaned over the two people between us and said something to me, it was difficult to hear him. I thought he asked, again, about what interest Senator Schweiker might have in a conference of retired intelligence officers. I said that, really, it just gave me the opportunity to meet him and that we were working on something we thought he might be able to help us with. I said that after the luncheon, perhaps, we could talk about it. He nodded his head and smiled, but because of the din I wasn't sure he had caught everything I had said. He turned back to chatting with the fellow on his left. Veciana kept staring at him.

I kept glancing at Veciana, trying to get his attention. I didn't want to be obvious by engaging him in a whispered conversation, but the suspense got to me and I leaned toward him and whispered, "What do you think?" Veciana looked at me, shrugged his shoulders, and turned back to staring at Phillips.

I surveyed the crowd. Perhaps, I thought, I might stumble on someone who resembled the Maurice Bishop sketch even more closely than Phillips. I don't know what I expected a gathering of spies would look like, but this group looked like a crowd of college professors. A lot of pipe-puffers. And more

women than I had expected. I guessed that most of them were, or had been, intelligence analysts. That, in fact, is what most CIA employees are.

When the guest speaker was introduced, I turned in my chair and put my back to Phillips. Veciana moved only sideways and kept glancing back at him. The guest speaker was then Major General Samuel V. Wilson, newly appointed head of the Defense Intelligence Agency. A handsome, broad-shouldered soldier with wavy hair and a ruddy complexion, he wore a chestful of ribbons topped with the blue combat-infantryman's badge.

Polished, articulate, smoothly dramatic, General Wilson was out of the Patton school of military speakers. His speech, a model for the occasion, was an aggressive defense against the attacks being launched against the intelligence community.

When General Wilson finished, the audience gave him a standing ovation. I stood and clapped. It was one hell of a speech. Veciana stood but didn't clap, probably because the general didn't say anything about killing Castro.

During the ovation, I took the opportunity to lean over to Veciana and ask, "Is he Bishop?" Veciana removed his glasses and put them back in his pocket. "No," he said slowly, shaking his head, "it is not him." He paused for a moment, then added: "Well, you know, I would like to talk with him."

But by the time I turned around Phillips had already gone out the back door. Then I realized that as president of the association, he probably wanted to thank his guest speaker and had run ahead so he wouldn't get caught in the crowd at the rear of the room. I ran toward the rear door, beckoning Veciana and Lewis to follow me.

The hallway was already jammed, but I could see Phillips talking with General Wilson at the front door. I began trying to push my way against the flow of the crowd until I noticed that Phillips, having shaken the general's hand, was moving back down the hall toward me. As he chatted with another member, I said, "Excuse me, Mr. Phillips. I'd like you to meet Antonio Veciana." I turned, but Veciana wasn't there. I had thought that he and Lewis were directly behind me, but they had gotten caught in the crowd. It was now obvious to Phillips that I wanted to bring him and Veciana together. "Well, as you know," I said, turning back to Phillips, "I'm with Senator Schweiker and I thought you might be able to help us with what we've been working on."

"What about?" asked Phillips.

"The Kennedy assassination," I said.

Phillips smiled. "I'll be glad to talk with any congressman, or with any representative of Congress . . . in Congress."

Veciana suddenly appeared at our side, with Sarah Lewis behind him. "This is Mr. Veciana," I said again. Veciana asked Phillips in Spanish if he had been in Havana in 1960. Phillips answered in Spanish: Yes, he had.

Did he know Julio Lobo? Veciana asked. Phillips said he remembered the name.

Did he know Rufo Lopez-Fresquet? Phillips said yes, then asked Veciana, "What was your name again?"

"Antonio Veciana."

"Veciana?" Phillips repeated.

"Don't you know my name?"

Phillips shook his head slowly and said, "No." Then he turned to me and asked, in English: "Is he with Schweiker's staff?"

"No," I said, "Mr. Veciana has been helping us with our investigation."

"What investigation?"

"The Kennedy assassination," I said again. "That's why I thought if we could talk—I mean nothing official, just off the record if you prefer—you could be of some help. I thought . . . "

He interrupted me with a forced smile: "I'll be glad to talk with any congressman, or any representative of Congress . . . in Congress." His hands were shaking. Unintentionally, with the push of the crowd behind me, I had forced him up against the wall. "Well, there's an area I thought you might help us with,"

Veciana didn't say a word. His face was expressionless. "He's not Bishop?" I asked. Veciana looked straight ahead as we walked. "No, he's not him." A long silence. "But he knows."

I began, thinking I could push a little.

His smile was frozen. "I told you, I'll be glad to talk with any congressman, or any representative of Congress . . . in Congress," he repeated. Then he turned testy. "I'm sorry," he said, moving toward an opening in the crowd, "you've caught me at a very inopportune moment. As you can see, this is all very hectic here and I'm quite busy, so if you'll excuse me. . . " He kept the smile on his face.

"No," I said, "I didn't mean I wanted to talk with you now, but perhaps if I can give you a call. . . . "

This time the smile was gone. With a sigh of exasperation he repeated again, now slowly, "I'll be glad to talk with any congressman, or any representative of Congress . . . in Congress. *Now*, if you'll excuse me . . . "

On the ride from Reston to drop Veciana off for his flight back to Miami—I was not returning there directly—he remained silent, and so did Sarah and I. Perhaps we were stunned and dared not come to any conclusions about what had just happened until we had mulled it over. What I recall most clearly now is a moment when we were walking back to Sarah's car in the motel parking lot immediately after leaving Phillips. It was a beautiful day, very bright. Veciana didn't say a word. His face was expressionless.

"He's not Bishop?" I asked again.

Veciana continued looking straight ahead as we walked. "No, he's not him." A long silence. "But he knows."

He knows? "What do you mean, he knows?" I asked.

"He knows," Veciana repeated.

As we were waiting for Sarah to unlock the door of the car, Veciana turned to me and said, "It is strange he didn't know my name. I was very well known."

I was thinking the same thing.

For the next three months I thought about what happened that day. I saw Veciana only once or twice during that period and talked occasionally with him on the telephone. He seemed not to want to discuss the incident in detail. Once, when I did bring up David Phillips's name, he said again, "He knows." When I asked, "You mean he knows who Maurice Bishop is?" Veciana nodded his head. "He knows," he said. "I would like to talk with him more." I assumed then he meant that if he could talk with Phillips at length he would be able to elicit some clue from him about the real Maurice Bishop. I knew, from Phillips's reaction, that this was impossible.

In October, Schweiker concluded that 1976
he could no longer justify being involved as a lone senator in an investigation of the Kennedy assassination. First, he was very disappointed at having been politically maneuvered out of an appointment to the new Senate Permanent Committee on Intelligence, the formation of which came out of the recommendation of the Select Committee. There were two other factors. One was the announcement by Senator Daniel Inouye, the new chairman, that the Permanent Committee would continue the investigation of the Kennedy assassination begun by the Select Committee. Schweiker didn't believe that it actually would, but because Inouye had made the public announcement, it left Schweiker without reason to continue. (Schweiker was right; the new committee made a few moves, then dropped the subject.)

The other factor was the indication that the House was finally being pressured into conducting its own Kennedy-assassination investigation. The independent researchers had been pushing for it for years and were later joined by those who thought the Martin Luther King Jr. assassination required a thorough investigation. They were getting nowhere until Coretta King, the widow of the slain civil-rights leader, went directly to the Speaker of the House and said, "I would like to know what really happened to Martin."

V

The Last Investigation

The Select Committee on Assassinations was born out of House politics. Early in 1975, two congressmen each introduced bills to reopen the Kennedy assassination. A fiery Texan named Henry B. Gonzalez, who had been a passenger in the Dallas motorcade, included in his bill probes into the murders of Robert Kennedy and King. A respected Virginia lawmaker, Thomas N. Downing, introduced his bill when he developed doubts about the Warren Commission report. Both bills were stuck in the Rules Committee for more than a year, until the Black Caucus put pressure on the House leadership. The bills were then merged and the resolution passed.

Seeds of dissension were sown early. Traditionally, the author of a resolution establishing a select committee is named chairman of the committee. Downing, however, was a lame-duck congressman—he was not seeking reelection in 1976. His term would expire three months after the new committee was formed. Gonzalez was a barroom-brawling Mexican-American not especially respected by House powerbrokers. Thus, despite Downing's lame-duck status, House Speaker Tip O'Neill named him chairman of the Select Committee. That burned Gonzalez.

The Committee immediately mired itself in internal squabbling. Downing's first choice as the Committee's chief counsel and staff director was Washington attorney Bernard Fensterwald, an early Warren Commission critic who had established a research clearinghouse and lobbying operation called the Committee to Investigate Assassinations. After Gonzalez objected to him, Fensterwald withdrew from consideration. Then a story appeared in the *Washington Star* headlined: IS FENSTERWALD A CIA PLANT?—ASSASSINATION INQUIRY STUMBLING. It was later learned the story had been leaked from Gonzalez's office.

Downing and Gonzalez finally got together in October 1976 and settled on Philadelphia's Richard Sprague as chief counsel. Sprague had come to national attention with his successful prosecution of United Mine Workers President Tony Boyle for the murder of UMW reformer Joseph Yablonski. In Philadelphia, where as first assistant district attorney he had run up 69 homicide convictions out of 70 prosecutions, Sprague was known as tough, tenacious, and independent.

Representative Henry Gonzalez, Democrat from Texas, rode in the fatal motorcade on November 22, 1963. He briefly headed the House Assassinations Committee until he dramatically quit during internal political battling.

Early in November 1976, Sprague had lunch with Senator Schweiker in Washington. He knew of the work of Schweiker's Senate Intelligence Subcommittee, but Schweiker also filled him in on the files his personal staff had compiled. In those files was a fat stack of informally written memos reporting what I had dug up over the past year. Included were rough notes on Antonio Veciana and Maurice Bishop. To help Sprague, Schweiker arranged to turn over some of these personal staff files. In a letter to Sprague accompanying them, Schweiker noted: "Because of my concern for the personal safety of some of the individuals who came forth to my staff, neither my staff nor I have publicly divulged their names. I strongly urge that this confidentiality continue to be respected. . . ."

When he took the job, Sprague stipulated that he have complete authority to hire his own staff and run the investigation as he saw fit. He proposed setting up two separate investigations, one for John F. Kennedy and one for Martin Luther King Jr. He insisted on handling both cases as if they were homicide investigations.

It was a novel approach. Judging from the reaction of many members of Congress, it was too radical an approach. Sprague said he needed a staff of at least 200 and an initial annual budget of $6.5 million—and then refused to guarantee that would do the job. Sprague had not yet settled into his shabby office in the rat-infested former FBI Records Building when the attacks against him began. 1976 In December, Sprague called and asked me to come to Washington to talk. When I arrived I found that he had turned over the material Schweiker had given him to Deputy Counsel Bob Tannenbaum, a veteran homicide attorney Sprague had recruited from the New York District Attorney's Office. Tannenbaum reviewed the material and suggested that Sprague ask me to join the staff. I told Sprague I would if I could pursue those areas in which I had the most background and had the most potential, especially intelligence-agency involvement with the anti-Castro exiles in Miami. He said I could.

I had lunch with Sprague and several of his staffers that day in Washington. I talked about some of the things I had worked on with Schweiker and what I thought needed to be done. But Sprague,

Representative Thomas N. Downing of Virginia developed doubts about the Warren Commission's lone-gunman theory and introduced a bill to reopen the Kennedy investigation.

Richard Sprague, the first chief counsel to the House Assassinations Committee, was tough, tenacious, and independent. He wanted to handle the John Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations as homicide investigations.

despite having been on the job for more than two months, seemed still less occupied with the substance of the case than he did with other problems. He had been blasted by a few congressmen after word got around that the Committee would probably use such investigative devices as lie-detector tests, voice-stress evaluators, and concealed tape recorders. Some lawmakers, including a few conservatives, expressed their concern and said Sprague was threatening to trample on the civil rights of people he would investigate. At lunch that day, I commented to Sprague about the heat he was taking.

Sprague shook his head. "You know, I don't understand it. I've never been in a situation like this before where I'm getting criticized for things I *might* do. It's nonsense. I don't know why it's happening."

It was arranged that I would officially join the Committee as a staff investigator on January 1, 1977. I returned to Miami and got to work renewing the contacts and sources I had let lapse. I had accumulated file cases of documents and background material which I used to begin structuring an investigative plan. After talking with Sprague, I was now certain he planned to conduct a strong investigation, and I had never been more optimistic in my life. The investigation would include a major effort in Miami, with teams of investigators digging into all those unexplored corners the Warren Commission had ignored or shied away from. They would be working with squads of attorneys to put legal pressure on to squeeze the truth from recalcitrant witnesses. There would be sworn depositions, the use of warrants, and prosecutions for perjury. We would have sophisticated investigative resources and, more important, the authority to use them. The Kennedy assassination would finally get the investigation it deserved. There would be no more bullshit.

Little did I know.

What Sprague discovered when he arrived in Washington was that his first order of business was not to set up an investigation but simply to keep the Committee alive. The Committee had been officially established in September. All congressional committees expire at the end of each congressional year and then, if they have been mandated to continue by their originating resolutions, the new Congress reconstitutes them as a matter of course.

As soon as Sprague hit Washington and it became obvious he meant to conduct a real investigation, the flak began. Helped by some of the press, including the *New York Times*, talk began circulating that the reconstitution of the Assassinations Committee might not be "automatic." The attacks increased when Sprague announced his staff plan and budget. He did not pull either figure out of the air, but analyzed the resources that the Warren Commission had available from its own staff, plus from the FBI, Secret Service, CIA, and Justice and State Departments. Sprague figured that the nature of a truly independent investigation would preclude the use of the investigative forces of other government agencies, especially because some would be under investigation themselves. With a staff of 170 and a yearly budget of $6.5 million, the Assassinations Committee would not have many more resources than the Warren Commission. (The Warren Commission employed 83 people but used 150 full-time agents from the FBI plus other federal personnel.)

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT GRODIN

Heading the Kennedy part of the House Assassinations Committee's investigations was Robert Tannenbaum, a quick-thinking, fast-talking New York prosecutor.

The budget became the focal point for attacks on Sprague. He was accused of being disrespectful of congressional protocol. Sprague, they said, had made a "mistake" in coming on so strong. "Several people around here who are familiar with the bureaucratic game told me to first present a smaller budget," Sprague admitted. "They assured me that I could always go back later and plead for more. That's the way they do things in Washington. I was told. Well, I won't play that game."

On January 2, 1977, the day before the convening of the 95th Congress, there appeared in the *New York Times* a story headlined COUNSEL IN ASSASSINATION INQUIRY OFTEN TARGET OF CRITICISM. It reviewed Sprague's seventeen-year career as a Philadelphia prosecutor strictly in terms of the controversies he had provoked. Sprague's record has points worthy of criticism, but the *Times* story left out the grays and painted Sprague a heavy black.

The article had the effect of a well-placed torpedo. It almost sank the Assassinations Committee. On January 4, an attempt to reconstitute the Committee by a unanimous-consent voice vote failed. This meant the resolution would have to go through a bureaucratic labyrinth, including passage through the Rules Committee and a budget-review exercise, before the Committee could officially be reconstituted. That would take weeks.

In Miami, I was eager to get rolling. I kept calling Bob Tannenbaum, the boss of the Kennedy side of the investigation. "Bob, I think it's initially important to coordinate my area with what the rest of the staff is doing," I said. I suggested I travel to Washington to get a better idea of staff organization. Tannenbaum agreed. He was a man in his early thirties, very big and beefy but fit—a former Columbia University basketball star and student radical who, rising quickly in the New York DA's office, became the epitome of the quick-thinking, fast-talking prosecutor. Tannenbaum didn't want me to know how chaotic things were in Washington. "Let me work things out on this end," he kept saying, "and we'll plan on getting together. Stay loose."

On February 3, 1977, the House voted to reconstitute the Assassinations Committee. Temporarily. Still under attack by several conservative lawmakers suddenly turned civil libertarians, the Committee was, as the *Washington Star* put it, "given less than two months to justify its existence under conditions that . . . make it almost impossible to develop new evidence." The House, in keeping the Committee alive, provided only a maintenance budget, just barely enough to cover the reduced salaries of its then 72-member staff. (Everyone had taken a 40-percent pay cut while awaiting reconstitution.)

In Miami, I kept busy, but without the guidance of an investigative plan all I could do was continue a scatter-gun

About a week after the Committee was temporarily born again, I received a call from Bob Tannenbaum.

"Well," he sighed, "World War III has started in Washington. It's Gonzalez vs. Sprague. You wouldn't believe it. Gonzalez is taking back his stationery."

His what?

"Let me read you a letter. It's dated February 9, 1977. 'Dear Dick: Until the Select Committee is properly organized and its rules established, a number of steps are necessary. Accordingly, I hereby request and direct that you provide me at the earliest practical time, but no later than noon Friday, February 11, your written assurance as given verbally to the Committee yesterday that, failing to recommend necessary reductions in force, you guarantee compliance with the financial limits imposed on the Committee. . . . Owing to an evident inability of the Committee in past times to adequately control the use of its letterhead and franked materials, and in the absence of any present controls on such materials, you are directed to return to me immediately any and all letterhead materials bearing my name. . . . "

The *New York Times* story left out the grays and painted Sprague a heavy black. It had the effect of a well-placed torpedo. It almost sank the Committee.

Because all congressional committees use the postal-franking privileges of its chairman, and because every expense voucher, travel order, and most directives and requests to other government agencies are made under the chairman's signature, what Gonzalez was doing, in effect, was stopping the operation of the Committee.

Gonzalez had been furious at not being named chairman when the Committee was originally formed. He automatically stepped into the post, however, when Downing retired and the new Congress convened in January. (It was of something of a Catch-22 position because the Committee, not yet reconstituted, was officially nonexistent.) Gonzalez wanted more than just the title. He wanted control and the power to staff the investigation with his own people. Sprague wasn't going to give him that.

In December, Gonzalez had told Sprague that, under the formula in the Congressional Rules, the Committee could operate with a monthly budget of $150,000 until it was officially reconstituted. On that basis, Sprague began beefing up his original start-up staff with

payroll on January 1, 1977. I was in that group. Gonzalez, however, had been mistaken about the Committee's budget. The rules actually permitted it only $84,000 a month in expenses while it awaited reconstitution. When Gonzalez was called on the budget carpet by the Rules Committee, he said that Sprague had hired the new staffers without his knowledge or permission.

At a meeting of the members of the Assassinations Committee on February 8, Gonzalez repeated his charges against Sprague and ordered Sprague to fire the people he had put on the staff on January 1. Sprague refused to fire anyone and denied he had not told Gonzalez about the hirings. The other Committee members backed Sprague. Gonzalez fumed. The next day he wrote the letter cutting off the staff's resources and demanding the return of his stationery.

"And we just got another note from Gonzalez today," Tannenbaum said, "Listen to this: 'Dear Mr. Sprague: You called me at 10:10 yesterday morning. I was out. I returned the call at 11:30. You were not in. You were at a staff meeting. Your secretary said she would get you if it were important. I said, "I don't know if it's important. I'm returning his call." I hung up. I then met the President of the United States. I am the chairman. You are my employee. Do not forget that.' "

The next day, I received my own letter from Chairman Gonzalez. It was a form letter to all staffers:

"This is to convey to you my profound regret regarding the circumstances which surround your present employment. . . .

"It is highly deplorable that the person most responsible for your employment did not advise you of the possible difficulty in getting the Committee reconstituted. . . .

"No one likes a reduction in personnel, but . . . I hope that as soon as possible I will be able to convey to you what the future status of personnel will be with the Select Committee."

Gonzalez kept on swinging. He went to the Attorney General and demanded that Committee staff members, who while waiting for the investigation to get structured had begun researching the FBI files, be denied access to those files. Next. Gonzalez cut off the long-distance telephone calls, thereby isolating the only investigator—me—the Committee had in the field at the time.

Sprague later said: "Gonzalez went berserk."

Gonzalez finally threw his Sunday punch: He fired Sprague. In a hand-delivered letter, Gonzalez charged that Sprague "has engaged in a course of conduct that is wholly intolerable for any employee of the House," and ordered him to vacate his office by 5 PM that day. Gonzalez had Capitol Police officers go to the staff offices with orders to evict Sprague physically if he wasn't out. But within a couple of hours after Gonzalez

other House members sent their own order directing Sprague to ignore Gonzalez.

What was supposed to be an investigation into one of the most tragic events in this country's history had turned into, as George Lardner of the *Washington Post* put it, "an opera *bouffe*."

Then Gonzalez took one step too far. At an open meeting of the Committee, he attacked the second-ranking Democrat, Congressman Richardson Preyer, head of the Kennedy Subcommittee. Judge Preyer, a gray-haired, soft-spoken, North Carolinian known for his fairness and intellect, was one of the House's most respected members. When Gonzalez began flying off the handle, Preyer suggested the Committee adjourn until some of the problems were ironed out. Gonzalez exploded. "*I'm* the chairman! I know *you* want to be chairman and you're trying to get rid of me!" he yelled at Preyer.

According to Bob Tannenbaum, who was there, "Preyer's head actually jerked back. It looked like a shot from the front, but it was really a neurophysical reaction. It was really an embarrassing moment for the old guy."

Preyer recovered and said quietly, "I do not seek the chairmanship, nor do I want it. I have a motion that we adjourn." The Committee backed him and the members hurried away—except for Gonzalez, who held an impromptu press conference at which he called Sprague "a rattlesnake."

The next day I received a call from Tannenbaum. "Preyer and the other members of the Committee are going to House Speaker O'Neill to ask him to remove Gonzalez from the chairmanship," he told me. "We're down to the final act. If Gonzalez is not removed, we're leaving. There's no way we can go on with this man."

Confronted with committee members rebelling against their own chairman, Tip O'Neill waffled. Appearing on a *Face the Nation* telecast, the House Speaker said he lacked the power to remove a select-committee chairman. He also said that the Assassinations Committee's problems would probably be worked out, and he said he believed it would stay in business beyond its March 31 deadline.

"They tell us that Gonzalez is going to go," Tannenbaum reported to me, "But I think the bastards are lying to us. I think what they're really angling for is a trade-off. If Gonzalez goes, then Sprague will have to go."

Gonzalez resigned from his chairmanship—and the Assassinations Committee—the first week of March. He then flew home to San Antonio and gave a long, raging interview to hometown newsman Paul Thompson of the *Express-News*.

The next day I received a call in Miami from Associated Press reporter John Hopkins. "Have you ever been in Washington?" he asked. I said sure I've been to Washington, why? "Because Gonzalez gave an interview in Texas in which he claimed you've never been to Washington," Hopkins said. "He said he didn't know what you did in Miami and Sprague wouldn't tell him."

Representative Richardson Preyer from North Carolina helped engineer Henry Gonzalez's removal as chairman of the House Assassinations Committee.

Hopkins also told me that Gonzalez claimed that he had been forced out of the investigation by "vast and powerful forces, including the country's most sophisticated criminal element."

"By the way," Hopkins asked, "do you have any connections with organized crime?"

What?

"In that interview," Hopkins said, "Gonzalez claimed you are supposed to have underworld connections."

I had never met Gonzalez. But he did know my name from the list of new staffers whom Sprague had hired. Gonzalez apparently was making assumptions on the basis of my name. That night, if Gonzalez had lived in Miami, I would have had his car blown up.

It was nearing the end of March 1977. Again the Assassinations Committee was due to die unless the House granted it a continuance and approved a budget for it. The resignation of Gonzalez and the appointment of a new chairman, Louis Stokes, a big, balding, low-key black Democrat from Ohio, gave the Committee and its staff a chance to concentrate on the problem of survival. From its birth, the Committee had faced the possibility of premature termination. It was established in September 1976 with a token budget and life only until the end of the year. Subsequent attacks delayed its being reconstituted for a month, and then it was given another token budget and the right to live for two more months. At each resuscitation, there was a new survival deadline. The internal feuding naturally exacerbated the situation.

The investigation of the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. That's what Congress expected the Committee to be doing while it kept it in a financial armlock and permitted the Committee's own chairman to saw away at its legs.

Early on, even House Speaker O'Neill said he thought the Committee would have to produce "something of a sensational nature" to survive.

Too quickly, the lesson of the Warren Commission had been lost. There could be no real investigation of the Kennedy assassination without an objective, structured approach unencumbered by political pressures or financial problems. But all Sprague and Tannenbaum and the other staff directors could do in the first six months was concern themselves with political pressures and survival. A structured approach to the investigation could not be formulated. What was needed was the appearance of an investigation. The Committee had to *look* good. The Committee had to *look* as if it were making progress. The Committee had to *look* as if it were digging up new and sensational revelations. If it didn't, there were members of Congress ready to kill it for not performing.

Under such conditions, Committee staff problems began to arise.

Tannenbaum became paranoid. He took a few staff members into his confidence and distrusted everyone else. His paranoia was reinforced when one Committee employee was revealed to be feeding Gonzalez reports of Sprague's confidential talks to the staff.

Isolated in Miami, without authorization or funds to go to Washington to find out what was really going on, I was able to function a bit on my own, put up a good front with the people I was talking with, and chip away at the mountain of work to be done. In Washington the investigators were mostly spinning their wheels. All they could do was handle what came through the transom.

Cliff Fenton, the chief investigator, was a former top New York homicide detective brought in by Tannenbaum. Like all the other former detectives from New York City on the Committee, Fenton was a sharp dresser. A hefty, easy-moving man, Fenton gave the appearance of being a mellow, rambling type, and he spoke with a contagious chuckle. I often envisioned him back in Manhattan shuffling easily into the lock-up with a killer in tow, the guy chuckling right along with Fenton as he was led to his cell.

But Fenton was a shrewd, street-wise cop, and he knew only one way to handle an investigation: by putting men out to investigate. Before Gonzalez cut off authorization to travel, Fenton had sent a few men to Dallas to follow up leads. They returned with enough to convince Fenton that, if he had his way, there would be an investigation heavy with field work. Fenton never got his way.

In the beginning, he had a rough time keeping his men busy in Washington. Accustomed to being on the street, they got itchy staying inside. But because

The House Committee's chief investigator, former New York homicide detective Cliff Fenton, knew that intensive fieldwork was necessary for a proper investigation. He never got his way.

only one or two were familiar with the background of the Kennedy case, Fenton suggested they spend their time reading the shelves of assassination books, most written by Warren Commission critics. It was, however, a case of the blind leading the blind.

Although the Committee had been in existence for six months, it was not an effective investigative body, and I didn't fully realize that until the last days in March 1977, just before the question of its survival would come up again on the floor of the House.

Late Monday afternoon on March 28, I received a call from Bob Tannenbaum. The House was scheduled to vote that Wednesday on the Assassinations Committee's future. Members of the Committee and staff counsel had been spending most of their time lobbying individual lawmakers for support. Some lawmakers resented Sprague—viewed by one congressman as "just a clerk"—for beating Gonzalez in a head-to-head confrontation. That day, Gonzalez had been on the floor of the House talking again about the chief counsel's "insubordination." He had distributed a "Dear Colleague" letter to every House member urging that the Committee be put out of business. He was thirsting for revenge.

I asked Tannenbaum how it looked.

"It depends on who you talk to at what time of the day." He did not sound optimistic. "Anyway, Wednesday is the day. We'll know one way or the other." Then I started to tell Tannenbaum what I had been doing while waiting for the investigation to get organized.

"By the way," Tannenbaum interrupted, "I just got a call from this Dutch journalist, Willem Oltmans. He's the guy I was telling you about."

I knew about Oltmans. He had received national television coverage when he went to Washington to tell his story to the Committee. He had interviewed Oswald's former friend George de Mohrenschildt and claimed that de Mohrenschildt had confessed that he had been part of the "Dallas conspiracy" of oilmen and Cuban exiles with "a blood debt to settle." De Mohrenschildt befriended the Oswalds when they returned from Russia and settled in Dallas. He admitted, Oltmans said, that Oswald had "acted at his guidance and instructions."

De Mohrenschildt reportedly had suffered a nervous breakdown during the time he was talking with Oltmans, but he left a hospital in Dallas to travel with Oltmans to Europe to negotiate book and magazine rights to his story. However, in Brussels, Oltmans claimed, de Mohrenschildt disappeared.

Now Tannenbaum told me that Oltmans had called him from California. Oltmans said that in tracking de Mohrenschildt he had just found that de Mohrenschildt could be reached at a telephone number in Florida. Tannenbaum gave me the number.

That afternoon I checked out the number. It belonged to a Mrs. C.E. Tilton III of Manalapan, a wealthy strip of a town on the ocean south of Palm Beach. (I would later learn that Mrs. Tilton was the sister of one of de Mohrenschildt's former wives.) I decided to contact de Mohrenschildt in person rather than by telephone. I planned on driving up to Manalapan the next morning. I was excited about the opportunity to talk with him and thought it fortuitous that he should turn up in south Florida.

George de Mohrenschildt was one of the most fascinating characters in the original Warren Commission investigation. Born in Russia in 1911, the son of a czarist official who later became a wealthy landowner in Poland, de Mohrenschildt received a doctorate in commerce from the University of Liège in Belgium. He came to the United States in 1938 and worked for Shumaker & Company, an exporting firm. He was also, he would later admit, connected with the French intelligence service. In 1945 he went to Texas and got a master's degree in petroleum engineering. He then began traveling around the world as a consultant for various Texas oil companies. In 1961, he showed up at a Guatemalan camp being used by Cuban exiles for the Bay of Pigs invasion. At the time, he and his fourth wife were supposedly on a walking tour of South America. De Mohrenschildt also worked for a time in Yugoslavia as a consultant for the International Co-Operation Administration. His salary was paid by the US State Department under an arrangement similar to the one Antonio Veciana had as a banking consultant in Bolivia.

De Mohrenschildt moved in high society. His first wife was Palm Beach resident Dorothy Pierson. His second was the daughter of a high State Department official. His third was Philadelphia Main Line socialite Wynne Sharples. In 1959 he took a fourth wife, Jeanne LeGon, in Dallas. Her father had been director of the Far Eastern Railroad in Manchuria.

Given his background, it seemed strange that de Mohrenschildt would have befriended an apparent working-class drifter like Lee Harvey Oswald. When Gary Taylor, who had been married to de Mohrenschildt's daughter Alexandra, was asked by a Warren Commission counsel if he thought de Mohrenschildt had any influence over Oswald, Taylor replied: "Yes, there seemed to be a great deal of influence there." At the end of his questioning, Taylor was asked if he had any further comments that might help the Commission. "Well," he said, "the only thing that occurred to me was that—uh—and I guess it was from the beginning—that if there was any assistance or plotters in the assassination that it was, in my opinion, most probably the de Mohrenschildts." The Warren Commission did little to explore that contention.

On the morning of March 29, 1977, I went looking for George de Mohrenschildt in Manalapan. I found the Tilton home on the edge of the ocean highway behind a barrier of high hedges. The large, two-story structure of dark cedar shingles and green trim looked as if it belonged more in New England than Florida. To the rear was a series of garages with a carriage house above them. I drove into the wide yard beside the house. As I got out of the car, there appeared from behind the garage a tall, striking woman. She had smooth olive skin, dark eyes, and long black hair. She was wearing a black leotard, carrying a small towel, and glowed with a sheen of perspiration. She must have been exercising.

The woman was de Mohrenschildt's

PHOTOGRAPH BY WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

The mysterious George de Mohrenschildt, a Russian émigré and friend of Lee Harvey Oswald. The night before de Mohrenschildt was scheduled to give an interview to the author, as part of the House Assassinations Committee investigation, he placed a .20-gauge shotgun in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

daughter Alexandra. After I introduced myself, she told me that her father was in Palm Beach and that she didn't know how to reach him. She said, however, that she was certain he would be in that evening and that I could reach him if I phoned about 8 o'clock. She gave me the telephone number I already had. The only business identification I carried at the time was a card that identified me as a staff investigator for Senator Schweiker's office. I crossed out Schweiker's name and wrote "House Select Committee on Assassinations" above it and gave her the card. She said she would tell her father to expect my call.

I would later learn that as I was talking with Alexandra de Mohrenschildt her father was in a hotel room in Palm Beach being interviewed by Edward J. Epstein, the author of *Inquest*, one of the first books critical of the Warren Commission. Epstein, who had good CIA connections, was then working under a contract from *Reader's Digest* to write a book about Lee Harvey Oswald's connections with Russia's intelligence service, the KGB.

The drive from Manalapan to Miami took me about an hour and a half. That afternoon I called Cliff Fenton, the chief investigator, and told him what had happened. I said I would call de Mohrenschildt that evening and set up an appointment to see him the next morning. "Fine, fine," Fenton said. "Well, you just keep on it." He was obviously more occupied with the frantic efforts to keep the Committee alive when it came up for a House vote the next day. "This is crazy up here, just plain crazy," he said with his characteristic chuckle. "I have never seen anything like this place."

About 6:30 that evening I received a call from a friend, a television reporter in Dallas. "Funny thing happened," he said. "We just aired a story that came over the wire about a Dutch journalist saying the Assassinations Committee has finally located de Mohrenschildt in south Florida. Now de Mohrenschildt's attorney, a guy named Pat Russell—he calls and says de Mohrenschildt committed suicide this afternoon. Is that true?"

My card was found in George de Mohrenschildt's shirt pocket. He had returned to the Tilton home in Manalapan about four hours after I left it that morning. Alexandra told him of my visit and gave him my card. He put the card in his pocket and, according to Alexandra, did not seem upset. Shortly afterwards he said he was going upstairs to rest. De Mohrenschildt apparently took a .20-gauge shotgun that Mrs. Tilton kept beside her bed for protection, sat down on a soft chair, put the stock of the shotgun on the floor and the end of the barrel in his mouth, leaned forward, and pulled the trigger.

As soon as I had confirmed de Mohrenschildt's death, I called Sprague in Washington. It was about 7 PM. Sprague suggested I get to the scene immediately while he attempted to get staff members together and contacted Committee members to prepare subpoenas.

Sprague, I later learned, was unable to do anything and never did get back in touch with me. The inability of the Assassinations Committee to react to the death of a key witness revealed that it was still—six months after it was formed—incapable of functioning as an investigative body. It reflected how successful its opponents had been in keeping it distracted and off balance.

No subpoenas were ever issued, no witnesses ever called to testify, no independent investigation ever made of George de Morhenschildt's death.

Later that evening, as I rushed around Palm Beach County to learn the details of de Mohrenschildt's death, I attempted to contact Sprague or Tannenbaum or Fenton or someone who knew what was going on in Washington. I was trying to coordinate the Committee's handling of the case with Palm Beach State Attorney Dave Bludworth, who was cooperative but increasingly confused about the obvious lack of coordination. The only person I was able to reach at the Committee's offices was a junior staffer who knew only that Sprague and the top echelon had been urgently called to Chairman Stokes's office.

The next morning the newspaper headlines told what had happened in Washington that night as I was scurrying around Palm Beach: Sprague had quit.

Although the Committee finally had become unified as a result of the departure of Gonzalez, an early straw count had indicated that the House might not approve continuing the assassinations probe. As one of the old guard told Committee member Bob Edgar, "You guys dumped Gonzalez. I don't know Sprague at all, but if you don't dump him too, you guys are dead in the water." Sensing that, Sprague had offered to resign if it meant keeping the Committee alive. Chairman Stokes assured him that resigning would not be necessary. Then, in the last hours of the evening before the House vote, Stokes called Sprague to his office. Repeatedly, Stokes reviewed the situation and each time painted it in gloomier terms. Finally, near midnight, Sprague realized the ground was being shoveled out from beneath him.

"Do you want me *now* to resign?" Sprague asked. Stokes put his head down and remained silent. Bristling, Sprague stood up. "Congressmen," he said, "it's clear it's in everyone's best interest if I resign." He then called his secretary and dictated a two-sentence letter of resignation.

Sprague drove home to Philadelphia at 2 AM, about the time I was driving back to Miami from the state attorney's office in Palm Beach. By 8 the next morning, while I was again trying to contact someone at the Committee offices in Washington, Sprague was on a plane to Acapulco.

That day, after four hours of stormy debate, the House voted to continue the Assassinations Committee at a budget pared to $2.5 million for the year. The resignation of Richard Sprague and the death of George de Mohrenschildt were the key factors in the House vote to let the Committee live.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PALM BEACH POST-TIMES

De Mohrenschildt's daughter Alexandra had helped set up the interview between her father and Gaeton Fonzi.

VI

The Footprints of Intelligence

What drove Richard Sprague to resign as chief counsel appeared obvious. His proposed use of controversial investigative equipment, his demand for an expensive, unrestricted investigation, his refusal to play politics with chairman Gonzalez—all brought on the criticism that hampered the Committee's efforts to get on with its job. After his resignation and a respite from the turmoil of Washington, Sprague was able to view his experience in a broader perspective.

After he returned from Acapulco, he was interviewed by Robert Sam Anson of *New Times* magazine. Sprague admitted that, with shots flying at him from all directions, he and the staff had had little time to investigate. By his reckoning, he said, he spent "point zero one percent" of his time examining actual evidence. He told Anson that if he could do it over again, he would begin his investigation of the Kennedy assassination by probing "Oswald's ties to the Central Intelligence Agency."

Recently, I asked Sprague why he had come to that conclusion. "Well," he said, "when I first thought about it I decided that the House leadership really hadn't intended for there to be an investigation. The Committee was set up to appease the Black Caucus in an election year. I still believe that was a factor. But when I looked back at what happened, it suddenly became very clear that the problems began only after I ran up against the CIA. That's when my troubles really started."

In the early months of the Committee's life, Sprague's critics both in Congress and in the press were not only keeping him busy dodging the shots, they were also demanding that the Committee produce new evidence to justify its continuance. Sprague, therefore, was forced to take some swings at what appeared to be a few obvious targets. One area that very apparently needed closer examination was the CIA's handling of the initial investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald's activities in Mexico City.

According to the information supplied to the Warren Commission by the CIA, a man who identified himself as Lee Harvey Oswald visited the Cuban consulate in Mexico City on September 27, 1963. (That may have been one of the dates, the House Assassinations Committee would later conflictingly conclude, when Oswald appeared at Silvia Odio's door in Dallas.) The Agency told the Warren Commission that Oswald had been in Mexico City from September 26 to October 3, 1963. During that time, said the Agency, Oswald visited both the Cuban and Russian embassies trying to get an in-transit visa to Russia by way of Cuba. The CIA also claimed that when Oswald visited the Russian Embassy he spoke with a Soviet consul who was really a KGB intelligence officer.

It was later learned that CIA headquarters was not informed of the incident until October 9, and was then told only that Oswald had contacted the Soviet Embassy on October 1. The CIA station in Mexico City told headquarters that it had obtained a photograph of Oswald visiting the embassy and described the man in the photo as approximately 35 years old, six feet tall, with an athletic build and receding hairline.

"When I looked back at what happened, it suddenly became clear that the problems began only after I ran up against the CIA."

When the Warren Commission asked the CIA for photos of Oswald taken in Mexico City, the ones it produced depicted the man described in the original teletype—obviously not Oswald. Notified of this discrepancy, the CIA said simply it had made a mistake and that there were no photographs of Oswald taken in Mexico City. It never identified the man in the photos. The CIA was able to produce very little hard evidence regarding Oswald's activities in Mexico City. "For example," Commission Counsel J. Lee Rankin complained, "They had no record of Oswald's daily movements while in Mexico City, nor could they confirm the date of his departure or his mode of travel."

When Sprague first approached this area of inquiry, he discovered that the CIA officer in charge of reporting such information from Mexico City at the time of Oswald's visit was David Atlee Phillips.

In his biography, *The Night Watch: 25 Years of Peculiar Service*, published in 1977, Phillips devotes only a few pages to the Kennedy assassination and the Mexico City incident. He blames the cable discrepancy on a mistake by an underling. He blames the lack of an Oswald photograph on the CIA's inability—despite the ongoing missile crisis—to maintain surveillance on the Cuban and Russian embassies on an around-the-clock and weekend basis.

Sprague called David Phillips to testify before the Assassinations Committee in November 1976. According to Sprague, Phillips said that the CIA had monitored and taped Oswald's conversations with the Soviet Embassy. The tape was then transcribed by a CIA employee who mistakenly coupled it with a photograph of a person who was not Oswald. Phillips said that the actual tape recording was routinely destroyed or recycled a week after it was received.

Sprague subsequently discovered an FBI memorandum to the Secret Service dated November 23, 1963. It referred to the CIA identification of the man who had visited the Russian Embassy. The memo noted: "Special Agents of this Bureau who have conversed with Oswald in Dallas, Texas, have observed photographs of the individual referred to above and have listened to a recording of his voice. These Special Agents are of the opinion that the above-referred-to individual was not Lee Harvey Oswald."

Sprague was intrigued: How could the FBI agents have listened to a tape recording in November when Phillips said it had been destroyed in October? Sprague decided to push the CIA for an answer. He wanted information about the CIA's operation in Mexico City and access to all its employees who may have had anything to do with the photographs, tape recordings, and transcripts. The CIA balked. Sprague pushed harder. Finally the Agency agreed that Sprague could have access to the information if he agreed to sign a CIA secrecy agreement.

Sprague refused. He contended that would be in direct conflict with House Resolution 222, which established the Assassinations Committee and authorized it to investigate the agencies of the United States government. "How," he asked, "can I possibly sign an agreement with an agency I'm supposed to be investigating?" He indicated he would

subpoena the CIA's records.

Shortly afterward, the first attempt to get the Assassinations Committee reconstituted was blocked. One of its critics was Representative Robert Michel of Illinois, who objected to the scope of the Committee's mandate. "With the proposed mandate," Michel said, "that Committee could begin a whole new investigation of the Central Intelligence Agency!"

That, says Sprague, is exactly what he intended to do. And that, he now contends, was the beginning of his end.

Richard Sprague resigned as chief counsel of the House Select Committee on Assassinations on March 30, 1977—six and a half months after its formation. The new chief counsel, Professor G. Robert Blakey of Cornell University, was not appointed until June 20, 1977—more than nine months after the committee was formed. During that reorganization period, the Committee staff—contrary to its reports to Congress indicating the "progress" of its investigation—was going around in circles. Whenever the politics and finances permitted, Chief Investigator Cliff Fenton would send men into Dallas to check out a lead. Even with such a slap shot approach, they more often than not returned with evidence that hadn't previously been known or information from a witness who hadn't previously been interviewed, indicating that the Kennedy case was still, despite the years, ripe for a street-level investigation. But without a structured approach, without an apparatus to analyze and chart the raw data and indicate the next step, the Committee was running in place.

Consequently, I had long ago decided to move out on my own. I sent regular memos detailing developments in the various areas I was investigating. Any day now, I kept telling myself, the investigation would begin and my raw data would be structured into the big picture to produce new action and direction.

Eventually, as the file copies of my memos grew thicker and the response from Washington grew thinner, I began getting the feeling I was being a pain in the ass. I would later learn that both Tannenbaum and Fenton were secreting most of my memos away in the back of their file drawers, fearful of information in them leaking out. Each privately doubted that any real investigation would ever start.

Finally, in mid-April 1977, I was authorized to take my first trip to Washington since I had officially joined the Committee.

The staff was in sorry shape. Morale was horrendous. Many of the junior lawyers complained to me that Tannenbaum treated them like children. Tannenbaum complained to me that many of them were children. "They can't figure out a thing for themselves," he moaned. The wheel-spinning had gotten to everyone. For many, the frustration peaked when Tannenbaum ordered the staff to outline

the 26 volumes of Warren Commission evidence and testimony—an exercise in redundancy.

After Sprague departed and it eventually became apparent that he wouldn't be the new chief counsel, Tannenbaum's attitude deteriorated. He hung on until Blakey settled in and then left Washington for private practice in California. But before he left, Tannenbaum installed another investigator to work with me in Miami.

The Miami branch of the Assassinations Committee became a two-man operation when Al Gonzalez moved down from New York in August. A former cohort of Chief Investigator Fenton in the New York police department, Gonzalez had retired as a top detective and then worked for the New York state commission investigating the Attica prison riot. When Castro made his first visit to the United Nations in the early '60s, Gonzalez was picked to be his special bodyguard. Al was a native New Yorker and not of Cuban heritage, but Castro took a liking to him, insisted he remain at his side, put his arm around him, and invited him to be his personal guest in Cuba. Castro called him El Grande. Al was 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighed 270 pounds. I felt more secure in Little Havana after Al arrived.

I had kept in touch with Antonio Veciana after the closing of Schweiker's investigation, and on New Year's Day, 1977, I called him as soon as I had officially joined the House Select Committee on Assassinations. I told him that Schweiker's office had turned my files over to the House Committee and that I was now working for it. I told him the new House Committee would be more effective than the old Senate Committee because it would have more resources and be independent.

We chatted a bit and then Veciana asked if I knew that he had been called back to Washington to appear before the new Senate Permanent Committee on Intelligence. I hadn't known. "I was three days in Washington," Veciana said. "They asked me a lot of questions. There were different people there now and I think some were with the FBI. They asked me only a little about the Kennedy assassination, mostly about the Cuban cause here in Miami, about the bombing here and what was going on."

I asked whether he had been questioned again about Maurice Bishop. "Yes, a little," he said. "They showed me some more pictures, but they were not Bishop." We chatted a bit more and then I said I would be back in touch shortly, as soon as the Committee got organized. "Well, if I can help you, don't hesitate to call," he said. From his initial leeriness, Veciana's feeling about me apparently had grown to one of a little trust.

Two weeks later that trust was almost shattered.

The call came late on a Friday afternoon from Troy Gustavson in Senator Schweiker's office. "Veciana's cover

Obtaining Gaeton Fonzi's secret investigative notes, columnist Jack Anderson broke the story of Antonio Veciana and Maurice Bishop. Did the House Assassinations Committee leak the story to justify its existence?

had been blown," he said. "The whole story is going to be in Jack Anderson's column next Wednesday."

Gustavson told me he had just gotten a call from reporter George Lardner at the *Washington Post*. Lardner had seen the advance copies of two Jack Anderson columns that the *Post* was scheduled to run the following Wednesday and Thursday. Although Veciana's name was not mentioned—Anderson called him "mysterious witness Mr. X"—the columns detailed his entire relationship with a Morris Bishop. "Morris" was the way I had spelled Maurice Bishop's first name on my initial rough notes of my interviews with Veciana. Anderson obviously had copies of those notes.

I was furious at the leak and at Anderson. My old journalistic appreciation of a news scoop went out the window. Didn't Anderson have any regard for Veciana's life? Lardner, who had covered the Kennedy assassination and the intelligence community for years, had immediately recognized "Mr. X" as being Veciana. Anderson had pinpointed him as the founder of Alpha 66 and the organizer of the Castro-assassination attempts in 1961 and 1971. Every Cuban exile in Miami could easily identify Veciana as that person. Now Anderson was marking him as a tool of the CIA and a man who, in turn, had secretly used his fellow exiles as tools of a government that, in the end, had betrayed them. Bombs had gone off in Little Havana for less reason than that.

If Anderson had copies of my original rough interview notes, they could have come from one of four sources: from me, from Schweiker's office, from the Senate Intelligence Committee, or from the House Assassinations Committee. I suspected the latter. The House Committee had just failed to be automatically reconstituted and it was scheduled to clear its first key hurdle, the House Rules

Committee, the following week. Congressmen were asking for evidence of its effectiveness. Anderson's column about the coup of "congressional investigators" uncovering a "Mr. X" who had met with Oswald could be the kind of publicity boost that might push the Rules Committee into positive action.

I called Tannenbaum. He swore that the leak had not come from him or from Sprague. In fact, he said, Sprague was at that moment meeting with Schweiker and probably hearing about the Anderson columns for the first time from the senator himself. "I really think this is an attempt to sabotage us," Tannenbaum said. "We had already gotten word that certain senators are trying to zing us, and the Senate Committee is not being cooperative at all."

In the end, I could not prove where Anderson had gotten copies of my rough notes. I knew that they hadn't come from me or from Schweiker's office. In speaking with the staff counsel on the Senate Intelligence Committee who had interviewed Veciana, I was assured that they hadn't come from him either. "It's extremely damaging here," he said, "and I think it blows any chance of ever getting to the bottom of the thing. Also you know we're not going to be able to deal with the Miami Cuban community at all now. Once you blow your sources down there, you're cooked."

That I was well aware of. There was no assessing the damage the leak could cause to my effectiveness as an investigator. Why would any of my sources trust me now? Why should Veciana believe he could tell me anything confidentially? Why should he continue to cooperate at all?

I had to set up a meeting with Veciana to tell him about the Anderson column. He could accuse me of betraying him and I could not prove to him that I hadn't.

When I told him, Veciana's reaction was not directed at me. An expression of concern crossed his face and it became obvious as we started to talk about it that he was extremely worried about the reaction in the anti-Castro movement. I got the impression that he once again had become active and that his effectiveness was based on their long trust in him. "It is very bad for me," he said.

I questioned Tannenbaum further. He admitted he had briefed at least six of the twelve members of the Assassination Committee on the details of the Veciana story and that copies of the rough notes had been put into the file system. That meant the entire staff could have had access to them. Tannenbaum, however, expressed the feeling that perhaps it was the CIA itself that engineered the leak in order to damage the Committee's ability to develop new confidential sources. "Well, if so, it was damn successful," I said.

Months later Bob Tannenbaum, after he submitted his resignation, gave us this advice: "The thing you have to remember about this town is to stick together and watch your ass."

VII

The Washington Framework

I did not meet G. Robert Blakey, the new staff director of the House Assassinations Committee, until just before Bob Tannenbaum resigned in July. Between Sprague's departure and Blakey's arrival, Tannenbaum tried to structure the investigation. Special projects—such as drawing up a list of Dealey Plaza witnesses, arranging autopsy and ballistic studies, preparing photo analyses, and beginning file research—were beginning to keep the staff busy.

Late in June, I received a call from Tannenbaum. "I'm going to give you an investigative plan," he said. "I'm getting it together now." I said good but suggested that, first, the staff be divided into teams and the investigative areas defined. "Yeah, that's what I'm going to do," Tannenbaum said. "Blakey starts officially on Friday and I want you to come up next week to meet him. Meanwhile, I tried to talk to him about it but instead he gave me this little book he wrote called *Techniques in the Investigation and Prosecution of Organized Crime*. He told me, 'When I talk about an investigative plan, I want you to know my lingo.' Then he hands me this cockamamy book."

The next week I was in Washington sitting in Tannenbaum's office when Blakey stuck his head in the door. "Come in, Bob," Tannenbaum called. "We're just getting a briefing on the Miami situation." Actually, Tannenbaum had been telling me about a job interview he had that afternoon at the Justice Department. Blakey came in, introduced himself, took a seat, leaned back, and put his scruffy brown loafers up on Tannenbaum's desk.

Damned if he didn't look like a real Ivy League professor. He wore a baggy gray pin-stripped suit, blue button-down Oxford shirt, and an ancient green slim-jim tie. He wasn't a big man, and his slight paunch, soft pale face, and receding hairline made him look older than his 41 years. Under heavy, gray-flecked brows, he had clear blue eyes. He was casually self-confident, and, as I told him about what we were doing in Miami, he expressed keen interest. He asked particularly about Santos Trafficante and his involvement in the areas I was investigating. He then began talking about his days with the Organized Crime and Racketeering Section of the Justice Department. "You want to hear something

1963. He was running late for a luncheon appointment and had to hurry off. He said we'd finish up when he returned. He never returned. At lunch he got word of his brother's death in Dallas."

Despite his soft-spoken, casual, and sometimes whimsical demeanor (he once invaded the home of staff researchers on Halloween Eve dressed as Count Dracula), Blakey turned out to be a cunning strategist who took pride in his ability to manipulate people and situations. His foil was Gary Cornwell, the man he brought in to replace Tannenbaum as deputy chief counsel in charge of the Kennedy "task force." Cornwell, a 32-year-old Justice Department prosecutor out of the Kansas City Organized Crime Strike Force, was a brashly pragmatic Texan. He talked fast, loud, and Texan, smoked pipes and big cigars, drove a Datsun 280Z, wore cowboy boots, and appreciated hard rock and Willie Nelson. I liked him.

But, contrasts that they were, both Blakey and Cornwell viewed their roles as staff directors of the Committee in the same limited perspective: They were the hired hands of the congressional committee members, and the priorities of their job were governed by the desires of those members.

By the time Bob Blakey was offered the position as chief counsel (former Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox and former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg had reportedly refused it), the tumult the Committee had endured had convinced most congressional members that they were trapped in a no-way-to-win situation. They couldn't get out of it without losing political face, but they could get it over with as soon as possible. When Chairman Stokes offered Blakey the job, Stokes told him that he wanted the Committee's business wrapped up within its two-year life span and a final report done by the end of the 1978 congressional year.

The two-year limitation was an arbitrary one that became written in stone. Richard Sprague admitted to some of the blame. "When I first came to Washington," he later told *Gallery* magazine writer Jerry Policoff, "I was asked how long it would take. My response was, to properly investigate murder you can never put a time limit on it. If you ask me what I think ought to be the time to

Justice Department prosecutor Gary Cornwell replaced Robert Tannenbaum as deputy counsel to the House Committee. Brash and loud, he nevertheless accepted the role of hired hand. Cornwell: "Our ultimate goal is to get a report written."

limit and people who are being investigated know that, they can stall you for that length of time and defeat the investigation."

Sprague's fear of delaying tactics was based on historical precedent. That's exactly what the CIA did to the Warren Commission. When the Commission was pressing the Agency for information about its Mexico City operations, an internal memorandum written to then-Deputy Director Richard Helms noted: "Unless you feel otherwise, Jim [Angleton] would prefer to wait out the Commission on the matter. . . ." (Angleton was the longtime chief of the CIA's Counter-Intelligence Division, the unit handling the Agency's dealings with the Warren Commission.)

At his first general staff meeting late in August 1977, the new chief counsel announced that when he took the job he had to promise Chairman Stokes that the staff would finish its investigation and produce a report by December 31, 1978.

There would be no possibility, Blakey said, that the Committee would be extended beyond that time.

That pronouncement was an insight into Bob Blakey's character. It also indicated

F. Kennedy's assassination in the larger, historical context. He saw nothing incongruous about accepting a basic and crucial limitation in conducting "a full and complete investigation" of one of the most important events in this country's history.

It was also at that first staff meeting that Blakey established what he considered the limits of the Committee's operations. In carefully defined terms reminiscent of a freshman political-science lecture, he explained the differences between the functions of a legislative body and the goals of a law-enforcement agency. Our primary duty, he said, was *not* to conduct a criminal investigation; we were limited by the powers and privileges granted to Congress by the Constitution. Our investigative powers were merely an auxiliary of the legislative function. We were not out to produce indictments. We had no legal sanction to arrest or imprison anyone. Our goals were to gather evidence to be presented at public hearings and, after that, to produce a final report.

Our primary duty, Blakey said, was not to conduct a criminal investigation. We were not out to produce indictments. Our goals were to gather evidence to be presented at public hearings and to produce a final report.

There was no doubt that Blakey knew what he was doing. Not only was it apparent now that the staff would finally get organized, but organization itself would be the essence of its being. That became more obvious when I was called back to Washington a few weeks later for another general staff meeting. By that time every staff member had received newly arrived Deputy Counsel Cornwell's first memorandum. It said, in full: "Attached hereto is copy of House Resolution 222. Please familiarize yourself with this document." That was the resolution that created the Committee almost one year before. Cornwell was taking the first step toward what both he and Blakey took to be their goal: To build a record. That was the spirit of the second staff meeting. It dealt with informational processing and staff procedures, rules and regulations, the standardization of operations, and paperwork.

I remember returning from Washington after that meeting feeling as if I had been smothered in regulations and procedures. My concern was magnified be-

cause, just prior to the staff meeting, Cornwell had called me into his office and told me he wanted to talk to me about the nature of my reports.

When I started investigating the Kennedy assassination with Senator Schweiker, he was not concerned with formal reporting procedures. He was interested in my developing information that might help to resolve the case. I was in almost daily telephone contact with other staffers in his office who were working on the case. I also regularly sent informally written reports detailing and analyzing the information I was coming up with. Although not required, I felt such reports were necessary to give Schweiker a basis for evaluating the information and to provide a perspective for discussing where we were going. Facts can be misleading. They are, as writer Dwight MacDonald said, like marbles, which take on different hues and tones according to the light in which they are viewed. In my written reports, I attempted to use my knowledge of the Kennedy case to give Schweiker some perspective. When I joined the House Committee, I thought such analytical reports would be especially useful because there was no other investigator with my experience on the case.

Cornwell told me to stop them. "I want your reports to be strictly factual," he said. "Just give us the information. I don't want any of your analysis going into the record." That, I said, would require ignoring the validity of the sources of the information. In Miami, where I was dealing with so many Cubans and soldiers of fortune who were notorious disseminators of misformation, to report their words as gospel would produce a misleading record. "All right," Cornwell said, "if you want to analyze the information, put it on separate yellow paper and I'll tell the mail room not to log it in." I came to refer to the procedure as the "Yellow Paper Ploy."

On the plane flying back to Miami, I recorded my feelings: "For the first time, I'm beginning to understand what it's really like to work in Washington. Blakey obviously knows what's important here. And what's important is not what you do, but how what you do *looks* while you're doing it, how it *looks* after you did it, and how it will eventually *look* in relation to how everything else you did *looks*.

By the end of its first year, the Assassinations Committee was beginning to roll slowly forward. With the exception of personnel in the administrative, legal, and document-handling sections, the staff was divided into five "teams." Each team had two or three attorneys, plus researchers and investigators. In Miami, Al Gonzales and I worked mostly with Team 2, which had the organized-crime and Jack Ruby areas, and with Team 3, which had anti-Castro Cubans and New Orleans.

Blakey spent his first few months on the job establishing processes and procedures, cranking up the record-building machinery, and formulating "working relationships" with other government agencies. At an early staff meeting he outlined his immediate goals and direction. For the first few months, he said, each team would review its areas of investigation thoroughly. He called it "foraging." The second phase, he said, would entail defining the priority "issues"—that is, deciding the crucial questions in each area. ("Issue" is the favorite word, I discovered, of Washington lawyers. They use it to replace "question.") The third phase would be the concentrated investigation of those key questions. Then would come the public hearings and the final report.

It appeared that a real investigation was getting under way. However, when Blakey finally began to get himself into the substance of the case, his attitude toward the various methods of investigation became clear. He had the academician's view of scientific evidence having what he called the "greatest reliability." That's why so much time and money was spent on such things as neutron-activation analysis, acoustics studies, ballistic and trajectory analysis, and other scientific studies. But science, like statistics, can lie, and two scientists often read the same results in opposite ways.

The bulk of Blakey's past associations had been with law-enforcement personnel of more sophisticated breeding. Now here he was on the Committee with a bunch of street cops.

Blakey also dismissed the fact that some of the evidence being scientifically evaluated couldn't be authenticated as being the original evidence. The chain of custody could never be proven in any court. In fact, the shabby state of security in which some of the evidence was kept was illustrated in 1972 when it was discovered that President Kennedy's brain and a set of microscope tissue slides that might have shown conclusively which direction the fatal bullet had come from were missing from the National Archives security area. Although hints have come from the Kennedy family that Robert Kennedy wanted the brain in order to bury his brother's body properly, that doesn't explain the missing tissue slides. And stored in the same security area were other crucial pieces of physical evidence, including the photos and X-rays that the Committee used to corroborate the single-bullet theory. The Committee concluded that the photos and X-rays were authentic, yet one of its own photo consultants, Robert Groden, is now claiming to have found signs of forgery in this evidence. Another question of authenticity involves the bullet fragments subjected to neutron-activation analysis and whether they were the same fragments tested in 1964. Those are only a few of the questions critics are now asking. There will be more, each putting another crack in Blakey's theory of scientific evidence having the "greatest reliability."

My own impression was that Blakey's emphasis on scientific analysis was partly the result of his lack of confidence in the investigative staff. Although Blakey was eventually able to stack the staff-counsel positions with people he hired himself, most of the investigative staff had already been hired by the time he arrived. And because former chief-counsel Sprague had viewed the Kennedy assassination as a homicide case, almost all the investigators were from the ranks of police homicide squads, the largest number from New York. The bulk of Blakey's past associations, as a Justice Department attorney and an important figure in the anti-organized-crime fraternity, had been with law-enforcement personnel of more sophisticated breeding, mostly FBI agents and Internal Revenue specialists. Now here he was on the Committee with a bunch of street cops.

In Miami, still pretty much on our own, Al Gonzales and I were making progress in seeking links between what we considered the hottest leads, those involving the association of anti-Castro activists with intelligence operatives. Then from Washington came a ripple that forewarned of a new strategy from Blakey. It came with a call from Eddie Lopez, one of the young researchers on Team 3, the anti-Castro unit. Lopez, a bright guy attacking his new job with youthful fervor, was one of the small group of law-school students Blakey had brought from Cornell. Born in New York's Puerto Rican *barrio*, Lopez was a free spirit who wore long curly locks, an infectious smile, baggy jeans, and flip-flops. He was 21 but looked 16. Lopez told me that Team 3 had had a major meeting with Deputy Chief Cornwell that morning. "I think we may have some problems," Lopez said. "In our discussion with him, Gary craftily manipulated the conversation around to Miami. Then he asked, 'What the hell are those guys doing down there? Someone call Fonzi and ask him to answer that question in twenty words or less.' So I raised my hand and said that I could answer that question in five words: 'Trying to solve the case.' Then he said, 'Well, those guys are running around down there and they're never going to come up with anything we can resolve in time. I've got to bring them into our framework.'" Lopez, a little fellow with a soft whisper of a voice, sounded concerned. "To tell you the truth," he said, "that really shocked me. I couldn't believe he didn't know what you guys are

Cornell law students Mark Flanagan (front) and Eddie Lopez were among the corps of researchers recruited by the House Assassinations Committee.

doing down there."

I couldn't believe it either, and didn't. Cornwell had to be aware of what we were doing if he read the reports—both formal and on yellow paper—flowing across his desk. I also didn't believe he wasn't aware of the importance of Miami. What the critics have come to call "the Cubanization of Oswald" is one of the major mysteries of the Kennedy case. Although he assumed a pro-Castro public posture, Oswald's contacts were mostly with anti-Castro activists. Miami was the heart of anti-Castro activism and the headquarters of the groups with which Oswald had been in contact. Cornwell knew that and knew the specifics of what we were pursuing. I wondered what he meant when he talked about bringing the Miami investigators "into our framework."

Shortly afterwards, Al Gonzales and I were called back to Washington for another meeting. Eddie Lopez met us at the airport with a dour expression instead of his usual grin. "No one is very happy around here," he said. "There has been a new operating procedure directive. Cliff Fenton has had to call all his investigators back from Dallas and they have been hanging around the office now for more than two weeks. Blakey and Cornwell have told us that everything will stop until we develop what they call the 'key issues.' By that they mean questions which can be resolved by June. By then, they said, the investigation must be over, because we have to prepare for the public hearings and then the final report."

I couldn't grasp what Lopez was saying. Either I didn't want to believe it or I could see the incongruity of developing "key issues" resolvable by June. Lopez said that the general staff meeting was scheduled for the next afternoon, but I was too anxious to wait. With a few members from Team 3 and Chief Investigator Fenton, we arranged a meeting with Cornwell that morning.

The Assassinations Committee staff worked out of what is now called House

Annex Number 2, the former FBI Records Building, just southwest of the Capitol. (It was undergoing renovation for the two years of the Committee's life, and rats scurrying from office to office became such a frequent sight that staffers took to yelling at them for not wearing security identification cards.) Cornwell had a corner office with leather chairs and couches and a long conference table in front of his desk. One set of windows had a bleak view of a grimy stone viaduct that carried the Amtrak lines around the southern edge of DC. The other set offered the grandeur of the three main House office buildings set on the incline of Independence Avenue and, looming above, the golden dome of the Capitol.

Cornwell said he thought we had foraged enough. "I have the feeling," he said, "that if we go on the way we are we would have a great deal more information but, come time to write the report, we'd be no further along than we are now in terms of reaching conclusions. You have to remember that our ultimate goal is to get a report written."

What he and Blakey did not want, Cornwell said, was a report that would cause the public to say, "You mean we spent $5 million on *that?*" They did not want a report that would have the Committee concluding, in effect, that if it had so much more time and so much more money it might come up with some definite answers.

Therefore, Cornwell said, in order for the report to reach some definite conclusions, the character of the investigation would now change. The investigation would now be structured around what he called "linchpin" issues. Those issues, he said, would have to be selected with specific criteria in mind. There would be no broad, encompassing questions to which we probably wouldn't find the answers—or knew we would not find the answers—within the limits of our time and resources.

That was the key. We had so much time and so much money remaining before we had to get out a report. So, Cornwell said, we were not going to come up with any issues we couldn't handle given these limitations. We must remember, Cornwell said, that Congress gave us a job to do and dictated the time and resources in which to do it. "That's the legislative world," Cornwell said. "It may not be the real world, but it's the world in which we have to live."

With his hint of a Texas drawl and his ability to articulate his thoughts quickly, Cornwell had a prosecutor's ability to exude confidence regardless of what he was saying. I remember sitting slouched in that big leather couch, scribbling some notes and waiting for what he had just said to sink in. Then I said: "Realistically, that doesn't make any *sense!*" I almost yelled, as if it had just dawned on me.

Cornwell let out a loud whoop. "Reality is irrelevant!" he yelled back with a big grin.

"Come on, Gary, I'm serious," I said. "Are you telling us that we won't be able to pursue any questions in this case, regardless of how important we think they are, unless we *know* we can thoroughly investigate them in a few months?"

"I *am* serious," said Cornwell. "And I'm not being flip when I say reality is irrelevant here. I told you, this is not the real world we're dealing with; this is the legislative world."

Investigator L.J. Delsa had come from New Orleans. With shiny, tassled loafers, dapper three-piece suit, mod mustache, and styled haircut, Delsa looked like the TV version of a detective. He hid his intelligence under the veil of a down-home accent. "Well now, down in New Orl'ns," he said, "we got some issues that need a good lookin' into." He began detailing what he considered a crucial area. Cornwell interrupted him. "No, no, no," he said, shaking his head.

"It may not be the real world," Cornwell said, "but it's the world in which we have to live."

"You won't have *time* to do that. Like I said, that's the real world. That's irrelevant. This is the legislative world."

I sat there staring over Cornwell's head and out the window at the Capitol dome. I felt the strange sensation of my mental viewpoint leaving me, rising and floating above the scene I was a part of. Beyond that window, people were working in those government buildings, and thousands more were in other buildings all over Washington, and millions of others were going about their business all over the country, and I wondered what they would think if they could see us sitting here in this office making decisions about something that was to become a part of their history.

I remember thinking that I should be feeling a special pride in being there, having a role in something as historically significant as the Kennedy-assassination investigation.

I didn't feel that. I felt uneasiness—as if I were a part of something a bit shady. I'm not sure what those people out there in America expected, but it crossed my mind that what we were doing in this office in Washington was planning to deceive them. Those people out there thought we were investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. What we were really doing was planning to get out a report.

By the next afternoon at the general staff meeting, all the teams in the JFK task force had gotten word of the new investigative approach; Cornwell had held conferences with each team. The afternoon meeting was held in one of the large conference rooms on the fourth floor, above the staff offices, yet it felt crowded with a few dozen people jammed into it. Cornwell sat at the head of a long conference table, a big cigar in his mouth, looking tweedy in a brown patch jacket. His chair was tilted back and his boots were characteristically on the edge of the table. Blakey, in an uncharacteristic yellow corduroy suit, stationed himself against the wall behind Cornwell.

The room grew still when Cornwell called for attention. "*Alllll*right," he drawled. "I understand there's been a lot of bitching about the procedures we've instituted, so we'll let anyone who has any critical comments to make speak up." He puffed on his cigar, grinned, and slowly looked around the room. There was silence. Finally, Cornwell, with mock disappointment in his voice, said: "Gee, I thought someone would raise the *big* issue."

"All right," John Hornbeck said from the back of the room, "I'll raise the *big* issue." Hornbeck was the leader of Team 2, the organized-crime unit. Sandy-haired and ruddy-faced, with a Doonesbury style, he had impressive credentials as an organized-crime prosecutor in Denver. "The big issue," Hornbeck said, "is whether this investigation is going to be conducted in terms of restricted issues, in terms of getting out a report, or is it going to be a true wide-ranging investigation?"

That summed it up. Cornwell replied by repeating what he had told the individual teams. Then Blakey spoke up. "Listen," he said, "I've laid this all out to you from the beginning. We've reached the point where we must start moving on the report. Our main priority is the report. Now you may say I'm trying to cover my ass, but you don't have to worry about me covering my ass because I know how a report should be written. I know how to make a report *look* good. But I want more than that. I also want the report to *be* good. I just don't see a conflict in getting the investigation now boiled down to certain basic issues and in attempting to solve the case." That was that.

I looked toward Cliff Fenton, sitting in a corner. He was leaning forward, his hands clasped between his knees, his eyes staring down at the floor, his head slowly moving back and forth. He was in a tough spot. His investigators would not be able to get back into the field until each team developed its key issues and got them approved by Cornwell and Blakey. Then a specific "investigative plan"—detailing who would be interviewed and when—had to be drawn up from the issues and approved. It would be weeks before the investigators could get back on the case.

Confined to Washington, with the leads they had been developing in Dallas left dangling, the investigators began to go stir-crazy. Fenton tried to maintain their morale, but he was seething. One day he burst into Blakey's office: "What are

you *doing* to me?" he demanded. "Those are professional people out there! This is damn embarrassing to me." Blakey calmed him, but the attitude of the investigators degenerated to the point where Fenton was forced to call a meeting.

He sat at the head of the table with a smile on his face. "All right, all right," he said in his chuckling way, "I've got to admit that I've never seen an investigation conducted like this. But that don't mean it won't work." In response, there was a general snort. "All I'm saying," Fenton continued, "is that we got to give it a chance. I don't want anyone around here starting to feel they are just working for the money. Just because we've never seen it done this way before, that don't mean it won't work."

"The way it looks to me," said Clarence Day, a homicide veteran from Washington, "is that this investigation is over." There was a murmur of affirmation.

"Well, I've got to admit," Fenton chuckled, "I'm sort of flabbergasted. In fact, I'm totally flabbergasted. But between us, I can tell you now we've been promised something. We've been promised that as soon as we're done with this issues business at the end of May, while everyone else is busy with the public hearings and getting the report done, we'll be able to continue the investigation and cover it in any way we want. We got a promise on that. So that if anyone comes up with something that doesn't fit into the issues, just let me know and I'll make sure we get to it when we start moving the way we should be. Okay?"

That seemed to lift the gloom that had hung over the group when the meeting started, although it did end with an extemporaneous chorus of a popular song of the time: "Take This Job and Shove It."

I remained in Washington to help the anti-Castro team formulate its issues. It became obvious that each team had to limit not only the type of question it could investigate but also the number of questions. Because time was slipping away, the "full and complete" investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy would have to boil down to a five-month effort.

For the next few weeks, the staff worked late into the night to develop issues that contained priority questions and still fit Blakey's criteria. Some teams could do that easier than others. The teams handling the ballistics and autopsy projects, for instance, knew the questions they were going to ask their panels of experts.

The anti-Castro area was one of the toughtest in which to develop questions that could be fully explored in limited time. Yet Oswald's association with anti-Castro Cubans was one of the key mysteries of the Kennedy assassination. The progress we had been making in Miami was opening more doors, many of them marked CIA, and there was no assurance

The T-shirt reads "Reality Is Irrelevant"—it was the unofficial motto of House Assassinations Committee investigators who were frustrated at the restraints placed on their work by superiors.

that continuing investigation would lead only to answers rather than to more questions. In that, Blakey and Cornwell were right. Yet, if such questions were relevant to the solving of the Kennedy assassination, how could they be ignored? That was the circle we kept going in as the team attempted to develop acceptable issues.

The first question I tried to get approved: *Was there an intelligence-agency connection through anti-Castro Cubans and Oswald to the Kennedy assassination?* That question, I knew, would never pass muster because of the investigative effort it would require. By the nature of its operations, an intelligence agency doesn't leave authentic tracks. One has to look for patterns. The issue I wanted to pursue involved the patterns of verified misinformation—almost all linking Oswald to Castro—that were born in Miami immediately after the assassination. That, I figured, would also give me the opening to pursue the Veciana story, because Bishop had asked him to help develop a phony story through his cousin in Castro's intelligence service.

Cornwell rejected the issue. I was back in Miami when Eddie Lopez told me. "Cornwell said that issue wouldn't prove anything," Lopez said. "He said all it would do is raise the question of whether or not an intelligence agency was monitoring Oswald for one reason or other and, after the assassination, was trying to disassociate from him. So I said to Gary, 'But don't you see how much closer we'd be if we could prove that?' And he said, '*Closer* is not good enough. We can't put *closer* into a report.'"

After the formulation of the "issues approach," staff morale took the deepest plunge since the days of Chairman Gonzalez. At a Friday-evening office gathering shortly after the "issues approach" meeting, the members of the anti-Castro team all showed up in identical white T-shirts. In small letters on the left shoulder was the identification TEAM NO. 3. In blue letters across the front were the words REALITY IS IRRELEVANT.

One tends to search for analogies to provide a full understanding of what happened. Was the Assassination Committee a circus with many rings, some out front and some behind the grandstand, all spinning in a virtuoso display of razzle-dazzle before it folded its tent and left behind an empty field of grass matted in patterns ever undecipherable? Or was it a politically inspired drama of the Catch-22 genre, the story of a hapless group whose investigative mission got tangled in the demand to maintain a detailed log, to write an acceptable report?

At this point in the investigation, we had mixed feelings about what was happening. At least something was happening. Those of us who had been aboard the Committee when its sails flapped almost uselessly for a year felt enormously grateful that we were at last moving in *some* direction. Blakey had sailed us into smoother waters.

Besides, Bob Blakey was a nice guy. A Notre Dame grad and family man with seven children, he had always been on the right side in the war against the bad guys. Intellectually, his brilliance justified his hint of arrogance. He was easy to talk with, had a sense of humor, and knew when to listen.

But as staff discontent grew, leaks to the press about Blakey's methods increased. An article in *New Times* magazine blasted Blakey for his Machiavellian scheming in handling his staff and critics. It also charged him with being cozy with the CIA and making agreements with the Agency that severely restricted the investigative staff's use of intelligence information.

Shortly after the *New Times* article appeared, a rumor about Blakey suddenly burst into the open. It was triggered by what became known as "the Ortiz manuscript flap."

About six months previously, Al Gonzalez and I had interviewed a Miami attorney who represented a Puerto Rican calling himself Antulio Remirez Ortiz. Ortiz was in a federal prison for having hijacked a plane to Cuba in 1961. Castro had released him from Cuba in 1975, and Ortiz surrendered to the FBI when he returned to the United States.

While being held in Cuba, Ortiz said, he was assigned to work in the vicinity of the headquarters of the Cuban G-2, its intelligence service. He claimed to have had the opportunity to check surreptitiously the files on himself. In searching for them, he came across another file, marked OSWALDO/KENNEDY. Ortiz said this file revealed that President Kennedy had been killed by a "hit team" from Moscow.

While in prison in the United States,

Ortiz produced a manuscript of his adventures, including the discovery of the Kennedy file. His Miami attorney had a copy of that manuscript, written in Spanish, which he was in the process of trying to market through a New York literary agent. With the permission of Ortiz, who was in a prison on the West Coast, the attorney gave us a copy of the manuscript.

"Bullshit," said Gonzalez after he read it.

I agreed and, after checking further on Ortiz's background, thought it possible he may have had some association with American intelligence. (He served in the US Army, went to Cuba to help smuggle arms to Castro before the revolution, and once worked for a defense contractor in California.) On our next trip to Washington, Gonzalez turned the manuscript over to Blakey and suggested that he give it to researcher Eddie Lopez for a word-for-word translation before we made any decision on whether to check Ortiz's story further. (Gonzalez thought Lopez would have a better grasp of Ortiz's Puerto Rican idiom.)

Some time later, when I asked Eddie Lopez about the Ortiz manuscript, he didn't know what I was talking about. He said he had never received a manuscript from Blakey to translate. I made a mental note to check with Blakey about it later.

I didn't have to. Late one Sunday evening, I received a telephone call from Blakey. There was a nervous edge to his voice. "Talk to me," he said. "Tell me everything you know about how we came in contact with the Ortiz manuscript."

It was not fresh in my memory, but I pieced together the details. "All right," he said, "I just wanted to refresh my own recollection about it. I'll tell you why I asked." He said that on Friday afternoon one of columnist Jack Anderson's legmen had called him to check out a rumor. The rumor, Blakey said, was that he had sold out to the CIA in return for a high Justice Department post. An example of the sellout, he said, was that he had turned the Ortiz manuscript over to the CIA.

Blakey asked if I heard any such allegation. I told him I had not. "Well, anyway," he said, "if you hear it, it ain't true." He laughed.

What Blakey didn't acknowledge to me that evening was that he actually had turned over the Ortiz manuscript to the CIA. He did admit it subsequently when someone on his staff asked him directly. He claimed that he had done so because the CIA had linguists who could do a more expert translation of the Ortiz idiom than Lopez could. I thought it was a dumb thing to have done.

Nevertheless, because I thought the Ortiz manuscript was worthless, the fact that Blakey had given it to the Agency didn't bother me much. I was more concerned with the valid aspects of the investigation and Blakey's concern with them. The restricted-issues approach was Blakey's rationalization of it because of two factors: First, as restrictive as the approach was, it still permitted the staff investigators to get out in the field and do some digging. Second, as the chief investigator had told us, Blakey had promised that once the issues part of the investigation was wrapped up in June, the investigators would be free to delve into the evidence they were most interested in.

By early in June, it was becoming apparent that the selected issues were so narrow that, in most areas, even if the investigative plan could not be fully completed, it didn't really matter. Conclusions could be drawn about what the whole road was like from a quick trip down one section of it.

Whether that was a factor in what happened next, probably only Blakey knows. The only thing the staff knew at first was that there was a rumor of a big change in the wind.

Al Gonzalez and I were in Caracas.

The fake memo concluded: "All Leos, Cancers, Pisces, and Tauruses are hereby dismissed." But when the firings did come, no one was laughing.

We were there primarily to talk with a witness who could not be omitted from the investigative plan: Dr. Orlando Bosch, the best known and the most violent of anti-Castro terrorists. Bosch was being held by the Venezuelan government for blowing up a Cubana Airlines plane, killing 73 persons. The "issue" question we were to ask Bosch was whether Lee Harvey Oswald had had any association with him or his group. Both Gonzalez and I felt we were just going through the motions: Bosch was not under oath and had no motivation to tell the truth. Without the time or resources to check on what he said, we felt we were conveyors of whatever lies or propaganda he wanted to get into the record.

Sitting in our Caracas hotel room one evening near the end of our stay, Gonzalez called Washington to tell Cliff Fenton of our "progress." When he hung up, Al didn't look happy.

"It's hitting the fan up there again," he said. "Cliff said that Blakey just discovered that there was some miscalculation in the way they were keeping the financial records and that the Committee is running way the hell over our budget."

"What's that mean?" I asked. "That they can't afford to bring us home?"

"No such luck," said Gonzalez. "Cliff thinks that maybe Blakey is going to use cuts."

Fenton was on target. At a special staff meeting, Blakey went into a long explanation of what had happened. He and Tom Howarth, the Committee's budget officer, had spent days going over the books and they were astounded at what they discovered. The budget projections they had made were way off base. There was no way that the final phases of the Committee's work—the public hearings and the report writing—could be completed without major budget cuts. Some staff would have to be let go.

Al Gonzalez and I couldn't get back to Washington until after the massacre. The weeks between Blakey's announcing the staff cuts and the naming of those fired saw morale and production plummet to near zero.

Some jokesters had taken to posting on the bulletin board obviously phony memos from Blakey when things reached the edge of absurdity. The announced staff cuts had produced the latest posting, a parody of Blakey's passion for scientific analysis. The memo announced that a decision had been made on the individuals to be let go. The decision was made, the memo said, on the basis of careful consultation with experts who had established the proper scientific postulates for the decision. The memo concluded: "All Leos, Cancers, Pisces, and Tauruses are hereby dismissed."

When the firings did come, no one was laughing. Of the 25 staffers given their walking papers, the majority were investigators.

Chief Investigator Fenton took the massacre of his staff with bitterness: "They really bagged me. They kept promising me that we would be able to swing the way we wanted after we finished the work plan at the end of June. That's why I kept telling everybody whenever they started bitching that this wasn't a real investigation: 'All right, just finish the work plans, just finish the work plans.' But if they had told me the whole investigation was going to be over in June, well, we would've tried some slippin' and slidin' and tried to get a few things done. Now suddenly everything's off. They checkmated me. It was like they anticipated every move I was going to make."

If there had been an air of unreality to the Assassinations Committee's operations until then, after the decimation of its investigative staff there were periods that seemed almost hallucinatory. I still remember a meeting in Cornwell's office shortly after Dick Billings joined the Committee.

Billings was bearded, lean, and disheveled. He was hired by Blakey to be the Committee scribe. Billings was a pro's pro. He had spent years as an editor and writer for *Life* magazine, then became executive editor of *Congressional Quarterly* and also worked at *US News & World Report*.

Veteran magazine editor and writer Richard Billings had the unenviable task of writing the Committee's final report. The message in a Chinese fortune cookie accurately described his predicament.

month "investigative plan" was being folded up—Billings had produced his first proposed outline of the Committee's final report. It was disjointed and confused. There was no way Billings could have pulled together a comprehensive overview of the Kennedy assassination from the grab bag of questions the staff was working on. A meeting was held in Cornwell's office to discuss the outline.

It quickly became apparent that there were significant gaps in the investigative plan, even in the selective issues. But the investigative effort had produced some new leads and questions that appeared to have significant potential. Suddenly there was enthusiastic talk of following up hot open leads.

I sat there increasingly bewildered. Was I going crazy? Is everyone sitting here talking about investigating the Kennedy assassination now that the Committee no longer has a goddamn investigative staff? Maybe it's me, I thought. Maybe reality *is* irrelevant.

That night, a small group of staffers, including Billings, went to the Szechuan, a Chinese restaurant on H Street, for dinner. Billings not only had to write the final report, he had to script the scenarios for the upcoming public hearings and produce all the other interim reports for Congress. At dinner, we talked about the job ahead and what seemed the impossible task of creating a good report from the crazy-quilt of selected issues. Billings shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and wondered how we had gotten into such a position. The waiter brought us fortune cookies with tea after the meal. The little green slip inside mine said TOIL IS THE SIGN OF FAME. Billings cracked his cookie, read the fortune, closed his eyes, slapped his forehead, and let out a groan. He handed me the little green slip. It said: THE GODS WHO WERE SMILING WHEN YOU WERE BORN ARE NOW LAUGHING.

Between the investigative-staff firings in June and the officially scheduled demise of the Committee in December, Blakey directed his attention mostly to two things: the public hearings and the writing of the report.

From his first briefing, Blakey emphasized the public hearings. I had always thought that congressional public hearings were for the public. I assumed, in the case of the Assassinations Committee, that our public hearings would be an opportunity to present to the American people the first objective overview of the Kennedy assassination. It would be a presentation that cut through the years of crazy theories and confusion and misinformation. We would lay out all the evidence as we discovered it and ask the most troubling questions, whether or not we had the answers. If the hearings had a political purpose, as I saw it, it would be to arouse the public to demand answers and to support the government's efforts to come to a final conclusion about one of the most tragic and significant events in our country's history. The public hearings would have to do with knowledge and truth and the basis of the democratic system of government. All those platitudes they teach in civics class.

Washington teaches its own civics lessons. I learned that congressional public hearings are not for the public but for Congress. They are designed to provide committee members with as much exposure as possible, to give the impression that they are serious about what they're doing and the impression that they have not been squandering the taxpayers' money. They are designed to be politically rewarding.

The public hearings on the Kennedy assassination were scheduled for September 1978. Chief Counsel Blakey had begun preparing for them almost immediately after joining the Committee more than a year before. Memoranda on staff procedure for the hearings poured forth as early as November 1977. Blakey knew what he was doing in Washington.

My impression several weeks before the hearings was that no hard decisions had been made about which witnesses would be called. I discussed that recently with a senior-counsel staffer, Jim McDonald. A former organized-crime consultant to Florida Governor Reubin Askew, McDonald had just joined a top Miami law firm. Blakey convinced him to delay taking his new job for a temporary stint with the Committee. Blakey promised him he could leave shortly after the public hearings. McDonald, a former FBI agent, was a clean-cut, boyish-appearing, articulate trial attorney. He would look good on television.

"When I got to Washington," McDonald recalled, "none of the staffers had a focus on what the hearings were going to be about. And as the summer dragged on we began to realize that we didn't have a heck of a lot to present at a public hearing. I remember that was the big topic of discussion in each team: What are we going to put on that's meaningful? What new evidence could we present? We didn't want to trot out the old Warren Commission stuff. Then, in July, I guess, Blakey and Cornwell and I were all handed an outline of exactly what the hearings would contain."

The original outline of the public hearings indicated that anti-Castro Cuban activities would get a decent public exposure. "Under that area are listed Odio and Veciana," McDonald told me at the time, "but I'm wondering if that's going to be misleading. I'm afraid their appearance may give the impression that the Committee is trying to link anti-Castro Cubans to the assassination. There's no evidence for that."

I agreed. I pointed out that the Veciana incident indicated that Oswald's association was not with anti-Castro Cubans but with the intelligence community.

From the outline, that seemed to be a sensitive area. The possibility of Oswald's association with the CIA was going to be handled in a circuitous way, as a part of the presentation concerning the response of federal agencies to the Kennedy assassination.

Jim McDonald, senior staff member of the House Assassinations Committee, helped engineer the public hearings. Wary of linking Oswald to the anti-Castro exiles in Miami, he nevertheless concluded that Silvia Odio would make a credible witness. But she never appeared.

But I was happy with the proposed structure of the hearings as far as my area was concerned because it allowed for an introductory background narrative, to be read by Blakey prior to the calling of the witnesses. I arranged with McDonald that I be the one to write the narrative that would introduce the anti-Castro Cuban area of the investigation. People would be able to grasp the significance of Odio's and Veciana's testimony in its proper context.

McDonald and I worked closely to prepare this part of the public hearings. We felt we had only one major problem: to convince Silvia Odio to testify publicly. After talking with her, McDonald had concluded that she would make an

impressively credible witness. McDonald himself had developed a witness in Dallas, Dr. Burton Einspruch, who corroborated that Odio had told him, *prior* to the Kennedy assassination, of the visit by Oswald and his two companions. That's the kind of evidence a trial attorney appreciated.

Silvia Odio had never been an eager witness. The FBI had discovered her only coincidentally and her subsequent handling by the Warren Commission had left her distrustful. Through the years she had hidden from Kennedy-assassination researchers, refused to cooperate with the few who found her, and turned down large sums of money from checkbook journalists. Remarried now and with teenage children, she feared that any publicity connecting her with the Kennedy assassination would disrupt the stable life she had struggled so hard to achieve. And she was terrified for her safety.

It took time to get Silvia Odio's trust. When I first met her, I was an investigator for Senator Schweiker and could honestly promise her confidentiality and sincerity of purpose. Now I was no longer in control. I knew the last thing in the world she wanted was public exposure.

She was an educated and intelligent woman and, because of her Cuban experience, she had a deeper belief in the democratic system than most natural-born Americans. I thought I could convince her that now, with the direction I saw the Committee heading, it was more important than ever that she testify publicly.

"I have been dreading that you would call," she said when I telephoned. News of the Committee's hearings had been in the media. "Please don't let them call me for public hearings. I'm not ready for it to upset my whole life again." Well, I said, Jim McDonald was coming down the next week and perhaps we could have lunch together and talk about it. She had met McDonald and liked him. "But *why* do I have to do it?" she asked. "You have my sworn statements and you and Jim spent four hours taking my deposition. Why must I have to be brought before the TV cameras? I have a family and I'm frightened for them. If the congressmen want to see me privately, I'll be glad to see them privately. Tell me, please, *please* tell me why I have to go through it all over again? *Why?*"

I understood her fears and had a hard time giving good answers to her questions. She eventually agreed to have lunch with McDonald and me the next week. As a matter of formality, McDonald was bringing subpoenas for both her and Veciana, but the last thing I wanted was to force Silvia Odio to testify. If I couldn't convince her to come to Washington voluntarily, I didn't want to be a part of any legal coercion.

When I approached Antonio Veciana, he also was reluctant to make a public appearance. "Well, of course, I will go because I must go," Veciana said. "But I have already given my sworn statements. I cannot change my sworn statements. So what good is it for me to go to Washington again? I am not going to change my sworn statements."

Robert Blakey, chief counsel to the House Assassinations Committee: His personal conclusion was that organized crime was responsible for the murder of John F. Kennedy.

I assured Veciana we did not want him to change his sworn statements and that his appearance before the Committee would indicate that his testimony was being given credibility. At any rate, Veciana knew he couldn't avoid the Committee's command.

But Silvia Odio was something else. "Jim, I think we're going to have problems with her," I told McDonald. "It's going to take all your persuasive abilities as a trial attorney to convince her."

"Leave it to ol' Jim," said McDonald, never short of confidence.

The Miamarina, where we had lunch with Silvia Odio, is in Bayfront Park near downtown Miami. It is a port of call for yachts from around the world. A large circular restaurant sits at the base of its finger piers and from its elevated patio, against a backdrop of palms and blue sky, luncheon diners can survey the rows of sailing craft rolling on their lines. It was a lousy spot to try to convince someone to go to Washington. Jim McDonald and I spent several hours telling Silvia Odio why we thought her public appearance before the Assassinations Committee was so important. McDonald did most of the talking. We finally convinced her the American people had the right to hear her story as she presented it, not as the Warren Commission had distorted it.

"All right, I'll go," she finally said. "But only because I trust you and agree it's important for the people to know what happened. I must be crazy letting you two talk me into this, but I believe in you."

Arrangements were made that would bring Silvia Odio and Antonio Veciana to Washington for their public testimony. Veciana was tending to some business and had to do a little schedule juggling. Odio received permission to take a leave from her job, and she and her husband, who was going to accompany her at his own expense, made reservations at a Washington hotel. I got busy finishing up the narratives that Blakey would read as an introduction to the anti-Castro Cuban area of the Committee's investigation, then prepared to leave for Washington to attend the last week of the hearings—scheduled to deal with the possibility of a conspiracy in the Kennedy assassination. But it was obvious where the accent would be: One day was supposed to be devoted to what Blakey termed "flaky" theories, such as the contention that Kennedy was shot by an "umbrella man" wielding an assassination device hidden in an umbrella; one day was scheduled for the anti-Castro Cuban area; and three days were to be devoted to possible organized-crime connections.

Chief Investigator Cliff Fenton came into Miami on the morning of the day I was scheduled to leave for Washington. He brought with him a subpoena for organized-crime figure Santos Trafficante, who lived in north Miami. Al-

though his link to the assassination was tenuous, the appearance of Trafficante would give the Committee's last week of hearings a final shot of media "sex appeal."

What Fenton brought to Miami with him, however, was not only Trafficante's subpoena but also bad news for me. There would be no witnesses called in the anti-Castro area. That day was being lopped off the last week of hearings and the presentation of the organized-crime area was being allotted more time. I was to tell Silvia Odio and Antonio Veciana to cancel their trips to Washington.

Not to worry, I was told, because although no witnesses would be called, there would still be a public presentation of the anti-Castro Cuban area and Blakey would still read the narrative detailing the stories of Odio and Veciana. I was told I could even revise the narrative and add details when I got to Washington.

When I informed Veciana of the change in plans, he was confused. "Why did they make me a subpoena and now they say they don't want me?" He was a man trained to look for hidden motives and mirror images, and his suspicions were fine-tuned. I told him what I had been told: The Committee had run out of time, but his story would still be presented in narration. Extra time was needed to present the organized-crime aspect of the investigation. He found my explanation inadequate. "I think there is more to it than that," he said.

Silvia Odio did not take the news so calmly. After McDonald and I had convinced her that her testimony was needed, after all the talk of ideals and principles, she had been trying to prepare herself to face public exposure for the first time.

"My God, this is incredible," she said when I told her. "After all the hell I've been putting myself through." She paused, unable to express the depth of her reaction. "I feel a tremendous anger," she said. "Well, this is the end for me. I don't want to have anything to do with any more investigations or anything that has to do with the government at all. Of course, I'm glad in a way that I don't have to go through the public exposure, but now I really know that they don't want to know. They don't really want to know because they don't have any answers for the American public. They should never have started this charade in the first place."

Looking back at that last week of the Assassinations Committee's public hearings and the emphasis on the possibility of organized crime being involved in the murder of President Kennedy, one smells a setup. The findings of the acoustic tests—dictating the conclusion of a conspiracy as a result of more than three shots having been fired—were known prior to the public hearings. Blakey had to pin the conspiracy somewhere.

Most members of the Committee's organized-crime team never bought Blakey's theory. "I remember that as

being a constant battle at our meetings," former team leader Jim McDonald recalls. "Most of us on the team felt we never made the link. But at our meetings it was obvious that Blakey wanted that. He wanted to make that link more than anything else."

Blakey seemed to have made the link well before the acoustics results dictated the need for a conspiracy explanation. "When Blakey sold me on joining the Committee," McDonald remembers, "we had a long discussion over the phone. This was in late February. He was intimating he had some new evidence and he finally asked, 'Well, who do you think killed Kennedy?' I said I didn't know. And he said, 'Think. Think about it.' And I guessed, 'Castro? Cuban exiles? I really don't know.' *'Think!'* he said. 'What's so obvious!' By that time I was just confused. Finally he blurted out, *'Organized crime killed Kennedy!'*"

Another significant characteristic of the hearings: Although they purported to cover the area—it was so declared in the press releases—the hearings never really delved into most of the evidence of a possible connection between Lee Harvey Oswald and the CIA. Blakey acknowledged a reason for that—it had to do with the arrangement he had made with the CIA in order to gain access to its files. One of the stipulations was that all information the Committee obtained from the CIA and wanted to release in its final report would be reviewed by the CIA prior to its release. At that time, Blakey contended, the Committee could argue its case on a point-by-point basis. Blakey admitted he didn't want to present any information in the public hearings that might lead to a "premature" skirmish with the Agency.

My own experience indicated that Blakey leaned over backwards to be cautious. When I finally got to Washington during the last week of the public hearings, I set about expanding the details in the anti-Castro-area narrative Blakey was scheduled to present. Now, with Odio and Veciana not there, I was more intent than ever that their stories be told.

I wrapped up the narrative and put it into the system. The night before it was to be presented, I wanted to check the final typed draft. Neither Cornwell nor Blakey had indicated they had any points they wanted to discuss. In checking, I found that a significant fact had been cut from the Veciana narrative.

What had been edited out was that the State Department confirmed Veciana's employment by the US government when he was working for the Agency for International Development as a banking consultant in La Paz, Bolivia, and that his application for the job had been accepted and approved without his signature—which indicated that someone had pulled some strings for him and added credibility to Veciana's contention that his AID job was a cover for the work he was doing for Maurice Bishop.

I went into Blakey's office and asked him why that part of the narrative had been eliminated. Blakey said it was because he didn't want to get into a hassle with the CIA at this point. I told Blakey that the edited-out information did not come from the CIA, that it was developed when I worked for Senator Schweiker. It was not even information that came through the Senate Intelligence Committee. And it was not classified in any way.

Blakey seemed to miss my point. "Well, in any case," he said, "we've just got too much to do to get into a hassle with the Agency at this point." He dismissed me and turned to other staffers waiting to see him.

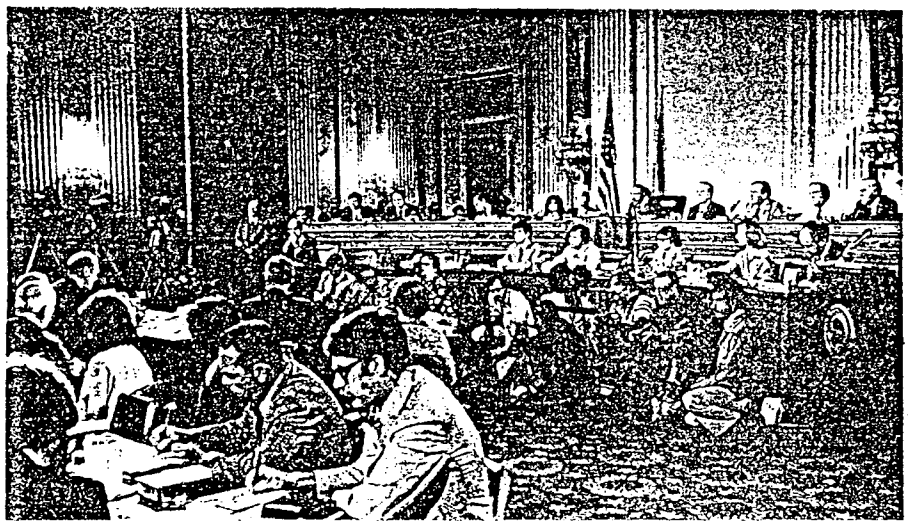
The next day, when it came time to present the anti-Castro Cuban narrative and the stories of Silvia Odio and Antonio Veciana, Blakey turned to Congressman Stokes and said:

"Mr. Chairman, in light of the time pressures the Committee is operating under today, I would like to ask permission that the narration on the anti-Castro Cubans be inserted in the record as if read."

At the conclusion of its public hearings, the House Select Committee on Assassinations had been in existence for more than two years. Officially, it had three more months of life. During that time, its dwindling staff, humbly determined to finish its job, worked on the area summaries for the final report. In those last months, Blakey's preoccupation was with the results of the acoustics tests. A police radio tape of the sounds in Dealey Plaza when Kennedy was shot had been analyzed by an expert. In a conference with

From right: Chief Counsel Robert Blakey, Chairman Louis Stokes (Democrat from Ohio), and administrative aide Charlie Matthews. When one witness strayed from his original statement, Matthews exploded: "He didn't testify to what we paid him to testify to!"

Former President Gerald Ford testifying before the House Assassinations Committee. He maintained his support of the Warren Commission findings, in which he had played a major role.



his scheduled appearance at the public hearings, Dr. James E. Barger had held the opinion that there were at least four shots recorded on the tape. That meant a conspiracy. Blakey was ecstatic that the hearings would finally have big news.

The next day, however, put under pressure in the public spotlight and feeling alone as the only witness testifying on the matter, Dr. Barger toned down his conclusions to a "fifty-fifty chance" of a fourth shot. Cornwell stomped back to the offices cursing a blue streak and yelling as if he had been personally betrayed. Blakey's administrative aide, Charlie Mathews, threw his arms in the air and shouted, "He didn't testify to what we paid him to testify to!"

There was no doubt that the tape recording, as analyzed, indicated that at least four shots were fired, probably more than four. Blakey finally had the hook on which to hang his organized-crime conspiracy theory and he wasn't about to let it slip away. With the hiring of auxiliary experts and additional field tests in Dallas, the Assassinations Committee was able to conclude that there was a "95-percent probability" that a fourth shot was fired from the grassy knoll. Ignoring the fact that such a conclusion contradicted all the earlier scientific findings, the Assassinations Committee published a final report that quiveringly declared: "President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as the result of a conspiracy."

Thus spake Congress.

G. Robert Blakey, pre-arranged publisher's advance in hand, went back to Cornell to write a book about it.

That is not the whole story. That, in broad brush strokes, is why and how the Assassinations Committee went the way it did. That is what was happening while a critical area of evidence was being given token consideration: A credible witness, Antonio Veciana, had alleged that an intelligence operative who used the name of Maurice Bishop was with Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas two months before President Kennedy was assassinated. It was not hard evidence and it was not corroborated, but it was, nevertheless, evidence. It was evidence that, by any standard of evaluation, screamed for the Committee's attention.

It never got that attention. The early political and organizational chaos, the establishment of priorities not related to the substance of the case, the subsequent restrictions imposed on the selection of key issues, the diffusion and then decimation of investigative resources, the predisposition to concentrate on organized crime—all dictated the Assassinations Committee's handling of, and its conclusions about, the revelations of Antonio Veciana.

And so, because it did not honor its mandate to conduct "a full and complete" investigation in this important area, the Committee had to distort the facts in its final report in order to justify its conclusions—and cover its ass.

VIII

The Company Man

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN NEUBAUER/PEOPLE WEEKLY © 1975

David Atlee Phillips loved to act and took part in amateur theater groups during his CIA assignments in Chile, Cuba, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. When he retired from the CIA in 1975, he was head of the Agency's Latin American operations.

On September 20, 1976, I wrote to Senator Richard Schweiker detailing what happened when Antonio Veciana, Sarah Lewis, and I met David Atlee Phillips at the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers meeting in Reston.

That memo became Document Number 013455 in the files of the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

It begins: "Instead of finally resolving anything, the confrontation between Veciana and Phillips on Friday in Reston only raised a lot more questions in my mind. . . . Now, for the first time, I have doubts about Veciana's credibility when it comes to Phillips. . . ."

The memo notes that Veciana's attitude appeared to have changed from when I first met him six months previously, largely as a result of his getting deeply involved again with Miami's anti-Castro movement. It then speculates: "Veciana may now feel that it won't pay to identify Bishop and, in fact, if Bishop knows he can do it at any moment, he might find that an incentive to want to get back into action with Veciana to keep him from doing so. They may both feel that they can wait for all this to blow over, even if it's a year or two. . . ."

Veciana himself would eventually tell me that he did indeed hope that Bishop would get back in touch with him.

As for David Atlee Phillips, it was striking to me how well the pieces of his character and career seemed to fit into the puzzle named Maurice Bishop. As first noted by Senator Schweiker, the composite sketch of Bishop was a very close likeness of Phillips. In addition, details revealed by Veciana long before the name of David Phillips popped up left an impression on me. One was the physical characteristic that both Bishop and Phillips shared—the dark, weathered ellipses under their eyes. The other was Veciana's assumption that Bishop was a Texan. David Phillips grew up and still has family living in Fort Worth.

Early in 1977, Phillips's autobiography appeared: *The Night Watch—25 Years of Peculiar Service*. It was, of course, in production long before it was known that Antonio Veciana had revealed the existence of Maurice Bishop. It would be misleading to characterize any published work by a smart intelligence agent as "revealing," especially one written by an expert in counterintelligence and propaganda, one whose life work was and shadow characters. And David Phillips does have a reputation among his peers of being an expert in what he does. His book, however, does provide certain benchmarks.

David Atlee Phillips was born on Halloween, October 31, 1922 in Fort Worth. His father died when he was five, leaving his family a portfolio of oil stocks, a lifetime membership in the country club he founded, and a house on the fourth green. The stocks collapsed in '29, but David's mother went to work and sent him off to college at William and Mary in Virginia. Phillips paints himself as a bit of a Fitzgeraldian party boy who, in less than a year, was back in Fort Worth plodding through Texas Christian University and then selling cemetery lots.

More than anything else, David Phillips wanted to be an actor. He spent several years bumming around New York in the effort, but his road to fame was detoured by World War II, a stint in a German prison camp, and a daring escape. He tried acting again after the war with more success, joining a touring road show. During his Agency career, in whatever city he was stationed, Phillips would invariably start or join a little-theater group.

In 1948, Phillips married an airline stewardess and, with a $200-a-month stipend from a producer's option on a play he had written but that was never produced, he and his bride decided to go to Chile to live cheaply.

Life in Chile was made easier, Phillips says, because both he and his wife could speak the language. He had studied Spanish casually in college and seriously while visiting Mexico. One of the reasons he was recruited by the CIA, he notes, was that he spoke fluent Spanish.

At first, Phillips tried playwriting, attended classes at the University of Chile, and joined a local theater group. Then came the opportunity to buy a small newspaper, the *South Pacific Mail*, and some secondhand presses for commercial printing. It was the purchase of the presses by an American, Phillips says, that attracted the interest of the CIA's chief-of-station in Santiago. Phillips was recruited to be a "part-time" agent at $50 a month. His salary was deposited in a Texas bank after going through a financial cover company in New York.

Phillips was sent by the Agency to New York for special training. He reto a brownstone in the East Seventies. It was a CIA safe house for training overseas personnel who were under cover, or anyone whose job was so sensitive that he was not allowed to visit Washington or the Agency training retreat in nearby Virginia. There were other agents in the safe house, but I never saw them. When I went to the john my instructor would check first to be sure it was not occupied by another student."

Phillips's three-week training session appears to have been similar to the one that Maurice Bishop gave Antonio Veciana in Havana. Phillips was taught basic tradecraft—how to conduct surveillances and countersurveillances, set up clandestine meetings, employ deception techniques, and run "dark alley" operations. He was then told he had the qualifications the Agency looked for in a propaganda specialist and his training thereafter concentrated on techniques of propaganda and political action.

David Atlee Phillips thus began his journey up the ladder of the CIA bureaucracy to the highest operational echelons. His known successes, some of which are detailed in his book and some only brushed against, were mainly in propaganda, psychological warfare, and counterintelligence.

From being a part-time recruit in Chile, Phillips was selected by the Agency to play an important role in overthrowing the leftist regime of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. He helped to set up a clandestine radio station in Mexico—the "Voice of Liberation"—which pretended to be broadcasting from within

about legions of rebels who didn't exist and major battles that never took place. Under such a propaganda barrage, the Arbenz government fled the country before real bullets could fly.

It was during the Guatemala operation that Phillips made associations that would endure throughout his Agency career. Among them was one with E. Howard Hunt, whom Phillips describes as being "friendly, anxious to help me, and considerate." Phillips would work closely with Hunt during the planning of the Bay of Pigs invasion and in other less visible operations.

Phillips moved up the CIA ladder, but spent most of his career in the field. Even when headquartered in Washington as propaganda chief of the Bay of Pigs operations, Phillips regularly flew into Miami, where his subordinates supervised the activities of various front groups. He played a major role in the Agency's actions in the Dominican Republic. Aside from a year and a half in Lebanon, Phillips's entire career was spent fighting Communist infiltration in the Caribbean and Latin America. Most of the time his sights were on the one man who represented the greatest Communist threat the hemisphere had known: Fidel Castro.

Aspects of Phillips's career attracted my attention. In a now-yellowing copy of the 1960 edition of the *Anglo-American Directory of Cuba,* there is listed on page 92: "PHILLIPS, David Atlee (Amer.); . . . Public Relations Counselor, David A. Phillips Associates. . . ." At the time, Phillips was a deep-cover operative in Havana posing as a public-relations consultant, hobnobbing with media executives and newspaper reporters, lunching with Havana businessmen, ostensibly pitching stories or clients. "My favorite luncheon place," he writes in his book, "was the Floridita restaurant in colonial Havana." Once he saw Hemingway there.

The book mentions little about what he actually did in Havana as a covert operator but does say that he "put in a full day for CIA" and that he "handled" agents.

Another interesting aspect of Phillips's career was his tour of duty in Mexico City. In terms of the Kennedy assassination, Mexico City was significant, not only because of Oswald's visit to the Cuban and Russian embassies there but also because of the number of false reports that flowed from there immediately following the assassination.

From 1961 through the fall of 1963, Phillips was chief of covert action in Mexico City. Just prior to the Kennedy assassination, he was made chief of Cuban operations. In those jobs his main activities were in propaganda, dirty tricks, and counterintelligence. His focus was on maintaining a watch on Castro's intelligence agents. Phillips had to know, for instance, that one of Castro's ranking intelligence officers stationed in the embassy in Mexico City was Guillermo Ruiz, the cousin of Antonio Veciana.

chief counsel, Richard Sprague, had run into a dead end when he tried to probe what David Phillips had done in monitoring Lee Harvey Oswald's actions in Mexico City. After G. Robert Blakey became chief counsel, an arrangement was made with the Agency to give Committee staffers who signed the CIA secrecy agreement access to previously restricted files. The Agency then would have to approve any information obtained from the files prior to publication in the Committee's report. The Committee was interested in questions related to Phillips's activities in Mexico City: Why was CIA headquarters not notified immediately when the Agency's Mexico City station learned of Oswald's contacts with the Cuban and Russian embassies? Was there a tape of Oswald's telephone conversations with Russian personnel—of a conversation in which Oswald, as

Veciana knows—he says there is no doubt—that Bishop was involved in the plan to dispose of Allende in Chile.

Phillips had declared, offered information to the Russians? Did Phillips lie when he denied having listened to such a tape? Did Phillips lie when he said the tape had been routinely destroyed? Why didn't the CIA have a photograph of Oswald entering the Cuban or Russian Embassy? Who was the man in the photographs the Agency told the Warren Commission were of Oswald? Did Phillips set himself up as the patsy in misexplaining the Agency's handling of the tapes and photographs?

The Assassinations Committee does not answer those questions in its final report. Most of its published conclusions are masterpieces of definitive statements with waffling qualifiers. For instance: "Despite the unanswered questions, the weight of the evidence supported the conclusion that Oswald was the individual who visited the Soviet Embassy and Cuban Consulate." It dismisses the Agency's handling of the Oswald case prior to the assassination as simply "deficient," yet admits that "the Committee was unable to determine whether the CIA did in fact come into possession of a photograph of Oswald taken during his visits to the Soviet Embassy and Cuban Consulate in Mexico City, or whether Oswald had any associates in Mexico City."

"Unable to determine." That admission reveals more about the Committee's investigation and its relationship to the CIA than do its pages of exposition and conclusions.

is not addressed in the Committee's final report. In fact, David Phillips is not mentioned in the final report.

In the search for the true identity of Maurice Bishop, the more I learned about David Atlee Phillips, the more the pieces fit. Aside from his physical similarity to Bishop, Phillips's interests and job assignments were relevant to almost everything Antonio Veciana had told me about Bishop. Phillips was in Havana as a covert operative, he was involved with the anti-Castro Cuban groups in Miami both before and after the Bay of Pigs, he was assigned to propaganda and counterintelligence activities in Mexico City when Lee Harvey Oswald visited there—could all this be coincidental?

Perhaps. But other aspects of Phillips's career tended to make the fit tighter. In 1968, for instance, at the suggestion and with the help of Bishop, Veciana got a US government salaried job with the Agency for International Development as a banking consultant in Bolivia. It was at this time, said Veciana, that his activities with Bishop broadened to include not only schemes directed against Castro but also strategies aimed at countering Communism throughout Latin America.

Late in 1967, David Phillips returned to Washington to take on a new assignment as chief of the Cuban Operations Group of the CIA's Western Hemisphere division. "Although I would report to the head of the Latin American affairs," he notes in his autobiography, "my responsibilities were worldwide: to keep tabs on Cuban preoccupations in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and in more than twenty countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as to manage CIA espionage operations in Cuba. Professionally, it was a prestigious but demanding assignment."

In my own mind, the most significant associations in David Phillips's career had to do with Chile. This from the notes made from a tape-recorded interview with Antonio Veciana on March 16, 1976, before the name of David Phillips surfaced: "Although all of Bishop's plans against Castro failed, there were other plans, against other people that didn't fail. He knows—he says there is no doubt—that Bishop was involved in the plan to dispose of Allende in Chile. That was one of his jobs. He knows that by the contacts in Chile that Bishop had. 'All the connections I had in Chile were given to me by Bishop.'"

Part of the plot to assassinate Castro in Chile in 1971, said Veciana, called for Chilean military bodyguards to capture the assassins before Castro's people could kill them. Bishop, said Veciana, made the arrangements for this.

In December 1975, the Church Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities issued a staff report titled *Covert Action in Chile: 1963-1973*. It noted:

"Was the United States directly involved, covertly, in the 1973 coup in Chile? The Committee has found no evi-

dence that it was. However, the United States sought in 1970 to foment a military coup in Chile: after 1970 it adopted a policy, both overt and covert, of opposition to Allende; and it remained in intelligence contact with the Chilean military, including officers who were participating in coup plotting."

One area uncovered in the Senate Intelligence Committee report was the huge amount of money available to the CIA operatives for covert action in Chile. Of the total $13 million the CIA spent in Chile, more than $8 million was used between the 1970 election and the military coup that toppled Allende in 1973. Most of the $8 million was spent on propaganda and media operations, including the purchase of radio stations and newspapers.

The Senate report also noted that the CIA did not consult its congressional oversight committees, as it was required by law to do, on most of its Chilean covert-action projects. Although most were approved by President Nixon's executive oversight group, called the 40 Committee, the Senate report said: "Congressional oversight committees were not consulted about projects which were not reviewed by the full 40 Committee. One of these was the Track II attempt to foment a military coup."

The chief of the Track II project was David Atlee Phillips.

When *The Night Watch* was published, I looked for clues or hints pointing to the possibility of David Phillips's being Maurice Bishop. Although the book was constructed to be as uninformative as possible about the details of his covert actions, it may contain just one mirror too many.

For instance, Phillips portrays himself as a moderate liberal. He proclaims that he voted for George McGovern and for Hubert Humphrey when they were presidential candidates. He also makes the point that he is a man who agonized much over the ethical and legal implications of his covert operations. Yet he reports that his career has been full of Agency honors and rewards for his repeated successes as a dirty-tricks expert, and he details how he helped to dislodge even governments democratically elected, as in Chile. Moreover, the real David Phillips often associated with top figures in the military-industrial complex and the nation's right wing.

Also provocative is his relationship with Clare Boothe Luce, which extends to her board position on the Phillips-founded Association of Retired Intelligence Officers. As those who worked for the Time Inc. communications empire can verify, the wife of the late board chairman Henry Luce was very influential. I recall talking with former *Life* correspondent Andrew St. George early in 1976, before I had ever heard of David Phillips. St. George told me that one of the many instances in which *Life* cooperated with the CIA was in the boosting of Alpha 66. "We would run these

David Atlee Phillips received the Distinguished Intelligence Medal after a long CIA career. He then founded the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers; he lives in Bethesda.

various stories and reports which made it appear much larger and more important an organization than it in fact was."

Another point perhaps relevant in David Phillips's autobiography was his handling of his involvement in or knowledge of assassination plots against Castro.

During the time of the plots on Castro's life, David Phillips was one of the key figures in the CIA's operations against Castro. Yet, in his autobiography, Phillips says he was not aware of any assassination plans. He relegates the point to a footnote: "I have often been asked how it was possible that I did not know of the Castro assassination schemes. The question is usually predicated on the assumption that when I became Chief of Cuban Operations and then head of all Latin American affairs someone would have told me, or I would have read about the endeavors in documents in my safe. The fact is that those few CIA officers involved did not discuss their participation even with senior officers not in the chain of command at the time of the plots. And highly sensitive papers are not retained in a division chief's office."

The last two sentences would have special significance for me, although not in the way Phillips intended them.

Because his testimony was already on record with the Senate Intelligence Committee, because he did fit into the House Committee's issue plan in an oblique way, and because it was an area I kept pushing, Antonio Veciana was brought to Washington on April 25, 1978, to testify in private before the House Select Committee on Assassinations. David Phillips was scheduled to testify immediately after him. Although it was not deliberately stage-directed, we recognized the possibility that Veciana and Phillips might encounter each other.

They did. As I walked out of the hearing room at Veciana's side, Phillips was talking with a small group just outside the door. He glanced up, saw Veciana, glanced at me, and turned back to his conversation. Veciana saw Phillips, leaned over to me, and said with a half-smile, "There's David Phillips."

That day, Veciana again testified under oath that David Phillips was not the person he had known as Maurice Bishop. He did say that there was a "physical similarity."

I returned to the hearing room to listen to Phillips testify after I had escorted Veciana out of the building. Most of the questioning concerned his knowledge of Oswald's activities in Mexico City and the validity of his previous testimony. (The Committee staff report that deals with this area remains classified.) Finally, the questioning came around to Veciana and Bishop.

David Phillips said he never used the name Maurice Bishop, nor did he know of anyone in the CIA who used the name. When asked if he knew Antonio Veciana, Phillips answered with a forced restraint, as if he were sick and tired of having to put up with such nonsense. He said he had seen Veciana only twice in his life, the second time that morning as Veciana was emerging from the hearing room. The first time he met Veciana, Phillips said, was at a meeting of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers in Reston.

I was facing Phillips's right side while sitting at a staff table on a level below the U-shaped congressional dais. Kennedy Subcommittee Chairman Richardson Preyer was presiding. As I listened I was struck by the credibility in Phillips's voice as he began to speak about an incident with which I was familiar.

Phillips said that Veciana was brought to the Reston meeting by an investigator from Senator Schweiker's office but that he was not introduced to Veciana by name. Veciana, he said, was introduced to him only as "the driver." He said that Veciana asked him some questions in Spanish and that he had the feeling Veciana did that in order to hear his accent. He did not say what questions Veciana asked him. At the time, he said, he did not know who Veciana was or why Schweiker's office had sent him to the meeting. Later, he said, he read about Veciana in Jack Anderson's column.

I wanted to jump up and shout, "That's not true!" I had introduced Veciana to Phillips twice at that luncheon in Reston, once at the table and once in the hallway. Phillips himself had asked Veciana, "What was your name again?" and Veciana had told him. And when Veciana asked Phillips if he remembered him, Phillips said no. I was there. Veciana was there. Sarah Lewis was there.

Later, I mentioned my reaction to Chief Counsel Blakey. "You know," I said, "David Phillips lied in his testimony." Blakey raised his brows. "Oh, really," he said. "What about?" I told him the details. He listened carefully, thought silently for a moment, shrugged, and walked away.

IX

The Final Pieces

Shortly after the Bay of Pigs, President John F. Kennedy confided to an adviser, Arthur Schlesinger, that he should not have retained Allen Dulles as CIA director. "I can't estimate his meaning when he tells me things," said Kennedy.

When he was appointed to the Warren Commission to investigate Kennedy's assassination, Dulles told columnist Murray Kempton that he was confident the Commission would find no evidence of a conspiracy.

At an early meeting of the Warren Commission, the transcript of which was marked "Top Secret" until 1975, the members discussed what Chief Counsel J. Lee Rankin called "this dirty rumor" that Oswald may have been an FBI informant.

"This is a terribly hard thing to disprove, you know," said Allen Dulles. "How do you disprove a fellow was not your agent? How do you disprove it?"

The late congressman from Louisiana, Hale Boggs, then asked: "You could disprove it, couldn't you?"

"No," said Dulles.

"Did you have agents about whom you had no record whatsoever?" asked Boggs.

"The record might not be on paper," said Dulles.

Boggs then asked about an agent who did not have a contract but had been recruited by someone from the CIA. "The man who recruited him would know, wouldn't he?" asked Boggs.

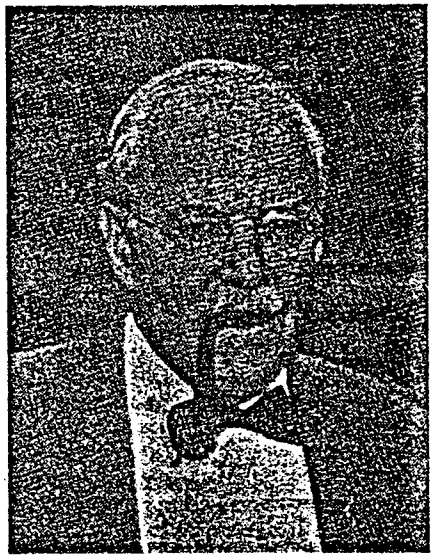
"Yes, but he wouldn't tell," said Dulles.

The commission's chairman, Chief Justice Earl Warren, appeared taken aback by that. "Wouldn't tell it under *oath?*" asked Warren.

"I wouldn't think he would tell it under oath, no," answered Dulles.

It was a revealing insight into a loyal CIA officer's perspective. It was the same perspective held by former CIA director Richard Helms when he called his conviction of perjury before Congress a "badge of honor."

At the time when House Assassinations Committee Chief Counsel Bob Blakey was making arrangements with the CIA for access to its files, one staff member raised the question of whether, in the absence of access to the file system itself, we could tell if the Agency was being honest with us in response to requests for all the files on a subject. "You don't think they'd lie to me, do you?"



Although a member of the Warren Commission, former CIA head Allen Dulles failed to reveal any CIA involvement in other assassination plots. Or was he ever told about them?

Blakey responded. "I've been working with those people for twenty years."

Of all the factors that dictated the Assassinations Committee's handling of the revelations of Antonio Veciana and its conclusions about Maurice Bishop, there was one of pivotal influence: the Committee's relationship with the CIA.

At one of his first general staff meetings, Blakey revealed what our general strategy would be in dealing with the CIA. It was going to be "realistic," he said. He was in the delicate process of negotiating a "working arrangement" with the Agency, one that would give us unprecedented access to its files. Meanwhile, he said, we have to accept several factors: First, we are a *temporary* congressional investigative entity. We have a limited time to do our job and then we will disappear. The CIA will be around long after we're gone.

"The thing to do now," said Blakey, "is be nice to the Agency. Ask for things in a nice way. If you have difficulty, deal with them in a nice way, don't buck them head-on at this point. That may result in the battle being lost on the beaches."

Unlike his predecessor, Richard Sprague, Blakey saw no problem in seeking a "working arrangement" with one of the subjects of the Committee's investigation.

The Committee's arrangement with the Agency for access to its files evolved over several months, most of the steps negotiated personally by Blakey and CIA Director Stansfield Turner. It ultimately gave every Committee staff member who signed the CIA secrecy agreement access to the Agency's classified files. No other congressional committee had ever reviewed CIA files without the Agency first deleting what it called its "sensitive sources and methods," which identified how the information had been obtained.

Yet, in the end, Blakey was suckered. Or, more accurately, he suckered himself. Although he pictured himself in periodic reports to the staff as aggressively sniping at the Agency at every instance of evasiveness or recalcitrance, he was, in fact, on the Agency's turf. And being there meant he accepted two assumptions: first, that access to CIA files would provide the Committee with the comprehensive information necessary for definitive conclusions; and, second, that the CIA files themselves reflected a complete and accurate record of whether the Agency or any of its personnel had been involved in any way with Oswald or in the Kennedy assassination. Those assumptions are reflected in the Committee's final report.

Blakey's reverence for the CIA as an institution permitted the Agency to impose its priorities on the Committee. And the CIA's priorities did not have anything to do with getting the facts of President Kennedy's assassination. The Committee's relationship with the CIA—especially in terms of its pursuit of Maurice Bishop—ignored the insights provided by Allen Dulles's admission to the Warren Commission.

I recall an informal discussion I had, before the Committee's investigation got under way, with a former high-ranking CIA officer who, after he retired to Florida, slowly began viewing the Agency in different light. He said that the CIA's response to the Committee would be "predictable." It would react the way it has always reacted to every crisis or investigation: A "task force" would be formed to "handle and contain" the inquiry. He said the "clandestine mentality" that is drilled into CIA operatives until it is instinctual would permit most of them to commit perjury because, in their view, their secrecy oath was more important than any congressional-witness oath. He said he doubted that the CIA would be candid with the Committee despite its congressional authority. "You represent the United States Congress," he said, "but what the hell is that to the CIA?"

I think of that when I recall what occurred in the pursuit of Veciana's revelations, and I think of the admission buried in the Committee's final report: "... the Agency's strict compartmentalization and the complexity of its enormous filing system ... have the ... effect of making congressional in-

quiry difficult. For example, CIA personnel testified to the Committee that a review of Agency files would not always indicate whether an individual was affiliated with the Agency in any capacity. Nor was there always an independent means of verifying that all materials requested from the Agency had, in fact, been provided."

In July 1977, two months after he wrote his first column about "Mr. X" and "Morris" Bishop, Jack Anderson brought the subject up again. Wrote Anderson: "The Central Intelligence Agency had no comment last May when we quoted from House investigative files that the CIA was in contact with Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas on the eve of the John F. Kennedy assassination. . . . The CIA, though maintaining official silence, reacted to our story in an internal memo. We have obtained a copy of the memo:

"This memo . . . is addressed to the CIA's Deputy Director for Operations. It states: 'The Jack Anderson column of 6 May 1977 alluded to "the CIA man, Morris Bishop," in Dallas. . . . The CIA did not have contact in Dallas with Lee Harvey Oswald. . . . We have run exhaustive traces to identify Morris Bishop without success. The name Morris Bishop has never been used as a registered alias or pseudonym nor has anyone with that name ever been employed by the CIA.'"

It was not until March 2, 1978, that the House Committee asked the CIA to check its files and index references for a Maurice Bishop. On March 31, 1978, the CIA informed the Committee that its Office of the Inspector General, its Office of the General Counsel, its Office of Personnel, and the Deputy Directorate of Operations had no record of a Maurice Bishop.

A search of David Phillips's files did not indicate that he had ever registered the alias of Maurice Bishop.

I was the only staff investigator on the House Select Committee on Assassinations with a journalistic background. As such, I was mindful of Blakey's early directive that all the activities of the Committee, classified or not, be kept confidential. Some of my friends were journalists and I was in touch with them. Some of them had been doing research into the Kennedy assassination and were good sources of information. For that reason, I didn't restrict my contacts with them. Blakey knew that, and I knew that he knew that, so I was careful not to leak any Committee information.

One of the journalists with whom I was in regular contact wound up in Miami one day to interview Robert McKeown.

In the mid-'50s, McKeown had a successful business in Cuba. He was forced out by Batista and was eventually arrested in Texas with a house full of arms and munitions he had been planning to smuggle to Fidel Castro. Actually, McKeown was a front man for former Cuban President Carlos Prio.

After the Kennedy assassination, the FBI discovered that Jack Ruby had once contacted McKeown to ask him for a letter of introduction to Castro. McKeown has since given a variety of reasons to explain why Ruby wanted the introduction. He has said that Ruby wanted to sell Castro a shipment of jeeps. He has said that Ruby was interested in obtaining the release of some friends Castro had imprisoned. And, in an interview I had with him while I was working for Senator Schweiker, McKeown said that Ruby had access to a load of slot machines hidden in the mountains of New Mexico. McKeown is now an old man, sickly and in need of money. The last time I saw him he said attorney Mark Lane was going to get him a big book contract.

Stumbling upon Cross, we both quickly realized, was dumb luck. He was a man who had been in the right place at the right time.

I met my journalist friend for lunch one day on Lincoln Road to find out if Robert McKeown had revealed anything to him. He hadn't. After lunch, he casually mentioned that McKeown had told him he had met a fellow at his bridge club who used to be involved in anti-Castro activities in the early '60s. My friend thought the fellow might be of some help to me and gave me his name.

This occurred prior to the cutting of the investigative staff, so Al Gonzalez was still working with me in Miami. Gonzalez tracked McKeown's friend to a small apartment in Coral Gables, and one morning when we were in the neighborhood we dropped in on him.

The CIA would later demand that the Committee not use the man's real name. The Committee called him Ron Cross. Cross, we discovered, had worked as a case officer out of the CIA's JM/WAVE station during the heyday of its anti-Castro activities in Miami. He had handled Cuban exile labor units and helped in organizing a militant group that, although not nearly as large and effective as Alpha 66, was very active. Early in his career, posing as an American businessman with financial connections, Cross had infiltrated Castro's mountain stronghold before the big *barbudo* seized power. There Cross ran into writer Andrew St. George and gunrunner Frank Sturgis.

Cross, retired from the Agency since 1964, was thin, tanned, and soft-spoken. Although we had spoken to other cooperative former CIA officers, he surprised me with his candor. At the end of our first meeting with him, he volunteered that he was a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. "I want you to know that," he said, "in case someone happens to remark, 'Oh, I know that old drunk.' Well, once a time ago I was an old drunk." Both he and his wife said the stress of intelligence work had caused the problem.

Cross was a gold mine of information. He provided us not only with details about the operations of the group he had handled, but also with insights into the structure and activities of the JM/WAVE station, including the duties and relationships of the station's top personnel. He mentioned that E. Howard Hunt had occasionally come by the headquarters. "He would come in, puff on his pipe, and look down his nose at the case officers."

Both Gonzalez and I stopped short of asking him certain questions for fear of revealing what we knew. Stumbling upon Cross, we both quickly realized, was dumb luck. In terms of our main areas of interest, he was a man who had been in the right place at the right time. But we wanted to check him out more before we opened up with questions that could provide the basis of misinformation feedback. Trusting souls we weren't.

But we did ask him about David Phillips. Sure, Cross said, he knew Phillips. He said Phillips, working through the JM/WAVE case officers, coordinated the propaganda operations of all the Cuban-exile groups the Agency was running. Phillips, he said, worked mostly out of Washington at that time but flew in and out of Miami frequently. On a daily basis, Cross said, the case officers worked with Phillips's direct subordinate at the station, a man called Doug Gupton.

Over the next few weeks, Gonzalez and I were in frequent touch with Cross as we tried to check out the information he gave us and the man himself. He appeared to be truthful. We then decided to test him in an area of major interest. One day Gonzalez called him and told him we were working on something that required confirmation of the pseudonyms or aliases used by CIA officers who had worked out of the JM/WAVE station. He threw three names at Cross: One was "Bishop," another was "Knight," and the third was the true name of an officer who had worked out of the Havana station.

Off the top of his head, Cross said, he believed "Bishop" was the name used by David Phillips, "Knight" a name that E. Howard Hunt occasionally used. He said we must be mistaken about the third name because that was the true name of a fellow he had known in Havana.

Cross said that within the next few days he would be talking with some of the Cuban exile agents he had worked with and, in chatting with them about the old days, perhaps his memory would be refreshed.

Several days later, Gonzalez dropped in for a chat with Cross to see if his memory had been refreshed. Well, Cross said, it had been a bit. He said now he was "almost certain" that David Phil-

lips had used the name of "Maurice Bishop," but he still was not definite about whether Hunt had used the "Knight" alias. He was sure, however, that the third name was a true name.

His answer surprised us. We had not given Cross the first name of Bishop.

Something else interesting in what Cross revealed: In his memoir, *Give Us This Day*, E. Howard Hunt anoints the "propaganda chief" of the CIA's anti-Castro operations—"an officer who had worked for me brilliantly on the Guatemala Project"—with the pseudonym of "Knight." In his own autobiography, David Phillips admits that Hunt is referring to him and, flipping the mirror a few times, he adds: "Bestowing the name of Knight was the ultimate accolade—people who have worked in CIA will recall that pseudonym belonged to one of the Agency's most senior officers, a man Howard idolized."

In Thomas Powers's biography of Richard Helms, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets*, the "man Howard idolized" is revealed to be his boss, former CIA Director Helms. Those who know E. Howard Hunt don't doubt that he himself would have occasionally donned the pseudonym of his idol. Such are the games spooks play.

Those who know E. Howard Hunt don't doubt that he himself would have occasionally donned the pseudonym of his idol. Such are the games spooks play.

Over the next few weeks, we continued to check Cross. We spoke with Cuban exiles who had worked with him and others who had known him. We found no discrepancies in anything he had told us. I felt, however, that I should again confirm his recollection about Maurice Bishop. One day, after a lengthy conversation about other areas of the JM/WAVE operation, I said offhandedly: "By the way, we're still checking into some of the cover names that were used at the time. Do you recall Al Gonzalez asking you about 'Knight' and 'Bishop'?"

Yes, Cross said, as a matter of fact, he had been giving it more thought. He said he was fairly sure now that Hunt did use the Knight alias. He also said he was now "almost positive" that David Phillips used the name Bishop. The reason he was sure about that, he said, was because he had been thinking about the period when he worked with Phillips's assistant at the JM/WAVE station, that young fellow named Doug Gupton. Cross said he now recalled often discussing special field and agent problems with Gupton and Gupton at times saying, "Well, I guess Mr. Bishop will have to talk with him." Cross said, "And, of course, I knew he was referring to his boss, Dave Phillips."

If Al Gonzalez and I had known that Ron Cross had been a retired CIA employee, we would not have been able to interview him for weeks, perhaps months. As part of Blakey's "working arrangement" with the Agency, it was agreed that the Assassinations Committee staff would permit the CIA to clear and arrange all interviews with both its present and former employees. That permitted the Agency to keep track of where the Committee's investigation was going.

It was more than six months after the Ron Cross interviews that the Assassinations Committee talked with the man who called himself Doug Gupton. Although Gupton was retired from the Agency, the interview was arranged at CIA headquarters. Gupton acknowledged that he had worked at the Miami JM/WAVE station and that his immediate superior had been David Phillips. He also acknowledged that he had worked with Ron Cross on a daily basis.

Explaining his working relationship with David Phillips, Gupton said he was in contact with him regularly in Washington by telephone and by cable. Phillips also visited Miami "quite often."

Gupton said Phillips was actually in charge of two sets of operations. Gupton's set of operations was run out of Miami, he said, and he kept Phillips informed of them. Phillips ran another set of operations personally out of Washington and, Gupton said, Phillips did not keep him briefed about those, so he didn't know anything about their specifics or what contacts Phillips used. Gupton did believe, however, that Phillips used many of his old contacts from Havana in his personal operations.

When asked if he knew whether either E. Howard Hunt or David Phillips ever used the cover name "Knight," Gupton said he did not know. When asked if David Phillips ever used the cover name "Maurice Bishop," Gupton said, "I don't recall." When told that Ron Cross said that he specifically remembered Gupton referring to David Phillips as "Mr. Bishop," Gupton remained silent for a moment, looked down at his lap, and said "Well, maybe I did. I don't remember."

Gupton was then shown the composite sketch of Maurice Bishop. No, he said, it didn't look like anyone he knew.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations issued 542 subpoenas for individuals to appear before it or provide material evidence. It took sworn testimony in depositions, at public hearings, or in executive session from 335 witnesses. The Committee never questioned Ron Cross or Doug Gupton under oath.

Near the end of his testimony before the Assassinations Committee in April 1978,

David Phillips had been shown the composite sketch of Maurice Bishop. Because I had not been able to show it to him at Reston, I assumed it was the first time he had seen the sketch. Phillips put on his glasses and studied it for a moment. Slowly he nodded his head. "It does look like me," he said. He paused for a moment and, with a smile, added: "Actually, it looks more like my brother." When asked, he said his brother was a lawyer in Texas.

About a month later I received a call from Leslie Wizelman, a researcher on the organized-crime team. She was one of the bright young Cornell law students Blakey had brought to Washington with him. "I have a neat story to tell you," she said. "I'm going down to Texas next week, so today I called the Tarrant County Crime Commission in Fort Worth just to see if they had any files that might be helpful. I wanted to speak to the director, and asked the secretary what his name was. She said Mr. Edwin Phillips. Well, it immediately struck me that it might just be David Phillips's brother. He wasn't there but he called me back later. He was real friendly. While I was asking him if he had files on the specific individuals we were interested in, I kept wondering how I could ask him if he was David Philips's brother. He was very nice and he thought he had some files that might help us and he'd be more than happy to cooperate. Then he said, 'I think I should tell you that I'm David Phillips's brother, someone your Committee has spoken with.' He asked if I knew that. I admitted I was wondering about it. Then he said that he makes it a point to keep up with what the Committee is doing and that his brother David, after he testified, asked him to search his Crime Commission files to see if he had anything on CIA activities in Dallas or on a Maurice Bishop. He said he did and, of course, he didn't find anything. Now that's some kind of a coincidence, isn't it?"

That was some kind of coincidence. I could not forget that much of David Phillips's career was involved with the dissemination of misinformation and that, because he still was an expert at it, his comment about his brother looking more like Maurice Bishop than he did intrigued me. Most investigative bodies would have checked that out immediately, if only just for the record. But this was the Assassinations Committee and I knew no one would do it if I didn't.

Although there were witnesses in Dallas I wanted to interview because of their Miami connections, my requests for travel authorization to Texas kept getting bogged down in the bureaucracy. In addition, other priorities in the organized-crime area were pressed upon me, including searching for old-time mob figures who might die before we could officially interview them. Chief Investigator Cliff Fenton kept saying he eventually wanted all his investigators to go to Dallas, just for the record. When the issues plan was

PHOTOGRAPH BY FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM

Edwin Phillips, brother of David Atlee Phillips. Shown the composite drawing of Maurice Bishop, Edwin Phillips proclaimed: "Ah am astonished!"

the place. But then came the mass firings, and in the end there were only four investigators left.

By the end of July 1978, with the investigative staff cut back, junior and senior counsels and researchers were flitting around the country trying to fill most of the obvious gaps in the investigative plan. The idea was to get a contact, a sworn deposition, or an interview on record. The quality of the interview or the substantive potential of the information solicited didn't matter. The investigation was over. So if someone was going to California, for instance, to interview a witness for one team's issue, he or she was also asked to interview other witnesses for other teams' issues, whether familiar with that area of the investigation or not. Usually, he or she wasn't. There are a number of interview reports from this period, now locked in the National Archives, that indicate that the interviewer really didn't know what the questions meant and couldn't follow up a significant answer.

"This is ridiculous," staff counsel Jim McDonald told me one day. "They've got me taking depositions and interviewing all these people in Dallas and you're the guy with the background on a lot of them. You've got to go to Dallas with me. I'm going to insist on it."

So in the final months of the life of the Assassinations Committee, the only remaining investigator who had not yet officially been on the scene of the crime got to visit it. (I had been to Dallas before count on the Committee's record.) I told Leslie Wizelman I was going. "Oh, good," she said, "you can drop in on Edwin Phillips and ask him if he has those Crime Commission files ready for me yet. He was supposed to have them by the end of June, but every time I call he tells me they're not quite complete yet. You can pick them up for me if they're ready. Besides, you'll enjoy meeting him. He's really friendly."

I spent a few days in Dallas helping Jim McDonald with witness depositions, most of which had to do with Jack Ruby. There was so much to do in such a short time that I didn't think I would be able to meet Edwin Phillips. At the last moment, an urgent call from Washington for an interview report of a witness took me to Fort Worth.

It was late in the afternoon when I called Edwin Phillips's office. His secretary suggested coming over because she knew he would be free shortly. His unpretentious office was in downtown Fort Worth, in the old Electric Service Building. I chatted with his secretary, a friendly matronly woman in the anteroom to Phillips's office while I waited for him to finish a telephone conversation. Another secretary, a younger woman, smiled a greeting as she passed. Leslie was right; this was a friendly place.

Edwin Phillips greeted me effusively as he emerged from his office. "Well, well, it sure *is* a pleasure to see you," he said. "You come right on in now." He was obviously older than David Phillips, shorter, paunchier, and more jowly. There was no doubt that they were brothers, but Edwin Phillips's resemblance to the Maurice Bishop sketch was in no way as close as his brother's.

In his high-backed black leather chair, surrounded by old-fashioned scrolled-mahogany furniture, attired in a conservative dark suit and vest, Edwin Phillips reminded me of a down-home Texas politician: fast-talking, drawling, backslapping, friendly—and sharp as an old hoot owl. I didn't get a chance to do much explaining. I said I happened to be in the area and had dropped by because Leslie Wizelman had asked me to check on the files.

Phillips said well, yessir, he had gotten together the files and they were right here somewhere. He began rummaging through the piles of papers on his desk. He said he hadn't had a chance to organize them yet and he wasn't about to give them to Leslie in the mess they were in, no sir, but he was gonna get to them right soon now and he'd have them ready for her in another week or two for sure. "Now that Leslie, she is a mighty fine little gal," he said. "Ah admire her, ah do. And ah respect her, and ah respect the work she's doin', but ah told her as soon as she walked in here, ah told her you know, ah'm David Phillips's brother. and you people have been talkin' to Davie and, well, David's my younger brother and ah always kinda looked afte David. . . ."

Edwin Phillips said that David h

called him and told him about his testimony before the Committee, told him what had happened and how the Committee had gotten him mixed up with Maurice Bishop. He said David told him that he was shown a sketch of this Maurice Bishop and when he saw it his mouth just dropped, he was so surprised at how much of a resemblance there was. "But David told me," said Edwin Phillips, "that he said the sketch looked more like me than him." He laughed. "Ah told David that ah resented his taking advantage of our fiduciary and fraternal relationship." He laughed again. "You know, ah always kinda looked after David."

Well, I said, that was the other reason I came by. I thought he might get a kick out of taking a look at the sketch himself.

Phillips seemed delighted. "Well, that's mighty nice of you," he said. "Ah do appreciate your thoughtfulness." I handed him the sketch. He leaned forward in his chair and looked at it closely.

"Ah am *astonished!*" He almost shouted. "Ah am *astonished!* Why that is amazin'! That certainly *does* look like David." He kept studying the sketch and shaking his head in amazement. "Well, now," he said, "ah am gonna kid David about that. That does look a lot more like David than it does me, don't it now?"

Well, I admitted, there was a resemblance. Edwin Phillips couldn't get over it. He went on about how David had told him about this Cuban fellow who said he had seen this Maurice Bishop with Oswald and how the Committee had asked David all about it.

Edwin Phillips thanked me again for dropping by, said it was mighty nice of me to go out of my way. He was laughing and chatting as he escorted me out of his office and then, as we passed the matronly secretary, began telling her the story and why I had come by. "Would you mind showing my secretary the sketch?" he asked. I pulled it out of my briefcase again.

The secretary put on her glasses and studied the sketch. "Ah was just tellin' this gentleman how astonished ah was," said Edwin Phillips. The secretary just shook her head in amazement. "That's David," she said. "That's David."

"Come take a look at this," Phillips called to the younger secretary at the other desk. "This is my daugher Beth," he said. "Let's see what she thinks. Does that look more like David or more like me?" She moved behind her father to get a better look at the sketch. "Why that's Uncle David," she said. "That *is* Uncle David." They were all shaking their heads and laughing now at the coincidence that the sketch should so much resemble David Phillips. It struck them as mighty funny. It struck me as funny, too.

David Phillips has always been a man of action. In *The Night Watch* he details how much he regretted being tied to a desk as he moved up the Agency's ranks.

He loved being on the operational end of the dirty-tricks business, playing the covert-action games, spinning hidden wheels to orchestrate a series of "coincidences" that would bring about a counterintelligence objective.

Until I dropped in to visit his brother Edwin in Forth Worth, David Phillips could have assumed that the Assassinations Committee had ceased its efforts to identify Maurice Bishop. He had been questioned under oath, Antonio Veciana had been questioned under oath, and the CIA had checked its files and declared that no agent or officer had ever officially used the name of Maurice Bishop. My visit to his brother signaled Phillips that the Committee had not dismissed the possibility that he was the person Veciana claimed he saw with Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas in September of 1963.

Shortly after I returned from Texas, I went to Washington for a series of meetings on the final Committee report. A researcher, Dan Hardway, greeted me as I walked into the office. Hardway was another of the young Cornell law students who, to Blakey's distress, had evolved into the staff's Young Turks. He and Ed Lopez were working on what would eventually be a revealing 300-page report that would be relegated in the Committee's final volumes to a footnote: "classified staff study, *Lee Harvey Oswald, the CIA and Mexico City*."

"Hey," Hardway now called, "we got an interview coming up at the Agency you might be interested in." Hardway said that in the course of his file research he had dug up an operative he thought he would like to talk with. The man turned out to have worked under such deep cover and been involved in such sensitive operations that the CIA was reluctant to let the Committee interview him. Pushed a bit, the Agency relented, but insisted on special security measures for the interview.

"Turns out this fellow worked with Dave Phillips quite a bit," Hardway said, "and probably was a good friend of his. Got any questions you want me to ask him?"

Yeah, I did. The man—who will here be named Bart Henry—turned out to be a closer friend of Phillips than Hardway had suspected.

Bart Henry said he had been a CIA agent for almost twenty years and that he had worked closely with David Phillips—on a "day-to-day" basis—on Cuban operations between 1960 and 1964. He said he thought of Phillips as one of the best agents the CIA ever had, characterized him as "an excellent intelligence officer," and said he was "a personal friend."

When Henry was asked if he knew anyone named Maurice Bishop, he shocked his interviewers by saying that he did. When asked to explain his relationship with Bishop, Henry said: "Again, Mr. Bishop was in the organization, but I had no personal day-to-day open relationship with him. Phillips, yes; Bishop, no. I knew them both."

Henry couldn't describe Bishop's physical characteristics. He said he had seen him only "two or three times" in the "hallway or cafeteria" at CIA headquarters in Langley. The times he saw Bishop, Henry said, were between 1960 and 1964 when he himself was in Cuban operations. He didn't know if Bishop also worked in that area. Henry said he thought that Bishop worked in the Western Hemisphere division and that he had a position "higher than me." When pushed for further detail, Henry could not be more specific.

Bart Henry said he had been a CIA agent for almost twenty years and had worked closely with David Phillips. When Henry was asked if he knew Maurice Bishop, he shocked his interviewers by saying that he did.

If he did not know Maurice Bishop, Henry was asked, how did he know that the person he saw at CIA headquarters was Bishop? His answer: "Someone might have said, 'That is Maurice Bishop,' and it was different from Dave Phillips or . . . guys that I know."

The interview went on into other areas and then, just before it ended, Henry was shown the composite sketch of Bishop without being told who it was. No, he said, it didn't remind him of anyone.

I reviewed the transcript of the interview with Bart Henry. First of all, given the rigid security procedures at Langley, it is doubtful that Maurice Bishop would have been so casually pointed out by name, especially not in the Agency cafeteria reserved for covert operatives. The contention rubbed against the Agency's "need-to-know" secrecy rule. David Phillips himself reveals in his autobiography how for years he assumed that the then-chief of counterintelligence, James Angleton, was a person once pointed out to him in the hallway at headquarters and then, when he was assigned to work for Angleton, was surprised to be introduced to someone else.

In further review of Bart Henry's transcript, I was struck by something much more fascinating: In answering questions about Maurice Bishop, he repeatedly mentioned David Phillips's name in the same sentence. Henry wanted us to know that, yes, he knew Maurice Bishop and he knew David Phillips and they were two different individuals.

About a week after the interview with Bart Henry, a young senior counsel, Bob Genzman, happened to be on the West Coast taking a deposition from former CIA Director John A. McCone. A wealthy shipbuilder and former deputy Secretary of Defense, McCone had been appointed by President Kennedy in 1961 and was in the post when Kennedy was killed. Genzman's team was not working the anti-Castro area, and he was not intimately familiar with the Veciana revelations about Maurice Bishop, but he knew enough, in running down a list of names for McCone to respond to as a matter of record, to include Bishop's. Here's how Genzman's questions and McCone's answers were recorded:

Q: Do you know or did you know Maurice Bishop?

A: Yes.

Q: Was he an Agency employee?

A: I believe so.

Q: Do you know what his duties were in 1963?

A: No.

Q: For instance, do you know whether Maurice Bishop worked in the Western Hemisphere Division or whether he worked in some other division of the CIA?

A: I do not know. I do not recall. I knew at the time, but I do not recall.

I found it difficult at first to fit McCone's recollection of the name "Maurice Bishop"—that was all he really remembered—into the model of the evidentiary structure that seemed to be emerging. Then, as I dug deeper, the role of John McCone appeared to provide a perspective.

David Phillips obviously didn't appreciate the appointment of McCone as CIA director. In his book he describes McCone as an "outsider" without experience in clandestine operations. "In his first appearances at Langley," Phillips wrote, "he left an impression of austerity, remoteness, and implacability."

Although McCone was director of the CIA, the old-boy fraternity of operational insiders kept him in the dark about some of the Agency's activities. Richard Helms, McCone's deputy director of plans, the "dirty tricks" department, has since admitted he never told McCone about the Agency's working relationship with the Mafia to kill Castro. Helms knew that McCone, a devout Catholic, abhorred assassination plots.

Could it have been that McCone was told of a Maurice Bishop without being told the specific nature of his operations?

Having gotten the confirmation of the existence of a Maurice Bishop from both John McCone and Bart Henry, the Assassinations Committee asked the CIA once again to search its files for any references to a Maurice Bishop. Chief Counsel Blakey said he also wanted a written reply from the Agency indicating whether a person using either the true name or pseudonym of Maurice Bishop had ever been associated, in any capacity, with the CIA.

Less than two weeks later, the Com-

mittee received a reply from the Agency. The results of its file search for a Maurice Bishop, it said, were again negative. "No person with such a name has a connection with the CIA," said the reply. "Quite frankly," it added, "it is our belief—from our earlier check, reinforced by this one—that such a man did not exist, so far as CIA connections are concerned."

It was later revealed that the CIA went beyond just another check of its files. It, too, was puzzled by the responses the Committee had received from its two former employees, John McCone and Bart Henry. On October 19, 1978, Chief Counsel Blakey received a letter from the Agency's chief liaison with the Committee:

"This is to advise you that I have interviewed Mr. McCone and a retired employee [Bart Henry] concerning their recollections about an alleged CIA employee reportedly using the name of Maurice Bishop.

"We assembled photographs of the persons with the surname of Bishop who had employment relationships of some type with the CIA during the 1960s, to see if either Mr. McCone or the employee would recognize one of them.

In answering questions about Maurice Bishop, he repeatedly mentioned David Phillips's name in the same sentence.

"Mr. McCone did not feel it necessary to review those photographs, stating that I should inform you that he had been in error. . . .

"The employee continues to recall a person—who was known as Maurice Bishop. He cannot state the organizational connection or responsibilities of the individual, not knowing him personally, and feels that the person in question was pointed out to him by someone, perhaps a secretary. He is unable, however, to recognize any of the photographs mentioned above. . . .

"It should be noted that the employee's statements to the effect that it is usual for employees to use aliases at Headquarters is in error. . . .

"In summary, Mr. McCone withdraws his statements on this point. The employee continues to recall such a name, but the nature of his recollection is not very clear or precise. . . ."

That, to me, was a revealing letter. The Agency had gone to John McCone and told him that there was no official record of a Maurice Bishop in its files, and McCone simply said, in effect: Okay, I guess I was wrong. Bart Henry couldn't very well back down. He had a personal friend to consider.

X

Loose Ends

What should have been just getting started was ending. What should have triggered an intensive investigative effort was simply allowed to become part of the record. Dozens of witnesses who could have been called, people who were in the right place at the right time, were not; pressures that could have been applied, the polygraph and stress tests that could have been used, the operational files and vouchers that could have been analyzed, were not; the full resources and powers that a congressional committee could have brought to bear on an area of significant evidence were not.

I was taken out of Miami as a staff investigator, assigned to Washington as a team leader, and told to coordinate the writing of the anti-Castro team's part of the final report: There were only three months left in the official life of the Assassinations Committee and, as Blakey himself said, parroting the Warren Commission's chief counsel near the end of that investigation, "This is no time to be opening doors."

I kept trying. Before I left for Washington, I had a long discussion with Antonio Veciana. His attitude toward the Committee had turned very negative but he remained cooperative with me. My belief in Veciana's story had grown stronger. Although there were key points not corroborated, the accumulation of details that checked out was now, I felt, confirmation. But there was one detail not yet checked out. I had not given it priority because it did not relate to the question of Maurice Bishop's identity, just his existence. It concerned the woman who Veciana said had served as an intermediary when Bishop wanted to contact him and couldn't locate him in Miami. Veciana said he had always let this woman know how to reach him when he went out of town. He had instructed Bishop to contact her for his location.

I considered the fact that Veciana had mentioned the existence of an intermediary a positive point in assessing his credibility. He initially told me he did not want to reveal her identity because he did not want to get her involved in the investigation, because she had never met Bishop and could not identify him.

Now, in the last month of the Committee's life, I saw the direction it was going. It appeared to me that an effort might be made to dismiss Veciana's story entirely. I thought, just to toss another log on the pile, I could convince Veciana

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF McGRAW HILL

Anthony Summers, author of the book *Conspiracy*, which conjectures that David Phillips might be Maurice Bishop. Phillips publicly accused Summers of character assassination.

to give me the name of the intermediary so that I could talk with her.

He was reluctant. She lived in Puerto Rico, he said. She had a family and a good job now, and he was afraid that she might get a lot of publicity she didn't need. I told him I would consider it a personal favor, that it was important to me to know who she was. Well, he said, in that case, he would have to ask her.

Shortly afterward, in Washington, I received a call from Anthony Summers. An Englishman, Summers had been involved in the production of a BBC-produced television special on the Kennedy assassination. He had discovered Veciana through the Jack Anderson column and, having gotten a book contract from McGraw-Hill, had begun to spend time with Veciana. An excellent investigator, he struck it off well with Veciana.

"I think I have some information that might be of some help to you," Summers told me when he called. "I have managed to goad Veciana into revealing the name of his intermediary. He didn't want to, of course, but I began telling him that I thought the information he was providing was balderdash. He's very sensitive, you know, about his credibility, so he told me her name and asked me not to contact her directly without his clearing it first. I thought you ought to know."

Summers said because of his book deadline he didn't have the time to check out the woman himself, but thought the Committee would want to. I thanked Summers and told him I would.

Although Summers had not gotten the woman's current location in Puerto Rico, he had gotten enough for me to track her down. Still, I was sensitive about my relationship with Veciana and did not want to go behind his back. I called him and asked about his progress with the woman. "She is very afraid," he said. "She feels she was not involved in anything and she is afraid there would be a lot of publicity that would hurt her family and cause her trouble in her job. I told her then, well, if she will just talk to you and if you can guarantee her there will be no publicity and she will not have to come to Washington, would she do that? She said okay. She will just talk to you if you can guarantee that. Do you want to talk with her?"

I had wanted to talk with her, but I was not going to lie to Veciana. I had learned my lesson about making promises that the Committee would ignore. I told Veciana that I couldn't give him or her any guarantees, but I would check with my superiors.

I remember walking into Deputy Chief Counsel Gary Cornwell's office. "I think I can locate the intermediary who can confirm the existence of Maurice Bishop," I said. "All I need is a couple of days in Puerto Rico and a promise that she won't get any publicity or be called to Washington."

Cornwell looked at me initially with some surprise and then, at the latter part of my proposal, burst into a loud guffaw: "No way!" he shouted. Then he turned serious. "Besides," he said, "it's too late. We don't have the time or the money. How far along are you on the report?"

Another effort in those last months of the Committee's life involved another person to whom, Veciana said, Bishop had referred him at the American embassy in Havana. His name was Smith, and initially Veciana recalled his first name as "something like Ewing." I was puzzled when I spoke with people who had been connected with the US Embassy and found that no one remembered a Ewing Smith. Then one day a photo-

graph appeared in the newspaper of a State Department official who President Carter had named as the new director of Cuban affairs. His name was Wayne Smith. It occurred to me that the Spanish visualization of the pronunciation of Wayne may have led Veciana to remember it incorrectly. I was right. When I showed Veciana the photograph, he remembered Wayne Smith as one of the individuals Bishop had suggested he talk with at the embassy about aid for his anti-Castro activities.

Wayne Smith, I discovered, was a vice consul and third secretary at the US Embassy in Havana at the time Veciana claimed he met him there. (He is currently back in Havana as chief of the US Interest Section.) Educated in Mexico City, Smith has spent most of his career on assignment in Latin America.

I thought it was important to interview Wayne Smith, to take a sworn deposition for the record, but I was again told that the Committee's investigation had ended and it was time to get out the report. I was disappointed because I had discovered that Wayne Smith, when he was stationed in Havana in 1960, had belonged to a little theater group composed mostly of Americans living in Cuba at the time. Among the amateur thespians was David Atlee Phillips.

The final volume of the report of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, the one entitled "Findings and Recommendations," was written after the official demise of the Committee and after all but a few of the staff had departed. It was written under the direction of Chief Counsel G. Robert Blakey. The volume contains 686 pages. Less than two and a quarter pages are devoted to Antonio Veciana and Maurice Bishop. David Atlee Phillips is not mentioned.

The conclusions in the Committee's final volume stand in contrast to the findings in the staff report I had written before I left Washington. That report said that although "no evidence was found to discredit Veciana's testimony" and that although "there was some evidence to support it," nevertheless "no definite conclusions could be drawn as to the identity or affiliations" of Maurice Bishop.

The Committee's final report dismisses Veciana's allegations completely. It said the Committee found "several reasons to believe that Veciana had been less than candid," and then listed four of those reasons:

"First, Veciana waited more than 10 years after the assassination to reveal his story.

"Second, Veciana would not supply proof of the $253,000 payment from Bishop, claiming fear of the Internal Revenue Service.

"Third, Veciana could not point to a single witness to his meetings with Bishop, much less with Oswald.

"Fourth, Veciana did little to help the committee identify Bishop."

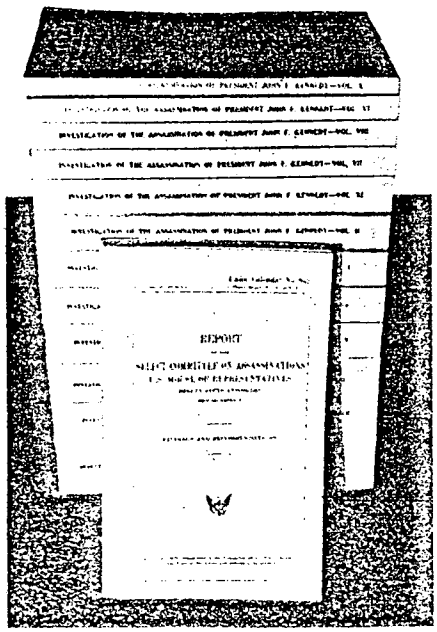
Every one of those reasons is deliberately misleading.

To claim that Veciana "waited" more than ten years ignores the circumstances of his initial telling of the story. He did not approach me. I approached him. He insisted on absolute confidentiality. Until 1973 he had no desire to jeopardize his relationship with Maurice Bishop, who for years had been a loyal and powerful ally. His revelations came as a result of his fears at that time and in an effort to create defenses against what he then felt would be future actions against him. His prison sentence had given substance to those fears. Immediately after the Kennedy assassination, when he had the opportunity to reveal the story to a US Customs agent he suspected of being with the CIA, he felt his CIA loyalties were being tested. "That was a very difficult situation, because I was afraid," Veciana explained. (The Committee never interviewed the Customs agent.)

Veciana did, initially, refuse to supply proof of the $253,000 payment from Bishop when asked in his formal hearing before the congressional members of the Committee. He did claim fear of the Internal Revenue Service. That's why, before he agreed to speak with me two years before, he requested assurances that nothing he told me would be held against him. The Committee refused to grant him immunity from the IRS. When pushed under oath, Veciana told the Committee that he would tell me what he had done with the money. The Committee refused that arrangement. The Committee's report ignored the fact that he initially told about the payment voluntarily and that he was a professional accountant who could have kept it well hidden if he had wanted to.

For the Committee to expect, as a requisite for believing Veciana, that there should have been witnesses to his meetings with Bishop is stupid. One would have to conclude that the Committee acquired absolutely no knowledge of basic intelligence operations during the two years of its existence. (Conversely, to ignore the intelligence patterns in Lee Harvey Oswald's activities—including the discovery of a subminiature Minox camera and photos of military installations among his effects—makes the Committee's expectations regarding Veciana's meeting with Bishop more ridiculous and its report's conclusions regarding organized-crime involvement more bizarre.)

The final report of the House Assassinations Committee concluded that the Kennedy assassination was "probably the result of a conspiracy."



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT GRODIN

Finally, the claim that Veciana did little to help the Committee identify Bishop implies a lack of cooperation that is simply not true. Although at one point Veciana announced he would no longer cooperate with a government that was dealing with Castro, later reports attest to the point that he did. In fact, he was ready to testify at a public hearing before the Committee pushed him aside.

In addition, the Committee's conclusions are tainted by its ability to dismiss pieces of contradictory evidence. For instance, it noted that the CIA "insisted that it did not at any time assign a case officer to Veciana."

The Committee wanted to avoid chewing on the CIA. The result was evasiveness: "The Committee found it probable that some agency of the United States assigned a case officer to Veciana, because he was the dominant figure in an extremely active anti-Castro organization. The Committee established that the CIA assigned case officers to Cuban revolutionaries of less importance than Veciana, though it could not draw from that alone an inference of CIA deception of the Committee concerning Veciana. . . ."

Nothing attests more vividly to the incongruity of the Committee's conclusions than the fact that in the end it was forced to impeach the testimony of both Antonio Veciana and David Phillips.

This, too, it relegated to a footnote: "The Committee suspected that Veciana was lying when he denied that the retired CIA officer was Bishop. The Committee recognized that Veciana had an interest in renewing his anti-Castro operations that might have led him to protect the officer from exposure as Bishop so they could work together again. For his part, the retired officer aroused the Committee's suspicion when he told the Committee he did not recognize Veciana as the founder of Alpha 66, especially since the officer had once been deeply involved in Agency anti-Castro operations."

With the official expiration of the Committee in December 1978, I returned to Miami. Blakey had asked me to stay on but I didn't want to. I didn't know what was going to happen to the staff reports that were produced on Antonio Veciana, Silvia Odio, and the other areas of anti-

Castro activity, and I didn't much care. I kept thinking what Vincent Salandria had told me in Philadelphia more than three years before: "They'll keep you very, very busy, and eventually they'll wear you down." Just before I left Washington, the remnants of the anti-Castro team had given me a farewell gift with a note attached saying it would be useful if I ever decided to write about my Committee experiences. It was a whitewash brush.

I remained in touch with both Antonio Veciana and Silvia Odio. Although I had first approached them as an official investigator, I maintained a personal rapport with them after I left the Committee. They were both interested in what the Committee's final report would say about their testimony.

Several weeks after the Committee's report was released, in July 1979, I got a copy of its concluding volume. Meanwhile, I had obtained a copy of the staff reports I had written in both the Veciana and Odio areas of the investigation. Because I felt an obligation to let both Veciana and Odio know what my conclusions were after dealing with them for more than three years, I gave them each copies of my staff report and promised that I would also get them copies of the Committee's final report.

One evening several days later, the telephone rang. A friend in Little Havana was calling. He said Veciana had just been shot in the head. Veciana had been driving home from work when someone ambushed him, fired four shots at him. Veciana was not dead, the friend said, but that was all he knew.

I placed a flurry of calls to find out what happened. Yes, someone had tried to assassinate Veciana. He was in the hospital, but he was all right. The hit man had been a bad shot, but a piece of one ricocheting bullet had caught Veciana in the side of the head. Later in the evening I reached one of his daughters who had just returned from the hospital. He was lucky, she said; it was not a serious wound.

Ana Veciana, the oldest daughter, had recently graduated from college and was working as a reporter for the *Miami News*. A few days after her father was shot, she wrote a story about it. Her family, she said, has come to accept the fact that they must live with danger, but they have refused to live with fear. Fear is the mind killer. Her family, she said, has chosen to live with pride. "My American friends never understood the politics or the violence that comes with Latin politics," she wrote. "To this day I have not been able to explain, but only to describe, the passion Cubans feel for the freedom that's taken for granted in this country." She was very proud of her father's anti-Castroism, she said, and had come to accept "the aberrations from normal life."

"But fear?" she wrote. "Never. The fear we know, if it can rightly be called that, is the fear many others are not fortunate enough to experience.

PHOTOGRAPH BY THE MIAMI NEWS

Antonio Veciana (far left) and his family. Shortly after the House Assassinations Committee report appeared, someone shot Veciana in the head. He survived, and his family today say they accept living with danger but refuse to live with fear.

"I fear that we may have forgotten why we are here.

"I fear that we have grown complacent and smug.

"I fear the satisfaction that comes from having three cars in the driveway and a chicken in every pot, and knowing we can say what we damn well please without valuing that freedom.

"That's what I fear."

A week after Veciana was shot, I received a call from him. He was out of the hospital and walking about. It was only a slight wound near the left temple. "My wife said if it was higher, I might have to wear a toupee," he laughed. The reason he called, he said, was he had read the staff report and he wanted to talk with me and show me some papers.

The next evening, I drove down to see Veciana. He had a small bandage on the side of his head and another on his right side. He was pale but appeared in good spirits. He showed me the bullet holes in the pickup truck he was driving when he was shot. He was coming home late, he said. When he made a left-hand turn into a street, he saw a brown station-wagon parked on the corner facing him. He noticed a figure sitting in it. Then he heard a loud noise and felt a sharp blow on the side of his head. The front vent window exploded when the second shot was fired. "Then I knew that it was an attempt on my life," Veciana said matter-of-factly. The third shot ripped through the door at his ribs, was deflected by the door's interior mechanism, passed in front of his stomach, burned across his right arm, and tore out the other side of the truck and into an open field. The fourth shot produced a spiderweb of cracks as it skimmed the front windshield.

Veciana showed me the bullet holes with a sense of amused wonder. I stood there in the shadows of the street lamp and looked at the size of the holes the .45-caliber slugs had made in the truck. The first shot had gone completely through the outside rearview mirror, producing as it emerged an ugly flower of jagged metal.

I asked him who he thought was trying to kill him. "It was a Castro agent," he said with certainty.

"Have you ever considered," I asked, "that it could be anyone else?" He looked at me and smiled. "No," he said. "It is Castro. I am sure."

Our talk eventually turned to the staff report I had left with him. Yes, he said, he had read it and that's why he wanted to talk with me. There are things in it, he said, that question his credibility. His credibility is very important to him because he is still gathering evidence to overturn his narcotics conviction, even though he has served the sentence.

What bothered him, Veciana said, was the denial, in Caracas, by Lucilo Peña and Luis Posada that they were involved with him in the Castro assassination attempt in Chile in 1971. "Sure they were with me," Veciana said. "They are not telling the truth." He said he had asked a friend who had just come from Caracas to bring papers that would prove it. He would also give me the name of a person in Miami who could corroborate it.

We talked for a few hours in detail about other points in that staff report, and I slowly began to realize that Veciana was not going to bring up the one key doubt I had expressed about his credibility. In the report, I said specifically that I had doubted his credibility when

he told me that David Phillips was not Maurice Bishop. In our discussion now, Veciana was letting that pass.

We had come to the point of a close but odd relationship, Veciana and I. I had told him I understood his position, and he said he appreciated that. "You know," he said, "I have given sworn statements." I knew what he meant. But that evening as we talked I was moved to take advantage of the camaraderie that had developed between us. "Tony," I said, "I am not going to put you on the spot, but I would like to ask you just one question, and I would like to you be totally honest with me because the answer that you give me is very important to me."

His face got serious and his dark eyes stared at me without expression.

"I know that you feel you have a mission in life," I said, "and I want you to know that I respect that and all the things you must do to be faithful to that mission. Believe me, I do not want to interfere with it."

He nodded his head, "I understand," he said softly.

"You know that I believe what you have told me," I went on. "I believe you about everything. Except when you told me that David Phillips is not Maurice Bishop."

His eyes never moved, his expression never changed.

"Now," I said, "I would like you to tell me this one time very truthfully: Would you have told me if I had found Maurice Bishop?"

A slow smile crossed Veciana's face as he let out his breath. He put his head down and scratched his forehead, taking time to think carefully. Then he looked up with a half-smile still on his face. "Well, you know," he said, "I would like to talk with him first."

I looked at him for a moment, then laughed. Veciana laughed with me.

More recently, several developments have produced a series of responses from David Atlee Phillips.

The catalyst was the publication by McGraw-Hill this July of Anthony Summers's book, *Conspiracy*. Summers's work was a synthesis of his own investigation and the Committee's findings. He was astute enough to dig beyond the Committee's final report and into its volumes of appendixes. There he discovered the staff report I had written detailing the Committee's interest in David Phillips. He incorporated a brief summary of it into *Conspiracy*.

(On his own, Summers recently took the investigation further in a series of articles for the *London Observer*. He revealed finding the woman Veciana claimed had been an intermediary in some of Bishop's contacts with him. Summers learned she had been Veciana's personal secretary at the Havana bank and, after having later gotten involved in anti-Castro activity in Puerto Rico, was re-contacted by Veciana when he was organizing Alpha 66. Veciana asked her again

to provide secretarial services and to act as his answering service when he traveled. She agreed, and in the months and years that followed she became familiar with the name of a man who called from the mainland. His name, she recalled, was Bishop.)

Prior to the publication of Summers's book, Phillips planned an aggressive reaction against it. Learning of Summers's scheduled television appearance on NBC's *Today* show, Phillips approached an NBC executive in Washington to arrange a confrontation with Summers. Phillips came on strong. Turning toward Summers, he dramatically proclaimed: "Welcome to America, Mr. Summers. I accuse you of assassination! . . . Character assassination!" He attacked Summers for involving him in the Kennedy assassination—which Summers had scrupulously avoided doing in his book—and then personally named me as being singly responsible for linking him with Maurice Bishop.

It was a melodramatic performance for a man whose career specialized in the subtlest of tradecraft.

Although Summers, an experienced BBC television veteran, fended off Phillips's attack in a cool and articulate manner, Phillips repeated the confrontation on Channel 5's *Panorama* program. In neither appearance did Phillips provide any evidence contrary to the information in the Committee's report.

However, in approaching the media prior to his appearance, Phillips had issued a two-page document titled "A Statement." In it, he attempted to attack me by noting that in a 1971 magazine article the congressional investigator "described himself as paranoid on the subject of the Kennedy assassination."

On the TV shows, Summers pointed out that the article, written in *Philadelphia* magazine, was an obvious tongue-in-cheek piece entitled "My Paranoia and Me" and that it detailed the pieces of the puzzle a decade ago that indicated that the truth about the Kennedy assassination had not yet been told.

It crossed my mind that Phillips was, uncharacteristically, being a bit panicky, although I can't avoid the tendency to look for mirror images. That initial thought then was reinforced in a subsequent development.

In his offensive against Summers's book, Phillips had approached the *Washington Post's* executive editor, Ben Bradlee. Bradlee assigned an English exchange reporter, David Leigh, to look into the story. As of this writing, Leigh has not produced a story for the *Post*, but Phillips spent a lot of time with him attempting to guide him through some of the information. Some of the points he made to Leigh contradict his statements to the Assassinations Committee. He told Leigh that he may very well have been in Texas, visiting his family in Fort Worth, during the period Veciana claims he saw Bishop with Oswald.

In pursuing the piece, Leigh also interviewed a number of other people. Among them were three who were deliberately given pseudonyms in my staff report: "Ross Crozier," "Doug Gupton" and "Bart Henry." Under its agreement with the Committee, the CIA changed the real names of those former agents to maintain their security.

When interviewed by Leigh, all three individuals repeated, in essense, the statements they had given to the Committee: Crozier maintained that David Phillips had used the name of Bishop; Gupton said he didn't recall referring to his former boss as Bishop; and Bart Henry insisted that he had seen a Maurice Bishop at CIA headquarters and that the man wasn't his "personal friend" David Phillips. (There were discrepancies between Bart Henry's statements to Leigh and what he told the Committee regarding the number of times he had seen Bishop and when he saw him.)

On his television appearance with Anthony Summers, Phillips spoke as if he didn't know who Ross Crozier was. "I certainly would like to have an opportunity to talk to that gentleman. His name is not given in the book. . . ."

However, in attempting to guide *Post* reporter Leigh through the story, Phillips not only gave him Crozier's real name and address, but he also pointed out that Crozier had been a heavy drinker and implied that he often got his facts wrong.

Phillips also revealed to Leigh the real names of Doug Gupton and former deep-cover operative Bart Henry.

It raises the question of whether Phillips, in his determination to take an aggressive stance against the possibility of his being identified as Oswald-associate Maurice Bishop, violated his CIA Secrecy Agreement.

A critique of the Assassinations Committee's final report was written by Carl Oglesby in *Clandestine America*, the

Accused Assassin Lee Harvey Owswald

Anti-Castro Leader Antonio Veciana

American Spymaster Maurice Bishop

Were these three men together in Dallas two months before the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Veciana says they were. If so, does this provide a crucial link of Oswald, anti-Castro Cuban exiles, and a US intelligence agent? And what is the true identity of Maurice Bishop? The answers to these questions could unravel the mystery of who killed John F. Kennedy.

President John Kennedy's widow Jacqueline, flanked by his two brothers, Robert and Edward, in the funeral cortege on November 25, 1963.

Washington newsletter of the independent Assassination Information Bureau:

"To sum up. This report has serious shortcomings. It pulls its punches. It insinuates much about the Mob and JFK's death which it then says it doesn't really mean. It is alternately confused and dogmatic on the subject of Oswald's motive. It tells us it could not see all the way into the heart of CIA or FBI darkness, yet assures us that we are secure. Its treatment of the technical evidence in the crucial areas of shot sequencing and the medical evidence is shallow and unconvincing.

"Yet still we say that this report, overall, is strongly positive. It has moved the Dealey Plaza conspiracy question out of the shadows. It has boldly nailed the thesis of conspiracy to the churchdoor of orthodox political opinion."

Oglesby is right. But this was the last investigation and, somehow, I expected more. I am not alone. There is not one investigator—*not one*—who served on the Kennedy task force of the Assassinations Committee who honestly feels he took part in an adequate investigation, let alone a "full and complete" one.

So after all these years and all those spent resources—after the last investigation—what the Kennedy assassination still needs is an investigation guided simply, unswervingly by the priority of truth. Is it unrealistic to desire, for something as important as the assassination of a President, an investigation unbound by political, financial, or time restrictions?

Yet this was the last investigation. Chief Counsel Bob Blakey himself said it at his first staff meeting. He is a very meticulous lawyer. His allegiance is to the standing institutions of government. Again and again, he emphasized the restraints inherent in a congressional probe. He never considered a higher mandate. He never considered the Kennedy assassination an extraordinary event or a possible manifestation of internal corruption within the institutions he was so bent on protecting. He never considered using his position to demonstrate a loyalty to principles higher than those institutions. He never considered his mandate to conduct a "full and complete" investigation as coming from the American people.

Blakey recently showed, in a radio interview in New York, the limitations of his perspective. "What the public wants," he said, "and what the public can get are two different things. . . . The notion that somehow people outside of Washington can come into Washington and do great and noble things in Washington without understanding the place is just nonsense."

Bob Blakey was fond of telling the staff, when anyone would start pushing beyond the limitations he imposed, that we would just have to accept the fact that we were going to leave loose ends. "Life has loose ends," he would say.

After the treatment she received at the hands of the Assassinations Committee, Silvia Odio, whose testimony stands as the strongest witness to a conspiracy, finally permitted English journalist Anthony Summers, then producing a television documentary about the Kennedy assassination, to film an interview in silhouette. As he relates in his book, *Conspiracy*, Summers asked her why she was now prepared to talk, after refusing press approaches for so long. Odio was silent for a long moment. Then she said: "I guess it is a feeling of frustration after so many years. I feel outraged that we have not discovered the truth for history's sake, for all of us. I think it is because I'm very angry about it all—the forces I cannot understand and the fact that there is nothing I can do against them. That is why I am here."

Bob Blakey never felt what Silvia Odio feels. He never felt the frustration and anger that lives within her, the outrage that the truth has not been discovered after so many years. I'll always remember what she told me when the Committee had changed its mind about permitting her to tell her story to the American people. Her words echo in my mind.

"We lost," she said. "We all lost."