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- **The Assassination of John Kennedy:**  
An Alternative Hypothesis Robin Ramsay
- **From Prague With Love:**  
Maria Novotny, Michael Eddowes, Profumo and Kennedy Stephen Dorril
- **Decoding Edward Jay Epstein's 'Legend'** Robin Ramsay
- **PERMINDEX: The International Trade in Disinformation**

# The Assassination of John Kennedy: An Alternative Hypothesis

**Robin Ramsay**

In this essay I offer some informed speculation on the assassination of John Kennedy. I have called this a new hypothesis, but in fact it is the elaboration of a hunch about the case - but an interesting hunch, I think.

I take as proven that there was a conspiracy to murder Kennedy and a wide-ranging cover-up of the facts about the case. But I am not inclined to search for a gargantuan conspiracy. American politics are profoundly conspiratorial, but the evidence suggests a jostling mass of groups, lobbies, temporary alliances, rather than the great over-arching conspiracy apparently perceived by some of those who have studied the case. Not that the idea of a meta-conspiracy isn't attractive. Faced with a cover-up extending across the intelligence services, the mass media, and the political establishment, many of the JFK researchers made the not unreasonable assumption that it was co-ordinated, and that its purpose was the concealment of the identities of the real assassins. (In some versions the cover-up is presumed to be the work of the group which organised the assassination.)

The closest anyone has come to identifying such a meta-conspiracy is Fletcher Prouty. In his book *The Secret Team* (1) he described a loose alliance of individuals centred round the upper echelons of the CIA, with members elsewhere throughout the Federal bureaucracies, and with ramifications out into the media, publishing and the academic world. Prouty appears to believe, and encourages his reader to infer, that this 'secret team' arranged Kennedy's death and the cover-up.

The force of Prouty's general claims is hard to resist. He knows at first hand whereof he speaks; and some of his thesis has indeed been confirmed in the post-Watergate revelations of CIA links with the media, the Agency's use of journalists, and the existence of 'detailees' - CIA agents working within the domestic US government.(2) But Prouty has no evidence for his belief that this 'secret team' murdered Kennedy (or has declined to offer it), and there is one major difficulty with his (and similar) suggestions: namely, why would a group with the kind of power attributed to a 'secret team' ever have concluded that the best (or only) way to deal with Kennedy was to shoot him down in the street? A public execution is risky and messy - its success impossible to guarantee. The string of failed attempts on de Gaulle by the OAS had demonstrated that long before 1963.

It may just come down to how one sees the world. I see conspiracy everywhere - conspiracy is normal politics. But I also see incompetence, internecine squabbling, and accident - a world in which Murphy's Law (what can go wrong will go wrong) has near universal application. A giant conspiracy asks us to credit a solitary area of extraordinary competence amidst the raggedy muddle of the rest of human (and political) affairs. What a contrast the apparently super-efficient execution and cover-up of the Kennedy assassination makes with the farce and chaos of the CIA's attempts to do the same to Castro. Were there no plausible alternatives to the giant conspiracy view one would have to accept it. But a view of *either* Oswald the 'lone nut' or some meta-conspiracy is false. The absence of a decent investigation, the on-going cover-up,

and the murder itself can be explained without the need to posit a meta-conspiracy.

The central step is to recognise that evidence of complicity or acquiescence in the cover-up of the truth about that day in Dallas need imply neither complicity in the actual conspiracy itself nor knowledge of the truth. None of the major participants in the drama - government agencies, the mass media, the political establishment, and the Kennedy family and its political allies - are much concerned with 'the truth'. The Kennedys had too many of their own secrets potentially at risk; the mass media are interested in making money, and in 1963 had a very cosy relationship with the intelligence agencies and would take the hint to leave things alone. The political establishment, especially the Democrats with their long history of links to organised crime, had nothing to gain from the enthusiastic 'pursuit of the truth' - Jack Ruby's role ensured that; and the intelligence/law enforcement agencies had to bury Oswald's links with them. (3) All of these groups are, first and foremost, interested in politics - the acquisition and retention of power: cover-up, lies, the harassment of those seeking 'the truth', are among their normal activities. What happened after the assassination was routine - larger and more sensitive than usual - but routine nonetheless.

The separation of the cover-up from the assassination itself has significant consequences. For if the murder is viewed as the work of people powerful enough to affect the cover-up, then we are looking for a very powerful, and, presumably, very large group. But if it be conceded that the two things can be intelligibly separated, that the cover-up need suggest nothing more sinister than the desire to conceal something embarrassing to the status quo, to the system as a whole, then there is no particular reason to presume the actual assassination conspiracy to be large.

Nor, for example, is there any reason to interpret the 'lone assassin' verdict, which emerged immediately after the assassination as itself an indicator of the conspiracy at work. On the perspective I am suggesting, almost before Kennedy's heart stopped beating the one thing which everyone involved would have agreed upon, without discussion, never mind coercion, was that a 'lone nut' verdict *had* to emerge. The 'truth' was not an issue: in politics the 'truth' is simply a tool. (4) The point about the 'lone nut' is that it was then, and remains (cf Hinckley) the only safe explanation for political assassination within America. 'Disney America' (5), the fantasy pluralist democracy described in the textbooks on the American political system, cannot accommodate planned political assassination. (6)

This very simple idea is often overlooked by those trying to establish 'the truth'. David Lifton, to take the most striking recent example (7), may indeed have proved that Kennedy's body was doctored to produce wounds consistent with the 'sniper's nest' in the Book Depository where Oswald worked. Lifton shows - convincingly in my view - that the Secret Service (SS), who were in charge of the corpse, had to have been a party to this. From the fact of the 'reconstruction' of Kennedy's skull, Lifton then concludes (a) that the reconstruction must have been a part of the original murder plan, and (b) that the SS must therefore have been part of the murder conspiracy.

But why should we conclude this? In the first instance, is it really credible that anyone in their right minds would agree to go ahead with a plan which hinged (a) on getting undisturbed access to the corpse (b) co-operative autopsy surgeons; and (c) a corpse that was not so badly damaged as to be beyond repair? Nor is Lifton's second conclusion any more compelling. As soon as the 'sniper's nest' was found and its discovery announced (at about 1.30pm) its location - behind the Presidential car -

meant that the 'lone assassin's' shots were going to have to come from there *come what may*. Shots from elsewhere - e.g. in front of the car - would indicate a conspiracy, and conspiracy, I suggest, was acceptable to no-one. The six hours or so between the initial examination of the corpse at the hospital in Dallas and the beginning of the autopsy at Bethesda, is surely ample time for the SS, or their political bosses, to have decided that the autopsy was about to reveal a conspiracy which no-one wanted. The thing which intervened between Dallas and Bethesda was a political appreciation of the consequences of the event. For the SS are not stupid men. A conspiracy was dangerous because it was an unknown. (8) Which group? Right or left? The Soviets? Cubans? None of the alternatives promised anything but horrors: some promised a Cuban Missile Crisis - or worse. Did the SS have any real choice, any political alternative, but make sure the 'best evidence' (the corpse) fitted the existence of the 'sniper's nest'? For whatever else was uncertain that afternoon, the 'sniper's nest' was there, a fact. And there they (the SS) were with a corpse, which would reveal the existence of a conspiracy. In the circumstances, altering the corpse or persuading the autopsy surgeons to lie (or both) were the only alternatives. Lifton deserves every possible praise for making all this clear. His book is a monumental achievement, one of the greatest pieces of detective work ever accomplished, but his conclusions can be discounted.

Having driven a plausible wedge between the murder itself and the events which followed it, it is to the murder I now turn. From the mountain of facts, factoids and speculation which has been erected these past 20 years, I want to consider four features of the case which, taken together, may constitute something like a series of stepping-stones through the morass.

The first is the form of the actual assassination itself. Kennedy was bushwhacked. People fired rifles at him - just like in a Western. And firing rifles at a head of state usually means one thing: the assassins couldn't get close enough to do it any other way. Never mind 'triangulation of fire' and the rest of the speculation that's been raised to try and convince us that this was some kind of masterful operation. It wasn't. This was a high-risk operation which almost failed. Only one killing shot was on target: at least three others missed.

I find it difficult to believe that any of the powerful elements in the US state apparatus - the intelligence agencies, the Pentagon, for example - would have felt it necessary to ambush Kennedy if they just wanted to get rid of him, or change some of his policies. For such agencies there are always better, less public, ways of persuading people to resign - permanently if necessary. Planes can crash, cars run off the road, boats sink, and so on. (9)

No, there are only three possibilities, it seems to me, which make sense of the ambush.

1. It was motivated by desperation - the job had to be done *then* and hang the consequences.
2. It was done by people who just didn't care about the consequences of failure.
3. It was done as part of some wider plan, whose point was not just to kill JFK (and, to anticipate my argument, perhaps not even that), but also to have his death (or the attempt) happen in public. In other words: either the assassination *was* a crude attempt to bushwhack Kennedy; or it was something designed to look like one.

The second thread I want to examine is the role of Oswald. After his arrest, he had no doubts about his part in it: 'I'm just the patsy', he said. Very striking, and very specific. He didn't say they'd got the wrong man, or make great protestations of innocence: just 'I'm the patsy'. The unavoidable conclusion is: he *knew*. His initial perceptions of his role seem to have been accurate. Kurtz and Summers (10) to cite merely the two latest large-scale re-examinations of the case, have demonstrated anew that Oswald was indeed the victim of a scheme to frame him as the assassin. But if this is the case - and I believe it *proved* - the conspirators must have included Oswald's speedy demise in their plans. With his connections to the intelligence world and the anti-Castro underground, he had to die: alive he would have talked - did talk, in fact, though what he said has never been made fully public; and threatened to talk some more when he came to court.

It seems likely that he was supposed to die 'resisting arrest'. When the Dallas police grabbed him in the Texas Theatre, a gun was heard to misfire. The Warren Report put this down to Oswald's gun but an FBI weapons expert:

"found nothing to indicate that this (Oswald's) weapon's firing pin had struck the primer of any of these cartridges." (11)

Again, Oswald's reactions at the time are revealing: he shouted "I am not resisting arrest."

Some effort and time had gone into making Oswald qua patsy appear to be a left-winger, a Castroite. (12) And given that he must have been scheduled to die immediately after the assassination, the obvious inference has to be that he was supposed to be unveiled (after his death) as a Castroite. Which indeed, is what certain people tried to do. But the plan went wrong (Murphy's law). Oswald survived long enough to get arrested, talk of exposing the conspiracy, and Jack Ruby had to step in at the last minute to do the necessary.

More importantly for whoever organised the affair, the US government, initially the Justice Department (i.e. the FBI) had decided immediately that Oswald had to be a 'lone nut'. Less than 24 hours after the shooting Hoover told Johnson that the FBI judged Oswald to have been working alone. The then Deputy Attorney General Katzenbach (one of the Kennedy allies) agreed and wanted the FBI's initial reports released to the press to silence 'speculations' that there was a conspiracy. These 'speculations' concerned links between Oswald and Cuba. It was the fear of what anti-Castro forces within the US could do with such 'speculations' which was the initial specific motivation for the cover-up. (This aspect of the case gets ignored).

At this distance, none of this seems exceptional. LBJ had had precious little foreign policy experience, and the last thing he would have wished on himself was another Cuban crisis in his first days in office. The FBI, the great seekers of 'Communist conspiracies' may be presumed to be eager not to be revealed as having missed the big one, the only such 'communist conspiracy' worth a damn since the early 1950s. So bureaucratic self-protection and LBJ's understandable reluctance to get embroiled in another Cuban hassle created the 'lone assassin' - if anything specific did so. It hardly matters whether or not we now believe that Johnson took the idea of a Cuban connection seriously; any more than it matters that we believe Jimmy Carter took his Cuban hassle with the Brigade of Soviet troops 'discovered' on Cuba in 1978. For both of them, as politicians what counted was that the 'Cuban thing' was likely to be used

against them. Politics prevailed. It usually does.

The third element I want to suggest as important is the fact that the assassination seems to have been widely known about in advance. What is striking about this is that for the most part the people who are known to have had such advance knowledge were low level 'street people' - a stripper, a waitress, a small-time right-winger, a minor intelligence agent. (13) The assassination conspiracy was leaky. And this suggests very strongly that we are dealing with something other than a professional job by the intelligence services or the Pentagon. It is hard to imagine the pros holding anything more closely than the assassination of a president.

Three elements: an ambush; Oswald the 'Castroite' patsy; a leaky operation. Obviously the first two merge: the assassination had to look like a crude bushwhack if Oswald, in the Book Depository, was to be plausibly framed as the man firing the shots. And the hypothesis which most immediately accommodates all three is the widespread view that this was an operation by anti-Castro Cubans and (perhaps) renegade elements in American intelligence - presumably the CIA or Army intelligence.

The difficulty with this is not that it is implausible in itself but that it is only plausible if one other feature of the events in Dallas is ignored - the actions of the Secret Service. For while no-one has *demonstrated* that the SS were part of the conspiracy, their behaviour that day was sufficiently sloppy to raise the suspicion that they were a party to it. Fletcher Prouty, for example, with some experience of other SS operations, has suggested this. (14) My problem with this is that I find it impossible to believe that the SS were so hostile to Kennedy as to be willing to see him killed (there is no evidence on that); so venal as to have been bought off; or so stupid as to take part in such an obvious ploy. To return to what I said at the beginning about the 'secret team': with a co-operative Secret Service who would need to consider such a crude, risky job? And yet their actions (or lack of them) that day in Dallas *look* very much like those of men who are turning their heads.

### **The alternative hypothesis**

It is 1962 and there is enormous resentment among the Cuban exiles and elements within the military/intelligence at Kennedy's perceived aborting of the Bay of Pigs. Then there is the missile crisis. The resolution of that gives Castro a 'hands off' agreement - but that's just in public: the 'Kennedy Vendetta' continues. (15) Everybody and their cousin is beavering away trying to screw Castro. Then, for reasons that still appear to be unknown, Kennedy begins trying to wind down the anti-Castro operations and opens a back channel to Castro via William Attwood at the UN. (16) My hunch - and that's all it is - is that some creative individual within the intelligence community had the bright idea that one way of sticking it to Castro *and* aborting Kennedy's peace feelers, would be to *fake* an attempt on Kennedy's life which could be attributed to Cuba. But the scheme involved a large number of people and someone in, or close to, the plan realised that the perfect conditions were going to be created for a real hit to take place. Security would be lax: the existence of the phoney set-up would ensure that no-one would want to examine the mess: and, most of all, there is Oswald, with some minor role in the 'phoney', ripe for the part of patsy. (17) So into the perfect set-up steps a real assassination team. And though there isn't a shred of real evidence to support this hypothesis, it has a number of significant features going for it.

1. This scenario explains the SS 'turn of the head' without asking us to believe

them a party to a real assassination attempt. Anticipating a piece of 'political theatre', they take no particular notice when the shots first ring out. (18)

2. On this scenario, some of Oswald's puzzling behaviour becomes intelligible. How did he know he was a patsy? He didn't seem to be surprised to be in the hands of the police. Nor did he seem particularly worried. He knew something, and that knowledge seems to have reassured him that, in the long run, all would be well. Perhaps what he knew about was the phoney hit.
3. The dual conspiracy enables us to put a minor gangster like Ruby alongside the SS - something which otherwise looks extremely odd.
4. In this scenario the assassination team need not be anything of significance. Taking advantage of circumstances, a handful of people could have done it. Thus the kind of picture which emerged during the Garrison enquiry - a handful of mercenaries sitting around discussing how to kill Kennedy - or a hit team from organised crime (Ruby's role suggests this, of course) cease to sound so implausible.
5. Such a small group might well not have had the professional discipline to keep the plan secret - hence the gossip circulating in anti-Castro/crime network circles.
6. The idea of a phoney attempt is well within the range of options that people like the CIA were considering at the time. It is certainly no more preposterous than some of the contemporaneous schemes concocted against Castro. And such a plan would explain the various CIA and Military personnel found around the periphery of the assassination without asking us to believe that such bureaucracies condoned - or organised - the assassination proper. Attempts to improve CIA/military involvement have all failed. The simplest explanation for that failure is that none existed. (19)
7. The twin track idea explains the curious mixture of subtlety and naivety which characterises the episode. For while the idea of framing Oswald was quite clever, the assumption behind it, that the *killing* of Kennedy could be laid at Castro's door, was extremely naïve. There was not the remotest chance of that happening. Kennedy was just another politician, but Cuba was the ally of the Soviet Union, which while in a strategically inferior position at that time, did have nuclear weapons. The Missile Crisis was still fresh in the minds of Washington's elite. As it turned out such pressure as was generated in the aftermath of the assassination was swiftly and comprehensively squashed by the government. The scenario I am suggesting, on the other hand, does not depend upon attributing the murder of Kennedy to Cuba. At best the original plan may have had the relatively modest ambitions of putting a stop to the peace feelers.
8. The twin track explains the ferocity with which the intelligence services in the US have fought to keep the lid on the case. Their actions stink of guilt. But guilt about what? An assassination or a piece of smart-ass 'theatre' which backfired?
9. Most of all, this scenario is attractive because it hinges on accident and opportunism. I understand the attractions of the meta-conspiracy view: it has taken me 5 years to rid myself of the compulsion to view the assassination through the lens of the cover-up which followed it. But when that is done, what does the assassination look like? A crude attempt to bushwhack Kennedy and blame Castro via Oswald. And it was crude. When examined, the various bits of evidence linking Oswald to the shooting are pretty thin. In the original plan that didn't matter: Oswald was going to be dead, and the evidence merely superficially plausible - the support for an open and shut case. Pity the poor



Warren Commission, trying to put the lid on the case when the material they had to work with was never designed for such close scrutiny.

I would like to be able to hone this scenario down a little but it really isn't possible. As it stands there are a great number of variations on the basic theme which are possible. The front-runners would seem to be:

- the anti-Castro forces within the US wanted the phoney hit to sabotage the peace movement towards Cuba:
- the US government, perhaps even with the consent of Kennedy himself, wanted the phoney hit to lay at the door of the anti-Castro forces to give themselves further justification for shutting the exiles down.

The former seems the more plausible: the latter, somehow, the more seductive, the more ironical.

Perhaps the final suggestive point should be left with the younger brother. Not known as a classicist, Robert Kennedy took to reading Greek tragedy after the assassination. As I understand it, the central theme of the Greek tragedies is the way men's schemes have a habit of rebounding on them. Maybe RFK knew something we don't .

## Notes

1. New York, 1973
2. media links: e.g. Leonard Mosley *Dulles* (NY 1978) p457  
journalists: e.g. Carl Bernstein *The CIA and the Media* (Rolling Stone 20th October 1977)  
detailees: in the Pike Report, discussed by I.F. Stone in *New York Review of Books* 1st April 1976.
3. As happened at this time in the UK with Stephen Ward, who, despite working for MI5, got abandoned by them when it came to the crunch. (See Steve Dorril's essay on Novotny in this issue)
4. Beautifully demonstrated by the wonderful Peter Dale Scott in his *Crime and Coverup* (Berkeley USA, 1977). One of the most interesting examples of this is the remark by Sprague, the man who was sacked from the House Committee on Assassinations, who said somewhere (I've forgotten where) that the real reason the committee was set up was to demonstrate to the black caucus in Congress that they were important to Jimmy Carter. This has the ring of political reality about it. It also explains why that committee never got the resources to do a decent job.
5. Jim Hougan's expression. See the introduction to his *Spooks* (London 1979)
6. Or: nothing other than that perpetrated by 'terrorists'. What I'm getting at here is: assassination planned by any of the 'legitimate' groups that compose the plurality.
7. David Lifton *Best Evidence* (London 1981)
8. It is also possible that the SS wanted to bury any signs of conspiracy because they should have prevented it - and didn't.
9. Plus, of course, JFK's sexual promiscuity left him wide open to blackmail.
10. Michael Kurtz *Crime of the Century* (Harvester, Brighton, 1982: Anthony Summers *Conspiracy* (London 1980)
11. Robert Sam Anson *They Killed The President* (NY 1975) pp354/5
12. Efforts based on the foundation of Oswald's own attempts to create such a role.

13. Discussed in Kurtz (above) p171
14. Prouty essay in *Unmasking the CIA*, ed Howard Frazier (NY 1978)
15. Branch and Crille *The Kennedy Vendetta* in Harpers (US)
16. William Attwood *The Reds and the Blacks* (London 1967). But better is Donald Schulz *Kennedy and Cuba* (Foreign Policy, Spring 1977)
17. On this track, Oswald may well have set-up the 'sniper's nest' and, perhaps, even have transported a rifle to work that day in the bundle he said was curtain rods. Perhaps it was the Mauser which was apparently left at the scene but then switched.
18. This may also explain why SS Agent Bolden was so keen to testify before the Warren Commission. Some reports have suggested that had he been allowed to do so, he would have said that the SS knew of the events in Dallas. Curious that none of the assassination buffs in the US have tracked Bolden down. Or have I missed that?

## **JFK - Information sources**

There are currently 5 newsletters devoted exclusively or partly to the continuing work on the case. They are:

- *Echoes of Conspiracy*  
Edited and produced by Paul L. Hoch, 1525 Acton Street, Berkeley, California 94702, USA.
- *The Continuing Enquiry*  
Penn Jones Jr.  
Route 3, Box 356  
Waxahachie, Texas 75165, USA.
- *The Grassy Knoll Gazette*  
Box 1465 Manchester, MA 01944  
USA.
- *Coverups*  
4620 Brandingshire Place, Fort Worth, Texas 76133, USA
- *The JFK Assassination Forum Newsletter*  
Harry Irwin, 32 Ravensdene Crescent, Ravenhill, Belfast, BT6 0DB, UK.

A line dropped to any of them will produce current subscription rates.

(Harry Irwin's Newsletter has been missing for some months. But Harry wrote us that he has had some 'personal and family troubles' which he is now over and his newsletter will be underway again in the near future.)

There is an absolutely vast literature on the case and the best source of books etc on the subject is:

- *Aries Research*  
PO Box 1107, Aptos, California, 95003, USA.

Ask for their mail order catalogue: it's astonishing.

# Maria Novotny: From Prague With Love

## Stephen Dorril

In February this year, unnoticed by the press, a funeral took place in a quiet Sussex village. In attendance were some famous names from London society of the fifties and sixties, and two men in regulation dark suits from an undisclosed department of the Security Services. They had been contacts for the deceased, Maria Novotny, who made headlines in the sixties through her 'relationship' with President John Kennedy, and her involvement in the Profumo affair.

Novotny's own accounts of the two episodes have tended to be dismissed, and reasonably so, as they appeared in the sensationalist press. (1) But one man, Michael Eddowes, took her very seriously indeed, claiming to have spent over \$100,000 of his own money following up leads generated by her story. To Eddowes, Novotny was the link to a Soviet plot to discredit Western leaders:

"I had discovered that the group in London who had destroyed Profumo had sent a young woman, Maria Novotny, to destroy the character of President Kennedy. She was the cousin of President Novotny of Czechoslovakia. This is fact." (2)

When Eddowes expanded his theory to include the assassination of Kennedy, it took on a distinctly bizarre look.

Eddowes' book, *November 22nd: How They Killed Kennedy* (3) suggested that Lee Harvey Oswald had been replaced by a look-a-like KGB agent when he went to the Soviet Union. (4) Following this to its logical conclusion, Eddowes reportedly spent over \$10,000 in October 1981 on legal fees and exhumation costs involved in re-opening Oswald's grave. (5) He arranged for a new autopsy with the consent of Marina Porter (Oswald) to see if the grave contained Oswald or a double. (6) Inevitably such ideas have meant that Eddowes has been portrayed as an 'assassination loony'. But he had at one time been a respected solicitor; obtained a Royal Pardon for Timothy Evans who was mistakenly hanged for the Christie murders; and wrote a best-selling book on the case, *A Man On Your Conscience*.

Was Eddowes just muddying the water with disinformation on the assassination, or had he really uncovered evidence to confirm his theories? Strangely, although central to his theory on the assassination, Novotny is only briefly mentioned in the introduction to his book. One would have thought that everything that could be said on the Profumo affair had been told, but new evidence, primarily from Nigel West (7) and Novotny herself, undermines the conclusions of the Denning Report. It also provides background to, and some justification for Eddowes' line of enquiry; even though in the end we can dismiss the Eddowes' claims because he misunderstood the role of Stephen Ward.

This article is also an account of Maria Novotny's own life, which confirms at least a part of the articles in the sensationalist press. (8) There are no tidy ends to this account and if it is largely speculative - so be it; for the true story of the Profumo affair has yet

to be revealed. I take it that readers have a basic knowledge of the Profumo affair and can read between the lines for themselves.

Maria Novotny knew little of her own background: it wasn't until this year that her husband learned her real name. Maria Stella Novotny was born on the 9th of May 1941 in Prague. Her father was brother to the President of Czechoslovakia, and they lived in the Royal palace until she was 6 years old, when the Soviet Union moved in. Because the President supported the Communists, this family tie would explain why Eddowes thought she had been chosen to destroy Kennedy. But what Eddowes didn't know was that Maria's father was actively *anti*-Communist. Although opposed to each other politically, the brothers remained friends, the President warning Maria's father that the Soviets were liable to arrest him, and advising him to leave the country. Instead, he joined the underground, making arrangements for Maria to leave the country with the family agent, called Rutter.

They escaped in a railway truck hiding under some corn, crossing the border into Austria. Unfortunately they ended up in the Soviet sector where they were put in a displaced persons camp.

In 1948 Maria was released, apparently through the efforts of a Mrs Capes, who had known her father when he was in England, studying at university. How this was achieved is not known, but Maria was brought to England where she lived as the daughter of Mrs Capes. When she became a teenager she went into modelling and was determined to make it into a successful career.

When only 18 she met Horace 'Hod' Dibden (9), then aged 57, at the Black Sheep Club (10) in Piccadilly, which he helped run. An expert on English antiques and furniture, he had many friends on the London scene, including Stephen Ward, who he had known since the war; and, interestingly, Michael Eddowes, who had given up his solicitor's practice and become the owner of a chain of restaurants. Hod and Eddowes had known each other for twenty years.

Hod and Maria were married in January 1960. The marriage was conditional on her being allowed to carry on her own life. She appears to have been a highly intelligent, very beautiful young girl, determined to get on in the world, hoping to use Hod's contacts and money to climb the social ladder. In her personal account she claims to have been a virgin at the time, and, in reality, rather turned off by sexual relations. To her, sex was a 'game' designed to shock other people: she took her pleasure watching the reactions of people to situations she had organised. After the honeymoon they were regulars on the night club scene. One particular party in February 1960, given by an American millionaire, Huntingdon Hartford, was a turning point.

Among the guests were Stephen Ward and a more 'sinister' man, Harry Alan Towers, who claimed to be a film producer and owner of a modelling agency. Maria and Towers didn't meet at the party, but Towers must have recognised her: four days later a letter arrived suggesting a meeting at Claridges to discuss some possible modelling work. The letter was actually signed by Tower's mother, Margaret, who Novotny claims had an extraordinary influence over him, and from whom he took his instructions. At the meeting Towers was brisk to the point of rudeness. He told her that he could make her a top television model doing commercials in America. Although she didn't like Towers, she found it difficult to turn down the contract, which offered upwards of \$50,000 a year.

Over the next days the contract was sorted out and Maria was introduced to some of Towers' friends, one of whom tried to have sex with her in Paris. Towers, over the next year, made no sexual advances towards Maria but didn't mind pushing his friends on her. She signed to Towers' modelling agency and he gave her a large deposit. The day she left for New York Stephen Ward went to a dinner party with her at which he made some sketches of her. Maria claimed that Ward and Towers knew each other. To Eddowes this provided a link between the Kennedy and Profumo episodes. Hod also thought that Ward and Towers knew each other at this time.

Towers flew ahead a few days earlier and met Maria at what became Kennedy Airport. Almost immediately they were arguing with each other, and Maria became doubly suspicious of him when he told her to sign a hotel register as Maria Novotny. Up til then she had been known as Maria Chapman, Hod's family name. Towers insisted that while she was in America she should use Novotny. What else, she thought, did Towers know of her background?

At first her modelling career went well and they went to the usual round of parties. But it seems that modelling offers were the result of her sleeping with television producers. After two weeks Towers arranged a lunch for her with Peter Lawford, the brother-in-law of President John Kennedy. Towers claimed that it would do her modelling career good if she got to know Kennedy. Maria didn't see the connection at the time; it was only later that she realised that Towers had engineered the meeting for other purposes. On reflection, it spelt blackmail to Maria and Eddowes.

Unknown to her at the time she was scheduled to be the replacement for Simone McQueen, a TV weather forecaster, who had just finished with Kennedy. Lawford took her to parties and she briefly met Kennedy at one and arranged to meet him again. They were more intimate at a party where the singer, Vic Damone, was the host. She was introduced to Kennedy and almost immediately shown into a bedroom where she went to bed with him. They weren't gone very long before there was a commotion in the main room. Damone's Asian girlfriend had made an unsuccessful suicide attempt and had been found in the bathroom with her wrists slashed. The apartment quickly emptied, Kennedy disappearing with a bodyguard and his associates.

The incident was hushed up. The quick departure may have had something to do with the fact that, according to Maria, one of J. Edgar Hoover's men was known to attend these parties. Word would have quickly reached Hoover who would have no doubt added it to his files on the Kennedy brothers.

Maria continued to see Kennedy and his brother, Robert, though I doubt that there is much truth in the published accounts of her relationship with Robert. Her own account rarely mentions him - or, for that matter, the sensational claims of her involvement with UN officials. The latter appears to have involved Towers' other girls.

At the end of the year Hod arrived in New York to buy antiques. At this time Maria had had enough of Towers. Her modelling career was nowhere in sight. She decided to leave Towers and move into Hod's apartment near the UN building. Towers was extremely angry and determined to make her stay in his flat. But as he was commuting between London and New York at this time, he had little real control over her. She moved in with Hod.

During this period when Towers would later be accused of running a vice-ring at the UN building, he was in constant touch with his mother - and one other person, Leslie Chateris.

This was presumably an innocent relationship since Towers said he wanted to buy the TV rights to *The Saint*. But Towers did get Maria to take a package to Chateris in Los Angeles. To Maria, Tower's business seemed to have little to do with television or films.

Shortly after the disagreement Maria returned to his luxurious Manhattan apartment to pick up the rest of her clothes. Towers was surprisingly good-natured, apologising for his previous loss of temper, saying he would make it up to her. That night he said she could use his apartment for a night with a boyfriend. When he arrived they went into a bedroom, at which point he tried to persuade her to accept \$100 for sexual relations. Eventually, after some persuasion, she accepted. He then showed her his badge and told her she was under arrest. He left the room fetching in other officers who were lining the corridor.

Searching the apartment they found Towers hiding, shaking under some suitcases in a lobby. Maria was taken to a police station and interrogated for four hours, going through three different agencies. Finally she was released on bail.

At her apartment the next day plain clothed policemen interviewed her and at FBI headquarters she was shown pictures of many girls and asked if she knew them. It was clear that the FBI wanted Towers. Several charges were to be made against him and they wanted her to testify against him. But before they could, Towers escaped from America after bail, reputedly a very large sum, had been put up.

Towers was accused of running a vice-ring involving UN officials. Hod and Maria were shown immigration files on Towers which, according to Hod, showed Towers' links with Eastern Europe. When Eddowes went to New York he met John Malone, head of the New York FBI, and they apparently had three two hour interviews. Eddowes was shown FBI, Immigration, and, possibly, CIA files on Towers and Novotny. These proved to Eddowes satisfaction that Towers was working for the Soviets; that Novotny had been used to get close to Kennedy for possible blackmail - probably because of her Czech background. (For some reason Novotny believed that photos existed of her love making sessions taken from hidden cameras in the UN building.)

It was reported that on leaving America Towers went to Prague, Moscow, and Peking, stopping for a time in southern Ireland before residing in Canada. (11) Novotny was held as a material witness and charged with being a wayward minor. According to Hod, it was rumoured at the time that Kennedy himself had intervened to stop the charges.

By now Novotny was determined to leave America: Towers was hardly likely to return. She had in her own words, become a political pawn, with the State police, FBI and Immigration officials claiming jurisdiction over her. She escaped by buying a boarding ticket for the *Queen Mary* and staying on board when it sailed. Rather implausibly an officer let her stay on board without saying anything when she told him she had lost her passport. A rumour reached the papers that the CIA had helped her escape. Hod met her off the boat in England having flown ahead.

One of the first people she met in London, around April 1961, was Stephen Ward, who invited her to a reception at the Soviet Embassy. Ward pestered her daily to meet the Soviet diplomat Eugene Ivanov, but she refused. She had had enough problems in New York, and a solicitor friend (possibly Eddowes) warned her not to get involved with political figures. Hod went in her place to the Embassy reception (with Gilbert Harding) where he met Ivanov. Ward didn't give up though. After Ivanov he switched to Profumo, introducing Maria as 'the girl who made an impact on the Kennedy clan'. Unknown to her, he was also playing up her relationship with the Czech President. These attempts to link Novotny to Profumo and Ivanov (which she later saw as deliberate) took place before the famous Keeler meeting, suggesting at the very least, that the Denning report (12) was less than adequate.

She was eventually tricked into seeing Ivanov at a party at Cliveden. Ward introduced her to a surprise guest and quickly left the room. The guest was Ivanov. What came next was a shock because Ivanov knew details of her background and told her he could arrange for her to visit Czechoslovakia to see relatives. He painted a rosy picture of life in the country and of the Communist Party. She declined his offers and after some further efforts at persuasion she left the room to join the others. She learned later that he was particularly interested in her experiences in America.

Behind the sexual affairs and personal intrigues of Ward, Profumo and Ivanov were the British Security Services; and further back, and probably not apparent to the participants, was the wider intelligence battle between East and West. It is worth going into some detail on this area as it provides clues to Novotny's true position.(13)

In April 1961 the West's most important Soviet spy, Oleg Penkovsky, arrived in London on a Trade Mission, staying until May 6th. The material he gave to MI6 and CIA representatives was to prove vital to resolving the Cuban missile crisis: Kennedy would base his final decisions on the Penkovsky material. (14) During this particular visit he was debriefed at an all-night session during which he provided details on the KGB and GRU men at the Soviet Embassy in London. Amongst them was Ivanov whom he had known as a student. It is also worth noting that he had told MI6 that there was a traitor in the top ranks of MI5. Although no MI5 men took part in the debriefings of Penkovsky, they did play a leading role in the Profumo/Ivanov episode based on details he provided.

Ivanov's cover for his intelligence role was that of Naval Attache. But he was no run-of-the-mill intelligence officer. His father-in-law was Alexander Gorkin, Chairman of the Soviet Supreme Court. It is also believed that Ivanov played a prominent role in Nasser's coup in Egypt. According to Nigel West (15) he had been identified by 'D' branch as an intelligence officer when he first arrived in London on the 27th March 1960. Penkovsky described him as a man who liked women and a good party, suggesting that he might be a profitable target. So the watchers began trailing him.

Here West's revisionist account starts to break down. It seems incredible that Ivanov was able to meet so many celebrities without MI5 keeping some tabs on him if they knew he was a spy. It is claimed that in June 1961 Ivanov led them to a house at 17 Wimpole Mews. By checking the electoral roll they found it was the home of Stephen Ward, who they contacted on June 8th. But that is virtually impossible because Ward didn't move into the flat until June 1st (16), which would have given him no time to be put on the register. Also according to MI5, on West's account, Ward was unknown to Registry. But Lee Tracey (17) an MI6 contract employee working at the *Daily Mirror*

on organised vice, has revealed that he was assigned by MI6 to compile a profile on Stephen Ward six years before the scandal broke. Nothing ever appeared in the paper but a full report went to MI6 who hoped that some juicy target might be sexually compromised inside the Ward circle. (Which suggests either MI5 and MI6 didn't exchange material or someone is lying - or both.) MI5 made some discreet enquiries of Ward which revealed that he had many important people as friends, including the third Viscount Astor, who was known to MI5. Novotny has said that she saw reports which showed that Bill Astor was controlling Ward, and that her meeting at Cliveden with Ivanov had been arranged by Astor.

In one of those intriguing coincidences, Astor played a role in Ivanov's attempts to intervene in the Cuban Missile Crisis. On the Thursday evening of the Cuba week, Astor suggested Ivanov should meet 'Boofy' Gore, the Earl of Arran. At the time it seemed to be an eccentric choice for behind-the-scenes diplomacy. But in reality it was spot on. For besides having easy access to Lord Home, then the Foreign Secretary, he was the first cousin of Sir David Ormsby-Gore the British Ambassador to America. Gore was a close friend of Kennedy - so intimately tied up in the decision making around the missile crisis (assuring Kennedy of the value of the Penkovsky material) that he was invited to the President's nuclear shelter if things went bad. (18) It was the Missile Crisis that persuaded Eddowes that Khrushchev was behind the assassination of JFK.

It is possible that MI5 have said they used the electoral register to trace Ward to protect the real source. It is said that Ward was introduced to Ivanov by (Sir) Colin Coote, editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, in January 1961. There are conflicting stories about the origins of this meeting, but it has something to do with Ward doing sketches of Soviet diplomats. He did sketches of many famous people though he was only an average artist. (19) Coote had contacts in the Soviet Embassy and, interestingly, he was a golfing friend of the Director of MI5, Sir Roger Hollis. (20) Coote arranged a meeting at the Garrick Club. Accompanying Ward to this lunch was David Floyd, the *Telegraph's* correspondent on Soviet Affairs. Floyd was on the books of the IRD. (21) IRD, run by the Foreign Office, was a Cold War propaganda outfit which had a close relationship with MI6; and, especially with section IX which dealt with the Soviet Union. Was the meeting set up by the intelligence services or did Floyd supply a report to section IX?

Officially Ward was employed by MI5 on June 8th 1961 to help in the entrapment of Ivanov, hopefully to compromise him with the help of his girls. Ward's friends didn't know this. On the contrary many, including Hod and Maria, believed that he could be working for the Soviets. Hod was astonished when told of Ward's real role. He still believes Ward was murdered to keep him quiet. "It wasn't in his character to commit suicide."

In London Hod and Maria set up dinner parties (22) at which many famous people attended. About half of these parties appear to have included sexual games afterwards. Ward was a frequent guest but as far as is known he never actually had sexual relations with the girls. It was at one of these dinner parties that the famous Minister-in-the-mask incident occurred; though in reality it was very different to the accounts of Keeler and Rice-Davies. (They, incidentally, never met Novotny.) Hod had met Keeler one night when Profumo picked her up at Ward's flat. According to Hod, Mandy Rice-Davies learned of the mask incident from Ward when he returned to their flat that night. Maria says:



"I lied to Lord Denning, but not about a politician. My lies were to protect someone from ruin and a criminal charge. A Member of Parliament was present, William Rees-Davies, MP for Thanet, but he was not in the disguise."

On December 14th 1962 Christine Keeler ran into an old friend - Michael Eddowes - and, according to him, the whole story of her involvement with Profumo and Ivanov came out. This included Ivanov's request that Keeler ask Profumo when the allies were going to let West Germany have nuclear warheads. Eddowes says he made out a 6-page report which eventually reached the Security Services. Nothing came of it because MI5 believed that Profumo had told the Prime Minister of this twin relationship, while Profumo assumed MI5 had told him. It wasn't until Eddowes wrote to Macmillan on June 13th that the affair was finally exposed. On Friday June 14th he released the full text of the letter to the Evening Standard and the media scramble began. Ward had been trying to get Novotny to meet Ivanov up until his departure. He left shortly after the Edgecombe shooting incident at Wimpole Mews. But what happened to Ivanov I haven't discovered. Officially he was recalled to Moscow, although Mandy Rice-Davies (who is not reliable) recounts a different tale. In 1977 two men interviewed her about the Profumo Affair in Israel, where she lived for a time. At first they claimed to be journalists from Time magazine; then private investigators. Eventually one of them said "I was with the CIA for 25 years. I spent a lot of time in London - I was involved in the George Raft affair at the Colony Club."

When she mentioned Ivanov he said "We took him...we... the CIA. We couldn't let him go. We didn't know what he had and what he didn't have and we didn't want to take any chances. Let's say he was an involuntary defector." (23)

It would be around this time that Eddowes started to put together the Novotny connection, eventually going to New York at the invitation of the Journal - American, to follow up leads. The one piece of information which he said he was after, could be details of the background of Harry Towers, which were given to him by 'contacts'. Eddowes did attempt to write a book with Maria Novotny on this whole affair and in the late sixties they were three quarters of the way through it when strange things started to happen. Eddowes rang Hod one day from his house telling him that two men had broken into his flat, beating him badly, leaving him bleeding on his bed. They warned him to stay away from the subject. The day before Maria had narrowly escaped a serious accident in her car when the steering failed. Bolts in the steering column had been cut. Eddowes, by this time an old man, was scared and burned the manuscript, and would pursue the matter no further. This would explain the brevity of the Novotny sections in his books on the Kennedy assassination.

Maria doesn't appear to have changed her lifestyle very much in the later sixties. She did try to become a novelist, writing many books. But only one, a Harold Robbins type version of her own life, got published. She also had a regular column in the magazine Club International for a time, exploiting incidents from her own life.

It was whilst researching a book, apparently on brothels, around 1970, that she came into contact with British Intelligence. At a brothel she found that it was a set-up, with two-way mirrors and hidden microphones, used by the Security Services to compromise clients. She was invited to help them with similar work and seems to have been employed as a high-class companion/whore to people of interest to the services.

Particular cases involved compromising the head of a Caribbean island which the Foreign Office hoped to stop going independent. It did little good: it went independent the following year. Cameras had been hidden in a bedroom at Brown's Hotel when he came across for a diplomatic meeting.

In 1978 (24) she was involved in the break-up of a massive fraud. She had been put onto the activities of Taylor and Ash by Billy Hill, the former London underworld boss, who thought there was the making of another Kray-type gang, whose brutality went against the old-time ideals. She was asked to become involved with Taylor, and was friendly with him for two years. In court Taylor claimed:

"I have been set up by Henrietta Chapman, also known as Maria Novotny, who is working for British intelligence."

The judge told him to sit down and stop being silly. Novotny was outside, waiting to give evidence against him, but following this outburst was advised not to, since she might be used again. A few days later on his way home from court, Taylor collapsed at Waterloo Station. He died later in hospital. Officially a heart attack, it has been suggested by some that he was killed with a poisoned umbrella.

Following this case she was asked by the Chief Constable of Kent to help with enquiries into corruption in Scotland Yard. She became very friendly with top detectives and reported direct to the Chief Constable. It is known that she made visits to Southern Ireland and Ulster, apparently involved in intelligence operations. She also arranged parties in Europe for Common Market MPs and diplomats. Whether this or many of the other episodes were actually done on behalf of British Intelligence is not known. (25)

Maria Stella Novotny died on the 20th February 1983. She had had a heavy cold during the day and ate little. Taking some food later she died choking on a milk pudding. Shortly after her death her house was burgled and all her files and large day-to-day diaries from the early sixties to the seventies were stolen. Recently Hod claims to have given her address books to the members of an undisclosed Secret Service department.

Unfortunately I have been unable to track down Eddowes - if he is still alive. One can see now from where he received his basic ideas. A Czech girl with supposed Communist background, used by a group of men also with alleged Communist links (Towers and Ward), controlled by a Soviet intelligence agent (Ivanov), who claimed to have direct access to Khrushchev. All this was linked in his mind through the Cuban Missile Crisis, to the assassination of JFK. Where the evidence for that link is no one knows. Obviously, though, it falls down with the recent revelation that Ward worked for British Intelligence. But that raises a whole load of other questions.....

## Notes

1. *News of The World* (1961), *Saturday Titbits* (1972), *The Globe* (US) 1980. She has written a book - *Kings Road* (1977) - which deals with this period but it is a highly fictionalised account.
2. Radio Interview: Chicago WGN 1977
3. Known in the USA as *The Oswald File* (NY 1978). He has also personally published *Khrushchev Killed Kennedy* (1975). Does anyone have a copy?

4. Although it would be stretching the evidence to suggest Oswald had been replaced by a double, there are some strange aspects to his trip to the Soviet Union. His height, recorded on various official documents, varies quite considerably, and there are marked differences between photos of Oswald in the USSR and in the USA. (See *The Many Faces of Lee Harvey Oswald* - Jack White US 1979)
5. A large section of articles dealing with the exhumation are in *The Continuing Enquiry* Vol. VI No 3 October 1981.
6. The new autopsy appeared to answer all the doubts that it was Oswald in the grave. But, incredibly, this has now come into question. The skull shows no signs of the original 1963 autopsy. Switched heads? It's all getting too crazy!
7. *MI5 1945-72: A Matter of Trust* Chapter 6. West's books are badly written. New material comes in small doses - basically to tease whilst the real 'game' is a continuing battle of sources, occasionally played over the dead body of Roger Hollis. It's a battle of the right wings. Chapman Pincher (*Their Trade is Treachery* NEL 1982), against aspiring Tory, Rupert Allason. ('West'). There are political and ideological motives to 'West's' books contrary to what some journalists believe. Notice how his books are so well received by the media whilst better and more important books - Verrier/Bloch and Fitzgerald/Faligot - suffer something like an unofficial D Notice. Is there any truth to the rumour that the recently arrested 'mole' in MI5 is one of 'West's' sources?
8. This account is taken from interviews with her husband and access to her own hand-written journal, letters etc.
9. There was nothing unusual in this relationship for Hod. In the late 1940s he had taken the 16 year old Patsy Morgan, daughter of a Coventry grocer, and given her the Pygmalion treatment. Rather the same approach as Stephen Ward. (See *The Evil Firm: The Rise and Fall of the Brothers Kray* - Brian McConnell, London 1969, p34)
10. Hod had helped to run Esmeralda's Barn, a night-club in Knightsbridge. Originally he designed it for society girl Esmeralda. In another bizarre incident on the night of its opening, she was found dead, accidentally gassed, on her bed with her lesbian lover. Patsy Morgan-Dibden was the main attraction of the club, so when she ran away from Hod to Europe, he gave it up. Protection for the club was provided by Billy Hill who ran the London underworld with his rival, Jack Spot. Hod returned to the business in the late 1950s with the Black Sheep Club. Esmeralda's Barn was eventually owned by the Kray twins who purchased it on the advice of Peter Rachman. (*The Profession of Violence*, John Pearson, London 1973). A good introduction to this whole Ward/Rachman/Criminal underworld nexus is *Rachman*, Shirley Green, London 1981. The media created 'Rachmanism' - a device designed to ease attention away from the real crooks, and a godsend to Labour's election hopes at the time.
11. Towers decided to return to the States in 1980 to face charges of bail jumping and contempt of court. As part of the deal, an address book which reportedly contains the names of every politician for whom he allegedly procured call girls will forever remain sealed away. Mary De Bourgon, Assistant D.A.: "It will never be opened in a court of law." (*The Globe* (US) December 9th 1980).

Novotny was friendly with other politicians and lawyers.

"Their names didn't mean all that much then but now many of them are big shots, in very high places."

Obviously association with one of Towers' girls would have people worried, especially so when she adds:

"I kept a diary of all my appointments in the UN building ...I understand the diary is now in the hands of the CIA."

12. Lord Denning's Report (HMSO 1963). Novotny was interviewed by Denning but she says the report was already written. He refused to accept her allegations, seemingly turned off by the details of the sexual games.
13. Kennedy's other 'relationships' certainly weren't ordinary and could explain why Novotny's could be important. In 1964, a year after the assassination, Mary Meyer [Pinchot], an intimate friend of JFK'S was mysteriously shot to death. Shortly after, her personal diaries were taken from her home by James Angleton (at the time head of CIA's Counter Intelligence Branch), a friend of the Meyer family. Angleton destroyed the diary, and though involved in the CIA's investigation of the assassination, has refused to comment: on the Meyer episode. (See *Washington Post* February 23rd 1976. *Coincidence or Conspiracy* Bernard Fensterwald (US 1977)

Judith Exner had been introduced to JFK by friend Frank Sinatra, and had an affair with him through 1961 and '62. She also knew Sam Giancana and John Roselli intimately, both of whom were involved in the CIA/Mafia plots against Castro. (And both of whom were murdered just before going to testify before the House Select Committee on Assassinations.) It has been suggested that Giancana used his close friend Sinatra to place a girl near the President, perhaps to blackmail him.

In another strange twist, Robert Maheu, Howard Hughes' man, who had also been involved in the CIA/Mafia plots, had been involved in a highly questionable CIA operation. "Taxpayers monies were spent to provide Heads of State with female companions and to pay people with questionable reputations to make pornographic movies for blackmail (against Heads of State)."

See final Report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence: *Village Voice* Feb 16th 1976 page 72.

On Exner see *My Story* Judith Exner (NY 1977).

And, of course, there was Marilyn Monroe, who Novotny claimed to have met a few times when MM was having an affair with both Kennedy brothers. It has been claimed that she died in mysterious circumstances and had knowledge of Mafia and Teamster affairs, contained (again) in diaries. See: *Who Killed Marilyn*, and *Did The Kennedy's Know*, Tony Sciacca (NY 1976): *Marilyn Monroe* S. Periglio (Seville, 1982): and, for this whole Maheu/Mafia/CIA/Kennedy's/Monroe mess, best of all is Jim Hougan's *Spooks* (London 1979).

14. *Through The Looking Glass* Anthony Verrier (London 1983) Chapter 6.
15. West, *ibid* page 17: also *How MI5 Sacrificed Stephen Ward* (*Sunday Times* 28/11/82)
16. *Scandal '63: A Study of The Profumo Affair* Clive Irving et al (London 1963) p

17. *Secrets That Won't Be Told*, Duncan Campbell (*New Statesman* 20th February 1981)
18. Verrier *ibid*.
19. Ward told Hod that he picked up girls in coffee bars, doing quick sketches of them to introduce himself. Ward said this was how he met Keeler in a cafe in Staines, Middlesex, and that he (Ward) was instrumental in obtaining a job for her at Murray's Club, contrary to published stories.
20. West *ibid* p145
21. See *The Ministry of Truth*, in *Leveller* No 64 (1981) and *British Intelligence and Covert Action* Bloch/Fitzgerald (London 1983) p 91.
22. Among those attending the Novotny parties were Walter Flack, Charles Clore's partner; Bill Astor; Sir William Emirs Williams, the Secretary General of the Arts Council; Sheila Scott; Nicholas Egon; Lord Asquith; Bobby Moore; Eustace Chesser; Douglas Fairbanks Jnr; Felix Topolski; Simon Harcourt-Smith; Lord Belper and many others.
23. *Mandy Mandy* Rice-Davies with Sheila Flack (London, 1980) p123. She reveals that she knew next to nothing - though perhaps others thought she did. She claims that she was refused a visa to the USA, and when in 1974 she tried to see her (she claims CIA) files they had disappeared (p121). She claims she was interviewed by MI6 at Century House - unusually, since it is usually left to Special Branch to sort out security cases.
24. *Times* 1978: April 4/5/25; May 6/12/26; June 10/14/17/23
25. *Times* May 6th 1978

## Decoding Edward Jay Epstein's 'LEGEND'

### Robin Ramsay

As Steve Dorril shows in his essay on *Permindex*, the lack of a satisfactory resolution to the assassination of Kennedy allowed Soviet intelligence to use the event to their own ends. The French also had a go with the pseudonymous book *Farewell America* which made public considerable information about the CIA's activities while pretending to be a solution to the assassination. In both cases the assassination was used against political opponents. With *Permindex* the Soviets were making trouble for US interests, especially in Italy: Gaullist elements used *Farewell America* to attack pro-American sections within French intelligence as well as exposing some of the CIA's activities. (1) *Legend* is an example of the same process.

*Legend* is two interwoven narratives: a biography of Oswald, and an account of disputes within the US intelligence services over the status of a Soviet defector, Nosenko. The biography of Oswald is essentially that given in the Warren Commission's Report: lonely left-wing adolescent joins Marines, defects, returns, tries to shoot General Walker and then shoots Kennedy. Epstein tarts all this up with a large amount of totally irrelevant material derived from interviews with some of Oswald's Marine colleagues. He tries to convince the reader that in some sense Oswald was got at by the KGB - maybe in Japan. There is of course, nothing resembling evidence for this belief. There is no 'secret life' - the promise in the book's subtitle.

In 1964, while the Warren Commission was sitting, Nosenko defected and announced, among other things, that he had been in charge of the KGB's file on Oswald's stay in the Soviet Union, and that the KGB had not attempted to recruit him. Nosenko's testimony was welcome to almost all concerned: a 'lone nut' was the verdict that was required. But Counter Intelligence (CI) in the CIA, debriefing Nosenko, began to detect what it thought were flaws in Nosenko's story, and the suspicion began to grow (in the minds of men congenitally inclined to be suspicious) that Nosenko was a false defector, a plant, sent to the US to whitewash KGB involvement with Oswald and, perhaps, to lead CI off the track of other Soviet 'moles' within the US. (That Nosenko might have been a false defector sent to tell the *truth* about the absence of KGB involvement with Oswald does not seem to have been considered.)

Nosenko, we are told, split the US intelligence community. Most of the CIA accepted him as a genuine defector: CI refused to do so. The FBI accepted him as genuine because parts of what he was saying were being confirmed by the FBI's own 'mole' still in place at the UN: to disbelieve one meant to disbelieve both. After a long bureaucratic hassle Nosenko was declared 'clean' and hired by the CIA. Some years later the upper echelons of CI resigned (or were sacked); and Epstein, taking their side in the dispute, believes the result has been to turn the Agency 'inside out' - the 'good guys' removed, and a Soviet 'mole' installed within the Agency.

Epstein has two problems. First there is not a shred of real evidence that Oswald was KGB. Second his thesis rests on the premise that Oswald, alone, shot Kennedy: for which there is no evidence; which Epstein knows to be false; and which Epstein's first book on the assassination, *Inquest* (1966) did much to undermine.

Epstein tries to conceal this latter difficulty by relegating his revised version of Oswald's role in the actual shooting to a brief section at the back of the book. It is unbelievably sloppy. For example, in Section VI of Appendix A (this is in the UK paperback version), titled The Sequence of the Shots, Epstein tells us that:

"The Warren Commission...concluded that only two shots were fired accurately, the first striking the President in the back of the neck and passing through him to cause two wounds in Governor Connally; and the second exploding the President's head and fragmenting. (A third shot missed completely)."

Then, four lines later, he assures us that:

"from the path of the bullets delineated in the autopsy photographs and X-rays (and other collateral evidence) it can be concluded that Kennedy and Connally were hit by separate bullets and that a third bullet then hit Kennedy."

But he has forgotten about the bullet that missed and absurdly, in a few lines, commits himself to *four* shots, and demolishes his entire case. Did anyone actually proof-read *Legend*?

Epstein has got himself into this ridiculous muddle because he wants to avoid the Warren Commission version of events ('magic bullet' and all) while sticking to Oswald as the 'lone assassin'. He wants us to think that Oswald was (somehow) KGB, and therefore the assassination was (somehow) KGB, without being willing to stick his

neck out and say the assassination *was* KGB. Oswald remains a 'lone nut,' but now one of the KGB's 'lone nuts'. (2)

To achieve this Epstein and his team of (count them) 8 researchers create a partial biography of Oswald in which everything linking him to the political right-wing, the US intelligence services and the anti-Castro Cubans, is systematically excluded. And I mean excluded: Epstein had already demonstrated knowledge of much of such material in his second foray into the assassination, his account of the Garrison enquiry. (3)

What Epstein does, in effect, is to restore the parapolitical world to the state of innocence which existed before the Bay of Pigs. The 'menace' is, once again just the Soviet Union: it is the KGB which is the conspiratorial fifth wheel of history - not the CIA. Epstein writes for all the world as if none of the revelations about the real nature of American political life that occurred between Dallas and Watergate, had ever existed; and in this innocent world of black hats and white hats he would have us believe that only James Angleton, the erstwhile head of CIA Counter Intelligence, perceived the reality of the Soviet menace. (4)

Angleton and his senior colleagues in CI were forced out of the Agency in late 1974 by the then DCIA, William Colby. The immediate cause of their removal was Seymour Hersh's story in the *New York Times* alleging that CI had been involved in illegal mail opening operations. Colby confirmed the truth of the story and asked for Angleton's resignation. Epstein would have us believe that the real reason for his ouster is the dispute over Nosenko. Epstein argues thus: that Oswald was KGB proves that Nosenko was a false defector. That Angleton was right about Nosenko proves that Angleton was removed *because* he was right about Nosenko.

As far as I can see from reading some of the other literature on this episode, Angleton was removed because he was a paranoid fruitcake whose chronic suspiciousness was a major obstacle to the CIA's gathering of intelligence on the Soviet Union: Angleton seems to have assumed that every defector, agent, informant, was a Soviet disinformant. (5) It would appear that Hersh's story gave Colby the pretext to rid the Agency of Angleton - something many of his predecessors had wanted.

In fact, the mail opening episode, Angleton's paranoia, and the dispute about Nosenko conceal another, more pressing reason for Angleton's removal. For Angleton and the CI branch had another role within the CIA: they had exclusive control of the link between the CIA and the Israeli Intelligence Service (IIS). (6)

This anomalous set-up seems to have been something of a closely guarded secret before 1974. I have seen no references to it in print before then, and Colby, if he is to be believed, only learned of it when he became DCIA, after almost 30 years in the Agency. (7)

The CI-IIS link served as a "mechanism for insulating Israel from multinational pressure within the CIA" - i.e. from the oil companies with interests in the Middle East - and on Angleton's resignation "Israeli intelligence matters were reorganised along more conventional lines. That is they devolved into the orbit of the Middle East specialists and, for the first time, came under the domination of the multinationals." (8)

In other words, Angleton (in Hougan's words 'the best friend Israel ever had') had been running his own intelligence network independent of, and frequently in opposition to, the rest of the US foreign policy machinery.

The CIA's dependence on this exclusive CI-IIS relationship left the US in the lurch when IIS failed to predict the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In his memoirs Nixon refers to this 'intelligence shortcoming'. No doubt at the time the message went down the line in more robust form: this wasn't the first time Nixon (and Kissinger) felt they'd been dropped in the shit by the CIA. Hersh's mail opening story handed Colby the perfect pretext to rid the Agency of Angleton and shut down the CI-IIS link. He traded a brief minor scandal which quickly got lost amidst the Watergate coverage in return for the preservation (albeit temporary) of the larger, more sensitive secret.

US government support for Israel during the Yom Kippur war was tempered by considerations of detente with the Soviet Union: Kissinger soft-pedalled the re-supply operation to the Israeli armed forces.

"Kissinger wanted a limited Israeli defeat. The nicety lay in calculating the optimum scale of the defeat: big enough to satisfy the Arabs; modest enough to bring Israel to the conference table; bearable enough to avoid the collapse of Mrs Meir's government and its replacement by right-wing intransigents" (9)

Kissinger's calculations were almost right but then OPEC raised the price of oil and changed everything. For the Israeli lobby in the US these events raised the spectre of Israel sacrificed on the altar of oil and detente. Sections of the Israeli lobby began moving rapidly to the political right. *Commentary*, the journal of the American Jewish Committee, and the single most influential voice of the Israeli lobby, mirrored this change. (10) In a series of major articles Israeli interests were linked to the rejection of detente and an expanding US arms budget (11); the editor warned of the abandonment of Israel (12); and Israel was presented as America's only reliable ally in a Middle East threatened by Soviet expansionism (13). (This had always been Angleton's view and the reason for his support of Israel.)

By 1979 *Commentary* had become a full-blown neo-Conservative pro-Reagan platform: the editor, Norman Podhoretz, had even seen the prospect of the 'Finlandisation of America' lurking behind detente. (14).

Along the way two books had a particular impact. One was Alan Weinstein's *Perjury*, a study of the Hiss case, which concluded that, after all, he had indeed been guilty. *Perjury* enabled Podhoretz, for example, to see that:

"In exposing Alger Hiss as a Soviet agent, Congressman (sic) Richard Nixon made a major contribution to the bringing home of the Communist menace and therefore to the mobilisation of popular support for an interventionist foreign policy." (15)

For a member of the Israeli lobby in 1976 when that was written 'an interventionist foreign policy' meant something quite specific.

The other book, of course, was *Legend*, which did for Oswald what *Perjury* had done for Hiss. In a long review essay of both books in *Commentary* Michael Ledeen (16)



announced that:

"the real spectacle has been the discrediting of any concern over Communist espionage and subversion in the United States. Indeed, the concern has been turned inside out; the real threat - according to the fashionable mythology - was a conspiracy on the part of the vicious power structure using the myth of a Communist menace to justify its aggressive designs abroad and the squelching of opposition to those designs at home.. the real subversives, both at home and abroad, were 'loyal' Americans - FBI and CIA men - who overthrew foreign governments, violated the constitutional rights of the American citizen, and, hand in hand with the other leaders of the military-industrial complex, inaugurated and perpetuated the Cold War." (17)

A host of demons are being exorcised here: the revisionist historiography of the Cold War; Dallas; Watergate; Vietnam; Cointelpro; domestic surveillance run amok as everybody from the IRS downwards tapped, taped, planted, bugged, and (yes) assassinated - all of it swept away ('fashionable mythology') after the revelations of *Perjury* and *Legend*.

Three months after Ledeen's piece Epstein himself contributed a long article of his own, *The War Within The CIA*, based on the Nosenko sections of *Legend*. In it he discussed the Angleton-Colby dispute, suggestions from CI people that Colby was the Soviet 'mole' Angleton had suspected within the CIA; and, as the clincher for a predominantly Jewish readership, he added an account of the CIA's unwitting recruitment of a KGB agent who had infiltrated a group of Soviet Jewish dissidents. Epstein attributes the resulting mess to the removal of Angleton and the downgrading of basic counter intelligence procedures. (18)

By 1977, when Epstein was starting to write *Legend*, the CI-IIS link had ceased to be a secret (if, indeed it ever was one: I have no way of knowing). For five years, while researching *Legend* and writing and researching his previous one, *Agency of Fear* (19), Epstein had been the confidant of groups of intelligence personnel and politicians with intelligence links. In 1975 Tad Szulc revealed that CI people had delivered nuclear technology to the Israelis in 1957/8 (20); and in the same year Anthony Pearson's *Conspiracy of Silence* was published (21) and sections of it, detailing the CI-IIS link and the nuclear deal, were published in Penthouse, and Pearson himself widely seen on American television while promoting the book. Yet there is no mention of the Israeli connection either in *Legend*, the *Commentary* piece based on it, or any of Epstein's subsequent writing on this subject. (22) The real secret of *Legend* is not the gossip about Oswald's life in the Marines Epstein has accumulated, but the CI-IIS relationship and Angleton's role in particular. *Legend* is a kind of smoke-screen behind which Epstein hopes to conceal what Angleton was doing with the Israelis.

The election of Jimmy Carter was the climax of a series of disasters and revelations in domestic and foreign policy which seemed to have wrecked the anti-Communist rationale of the US ruling elites. In the political crisis which followed Carter's election, the anticipated groups on the political right, with most (but not all) of the intelligence agencies and the military, joined forces to recreate a plausible Soviet 'menace'. (23) For the first time these groups were joined by most of the Israeli lobby, for whom nothing less than the future survival of Israel appeared to be at stake.

Into the low, dishonest, but predictable campaign which ran the course of the Carter administration, and climaxed, triumphantly (and fittingly) with the election of the moron now sitting in the White House, *Legend* added a little sensational colouring to an otherwise dangerously serious campaign. If 'Minuteman vulnerability' and 'the window of opportunity' were rather complex concepts for an American public which had virtually ceased to read; if the events in Angola, the Horn of Africa were too far away and too obscure; if the complexities of the case against Salt 2 defeated attempts to make them political dynamite; then the idea that the KGB had a hand in the assassination of President Kennedy was something almost anyone could ingest on breakfast television.

*Legend*, in fact, is an ingenious compendium of misinformation. Amplifying the 'Soviet threat' it was another blow against détente, against Carter, for Reagan. With the Nosenko material it offered to explain Angleton's fall with a story which was interesting because apparently secret - obscuring the Israeli connection which was by then firmly in the public domain. Suggesting that it was the 'commies' who shot Kennedy after all, it offered to rehabilitate the US intelligence services - especially the CIA - which a large section of the American public had long suspected of doing the dirty deed.

*Legend* was never intended as a serious contribution to the literature on the Kennedy case. This, unfortunately, didn't prevent the US/UK literary and political establishment from swallowing Epstein's thesis whole. (24)

As for Epstein, I can only hope that he occasionally comes across what he wrote in 1974. In an essay with the now amusing title, *Journalism and Truth*, Epstein wrote:

"When journalists are presented with secret information about issues of great import, they become, in a very real sense, agents for the surreptitious source." (25)

## Notes

1. The account of the origins of *Farewell America* is in Warren Hinkle's *If You've Got A Lemon Make Lemonade* (New York 1974)
2. It really is as stupid as this.
3. In his essay in the *New Yorker*, 13th July 1968. This became a book, *Counterplot*, which I haven't read. I assume they're substantially the same.
4. Angleton believed that the Soviets have a 'plan', a blueprint for the take-over of the world. This 'plan' has become a feature of the propaganda of this New Cold War. It is in De Borchgrave and Moss's *The Spike*, for example, and also in the less well known (but much better written) *The Exchange*, Theodore Wilden (London 1982). Wilden's book is a hymn of praise to Angleton.

The only claim that such a 'plan' actually exists that I know of is in Jan Sejna's *We Will Bury You* (London 1982). Sejna gives an account of this 'plan' circa 1968 just before he defected. From his account it is hard to believe that anyone in the Soviet bloc takes it any more seriously than they do Marxism-Leninism - i.e. not at all. (Assuming, of course, that Sejna is actually telling the truth.)

5. Including Penkovsky, who got himself shot for his troubles. Interesting new account of the Penkovsky episode in Anthony Verrier's *Through The Looking*

- Glass* (London 1983). This is a major piece of work and will be reviewed in *Lobster* 3.
6. Thomas Powers *The Man Who Kept The Secrets* (London 1980) p313  
William Colby *Honourable Men* (London 1979) p387  
Powers is believed by some to be a CIA agent. I have seen no evidence on this.
  7. Colby (above) p387
  8. Jim Hougan *Spooks* (London 1979) pp434/ 5
  9. The Insight Team *Insight On The Middle East War* (London 1974)
  10. A change also reflected in Podhoretz's own thought. His later writing makes depressing reading when compared with his celebrated autobiography *Making It*. You can almost hear the brain cells dying.
  11. Edward Luttwak in *Commentary* (February 1975)
  12. Podhoretz in *Commentary* April 1976
  13. Eugene Rostow in *Commentary* April 1977. Rostow, like Luttwak, is now in the Reagan Administration.
  14. Podhoretz in *Commentary*, March 1980. This article is supposed to have had a great impact on Reagan's 'thinking'. Says who? I refuse to believe that Reagan could even *understand* material like this. Maybe the title, *The Present Danger*, appealed?
  15. Podhoretz in *Commentary* April 1976
  16. Ledeen is one of the New Cold War mouthpieces based at the Georgetown Centre. See *Lobster* No 1, item 20. Also Fred Landis in *Inquiry* (US) 30th Sept. 1979
  17. Michael Ledeen, *Hiss Oswald the KGB and US* (*Commentary* May 1978)
  18. *The War Within The CIA* (*Commentary* August 1978)
  19. *Agency of Fear* (New York 1977)
  20. Tad Szulc, *Penthouse* September 1975: also NYT 12th July 1975.
  21. Anthony Pearson, *Conspiracy of Silence* (London 1978)
  22. For example:  
*The Spy War* in *International Herald Tribune* 2nd October 1980;  
*The Spy War*, *New York Times Mag.* 26th September 1980;  
*Sunday Times*(London) 23rd April 1978.

There's a lot more I haven't read. If anyone has an Epstein piece in which the Israeli thing is mentioned I'd appreciate it being sent to me.

23. An amusing aspect of this is the current US cartoon for kids being shown in this country which has a bear as the villain, called Yuri! The heroes are two American robots. The name of the prog. I've forgotten. It's on Granada (ITV Midlands, Saturday mornings).
24. Especially the *Sunday Times* (London) which ran three large excerpts in March 1978. I don't have a record of a single sceptical review. Anyone see one? Epstein's standing in this country is high almost everywhere. When I mentioned all this to the current editor of *Tribune* some years ago, he was disbelieving.
25. *Journalism and Truth* (*Commentary*, April 1974)

An earlier version of this essay first appeared in Penn Jones' *The Continuing Enquiry*

# PERMINDEX: The International Trade in Disinformation

**Stephen Dorril**

On the 12th February 1967, Rosemary James of the New Orleans *States-Item* newspaper discovered that Jim Garrison, District Attorney of New Orleans, had spent more than \$8,000 on his own investigation of the assassination of John Kennedy. (The story appeared on the front page on February 20th.) Two weeks later the DA's office announced the arrest of Clay Shaw, a wealthy New Orleans businessman and real estate developer, on charges of conspiring to assassinate Kennedy. From then on Garrison's enquiry took place in the full glare of the world's media, making objective reporting and investigation virtually impossible.

It is not completely clear how Garrison's enquiry started or why Shaw became the chief suspect. It is said that Garrison became interested following a suggestion from Senator Russell Long, later named as a principal figure in the 'Save Hoffa' campaign. (1) If Long's association with Hoffa undermined the credibility of the inquiry from the beginning, with the death of another leading suspect, David Ferrie, the whole affair degenerated into wilder and wilder theories. (2)

Garrison had spent hours pouring over the third volume of the Warren Commission Report. He settled on two leads: the aforementioned David Ferrie, and one 'Clay Bertrand'. 'Clay Bertrand' appeared in the testimony of lawyer Dean Andrews who claimed that, following the assassination, he had received a phone call from 'Bertrand' asking him to represent Lee Harvey Oswald. Andrews already knew Oswald slightly having dealt with problems connected with Oswald's Marine Discharge papers; and 'Bertrand' from his involvement with some "gay Mexican kids". Andrews claimed they were friends of Oswald. But 'Bertrand' was never identified.(3) Garrison "solved" that mystery. Clay Shaw was 'Bertrand'.

How this conclusion was arrived at has never been adequately explained. One story has it that Garrison's detectives sat round thinking of people in New Orleans whose name began with Clay. Someone suggested Shaw and the ball rolled on from there. When insurance salesman Perry Raymond Russo came into the picture and claimed he had attended a party where Ferrie, 'Bertrand' and Oswald had talked of assassinating Kennedy, the conspiracy was apparently proved.

But the evidence was flimsy at best. Shaw was a homosexual and may have had a relationship with Ferrie (also a homosexual) - pictures exist which suggest that. Shaw was connected to the CIA (as was Ferrie) but only in a minor way; while Ferrie had been involved in operations surrounding the Bay of Pigs. Ferrie had known Oswald for a long time: Oswald had distributed Fairplay For Cuba leaflets outside Shaw's International Trade Mart. (4). But that is almost all the evidence, and much of it only emerged *after* the Garrison enquiry.

There is no evidence that Shaw ever met Oswald: the descriptions of Oswald and 'Bertrand' at the party that Russo attended are flawed. 'Oswald' was always 'Leon Oswald', and was physically more like the Oswald double, with his recent beard, than Lee Harvey himself. And Bertrand's forename was Clem - not Clay. Even under

hypnosis Russo referred to Clem and at no point in the following months did he say that Clay Shaw was Bertrand. It was only when the trial came up that the two became intertwined; and by then Russo may have felt he had to fall into line. (5)

The only substantial evidence that was presented at the trial was hard to dislodge because the witnesses were respected and not seeking media attention. Residents of Clinton claimed that they had seen Oswald, Ferrie and Shaw together in the town when black voters were registering. Hindsight suggests that while Oswald and Ferrie were probably there, the third person was more likely to have been Guy Bannister, not Shaw. Bannister fitted the description worked with, had known Ferrie and Oswald, and was heavily involved in racist and anti-civil rights activities. (6)

What remains of Garrison's enquiry? He was certainly on the right track with Ferrie. His (Ferrie's) links to the anti-Castro Cubans, and contacts with the CIA/Organised Crime nexus put him in a position at least to know of the real conspirators. Garrison was also right to investigate the 'Bertrand' figure, although Dean Andrews was obviously frightened, his descriptions of 'Bertrand' becoming progressively more colourful - some obviously invented to conceal the real identity. (7) As regards Shaw, no new evidence has appeared in the intervening years to associate him explicitly with the conspiracy. But at the time of the Garrison enquiry, such 'evidence' seemed to be flowering all over the place: and the seeds were coming from the most unlikely areas.

Clay Shaw was arrested on May 1st. On the 4th the Italian newspaper *Il Paese Sera* (referred to henceforth as *IPS*) carried an article on the Garrison enquiry which focused on the alleged activities of Shaw. *IPS* claimed that Shaw was one of the directors of the Rome World Trade Centre (Centro Mondiale Commerciale - aka CMC); that CMC was used as a conduit by the CIA for subsidies to anti-Communist groups; that CMC had links with the Italian Fascists; that CMC was affiliated with Permindex (Permanent Industrial Exhibitions); that Permindex had been expelled from Switzerland because of (undisclosed) criminal activities; that Permindex had financed the efforts of the OAS in France; and that CMC closed because of the publicity it had attracted, and had relocated in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Two days later a second article appeared giving more names and details. Permindex was linked to anti-Communist Ferenc Nagy, once head of the provisional government of Hungary. (He was forced to resign in 1947.)

"Another was Louis Bloomfield, an American agent who now plays the role of a businessman from Canada (who) established secret ties in Rome with Deputies of the Christian Democrats and neo-Fascist parties."

This "information" travelled the world, and even Moscow became interested in the Garrison inquiry. The telephone switchboard in Garrison's outer office

"blazed like a pinball machine gone mad...one Moscow journalist made six long distance calls without ever reaching Garrison himself." (8)

*Pravda's* correspondent V. Yermakov wrote an article on 7th March (9), based on material printed in *IPS* and *L'Unita*. The French-language Montreal paper, *Le Devoir*, printed a translation of the *Pravda* article, and on 16th March, *Le Devoir's* New York correspondent, Lou Wiznitzer, produced a longer article on the Garrison inquiry based on the *IPS* material. (10) This, in turn, formed the basis of a piece by Clark Blaise,

*Neo-Fascism and The Kennedy Assassination in Canadian Dimension* (September 1968). And, finally this article in turn looks like the material used by W.W. Turner for his article in *Ramparts* (January 1968) which proved so influential in spreading the alleged Permindex-Clay Shaw connection. (11)

Gradually the 'conspiracy' was becoming exaggerated. Associates of CMC became Directors; what were slight links became direct connections. An *IPS* article on 18th March announced that Shaw had organised Kennedy's visit to Dallas and had proposed the luncheon at the Trade Mart. Both assertions were untrue.

From there on the Permindex "conspiracy" - which by now had become a hotbed of international assassins - was losing all touch with reality, and the myths became accepted by the less discerning assassination buffs. The myths were most publicly and thoroughly expressed in Paris Flammonde's book *An Uncommissioned Report On The Garrison Inquiry* (12) which devoted a whole chapter to material, once again taken from the *IPS* articles. The wilder conspiracy theorists passed round *The Torbitt Memorandum* for years as if it were the Holy Grail, when what it contained was the same *IPS* information dressed up with the addition of the Solidarists, Hungarians, and Neo-Fascists - interesting in themselves, but whose relation to the assassination has never been established.

Bizarre was the appearance of the book *Betrayal* by minor ex-CIA operative Robert Morrow. Some people take the book very seriously but once again the same old meagre information was spread very thinly. Exactly what Morrow's motive was isn't clear since his links to the CIA and the Government didn't appear to stop his taking on the title *ex-* CIA. But the biscuit is taken by the US Labour Party who seem to have survived the last decade peddling absolute garbage about Permindex - the conspiracy not only including the Kennedy assassination, but also the domination of the West by the British(!) - supplemented by a disgusting dose of anti-Semitism.(13)

This foreign material on Shaw and Kennedy was potentially fascinating but nobody seemed to notice that it was all coming from one direction - Communist sources: *Il Paese Sera* and *L'Unita* were both Italian Communist Party papers. And while some of the information seems to have been true, the way it was presented, and the distortion of the evidence suggest that this was a case of disinformation. (14) And this wasn't the first time that *IPS* had disseminated half-truths. An earlier episode illustrates the international trade in disinformation and partly illuminates the Permindex connection.

In 1961 French Generals prepared a putsch against President de Gaulle. Within hours of the mutiny on April 22nd, rumours had begun to circulate that the CIA had played a role in encouraging the revolt. (15) Such rumours appear to have been based on the slim evidence that (a) General Maurice Challe, leader of the revolt, had been close to American military aides during his term of service with NATO and (b) that Richard Bissell, then Director of the Plans Division of the CIA, had met with Jacques Soustelle on December 7th 1960. (Soustelle was a French politician who had planned a previous unsuccessful putsch). (16) Significantly for us, the rumours first appeared in print in the Rome daily, *Il Paese Sera*, which reported:

"It is not by chance that some people in Paris are accusing the American Secret Service, headed by Allen Dulles, of having participated in the plot of the four 'ultra' Generals.... Franco, Salazar, Allen Dulles are the figures who hide themselves behind the pronouncements of the 'ultras'. They are

the pillars of an international conspiracy basing itself on the Iberian dictatorships, on the residue of the most fierce and blind colonialism, on the intrigues of the CIA which reacts furiously to the advance of progress and democracy." (17)

The day after the article was printed *Pravda* published a long article on the Generals' revolt in which it said that the mutiny was encouraged by NATO, the Pentagon and the CIA. (18)

The rumours on April 22nd were launched cautiously by "a minor official at the Elysee Palace itself", according to Crosby Noyes in the *Washington Star*. Foreign Minister Courve De Murville told a few favoured journalists that Challe had been encouraged in his putsch by the CIA. (19)

Pompidou was careful, suggesting that there was a plot backed by American money. He was clever enough to display concern without inferring CIA involvement, for he was about to go to the United States and knew that he would be asked about French attitudes to NATO. He was playing both sides in what became a battle between the pro-American sections in France and the Gaullists (20)

By the time Kennedy's Press Secretary, Pierre Salinger, arrived in Paris on 2nd May to make arrangements for Kennedy's forthcoming visit, the rumours had become well ingrained in the French press. Salinger had been briefed by the CIA's Helms who had categorically denied that the CIA had at any time sided with the rebel Generals. Helms admitted that agents had spoken with people around the Generals and had met with Soustelle, but said they had been part of a general fact-finding mission to see if the dissatisfaction with de Gaulle was great enough to cause them to revolt. Salinger was satisfied that the CIA had not gone too far in its mission, "Though the Generals could have misinterpreted it." Salinger asked De Murville if he had any evidence that the CIA was involved in the Generals' revolt, and when he said he had none, Salinger suggested that the French stop peddling the story. The next day De Murville appeared before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies to testify that there was no evidence of US complicity.

But the rumours had worked, souring French-American relations; pushing de Gaulle into an anti-NATO corner; splitting the French Government so well that the wounds wouldn't heal until Pompidou met with Nixon in June 1970 to secure French-American relations.

It is against this background that we should view the book *Farewell America*, a Gaullist disinformation attempt to redress the balance in the French government in its relations with America. It is the perfect summation of Gaullist attitudes to the US and provides a key to their understanding. The whole military/industrial/political complex is portrayed as some sort of heart of darkness where Kennedy, because he displays a European outlook, must suffer. Only de Gaulle can stand up to this monster.

"He is a realist...belongs to that great family of emperors who have always placed the interests of the state above sentiment - even when it caused their hearts to suffer." (21)

For de Gaulle, foreign policy was the place where internal politics are played out and *Farewell America* is an attack on his enemies within the French State. The book had a

tremendous impact in Europe (but not in Britain) but was never published in the US, though copies were placed with *Ramparts*, W.W.Turner (22) and the Garrison inquiry.

Of the Kennedy assassination de Gaulle said in 1964:

"Kennedy's murder will involve all sorts of consequences. Blood calls for blood. America is becoming less and less a stable country, one that can be relied on. It is returning to its old demons."(23)

For France, the old demons were represented by the OAS, who had a long history of assassination attempts on de Gaulle. And on March 6th 1967, *Il Paese Sera* intimated that the OAS were partly financed by ...Permindex. Ferenc Nagy, President of Permindex:

"was said by the French press to be a munificent contributor to the philo-fascistic movement of (Jacques) Soustelle." (24)

But what do we really know about the history of Permindex? Very little it seems. What I have pieced together comes primarily from a selection of newspaper clippings from Switzerland in the late 1950s and early 1960s. How accurate these are I can't say: the press cuttings are vague, internally inconsistent - Permindex was as much a mystery in the 1950s as it is today.

The origins of Permindex appear to lie in New Orleans in 1948 - probably with Clay Shaw's International Trade Mart. In 1956 Permindex - apparently representing a "group of American business interests" - decided to move into Europe and set up in Basle, Switzerland. Two companies were set up under the auspices of the Permindex mother company: Building Finance (AG) and Parkhof (AG). (AG just indicates that this is a private company.) These two companies were supposed to buy land and develop it with skyscrapers, parks etc - the press accounts at the time were full of grandiose plans. The President of Permindex was Ferenc Nagy. But it appears that he was not the controller of the companies - more a nominal head, a front man who would appear attractive to Government officials and politicians. The only director who appears to have been identified was George Mantello, a Rumanian in Swiss business and media circles.

Permindex's plans in Basle appear to have generated considerable *commercial* suspicion. None of its plans came to fruition and the Basle press, which had earlier devoted columns and columns to its plans, became critical. In 1961 the Basle Workers' Paper (and that's a literal translation from the German) accused Nagy and Permindex of being "a bunch of swindlers".(It was further alleged that Nagy had been in jail in Rome for fraud.) Nagy sued for libel, won the case, but was awarded very small damages (only 3000 old francs.) Shortly after the trial Parkhof (AG) went bankrupt and, as one of the papers put it, it became clear that what Nagy and Permindex had been up to was a basic con. The Public Prosecutor's Office in Basle appears to have been considering bringing criminal charges against the company but were leaned on by various Swiss politicians not to do so. (There is no documentation of this in the Basle paper and its veracity is unknown.)

It appears that all this bad publicity led Permindex to leave Basle of its own accord - not thrown out as *IPS* alleges. Permindex next moved to Rome where it set itself up as the World Trade Centre (CMC) in the buildings of what had been the World War 2



World Exhibition Centre.

In 1962 the Centre was opened at a ceremony attended by top Italian Government and political figures. The set-up once again seems to have appeared to be fairly mysterious to outside observers and by 1964 more bad publicity appears to have been generated and they shut down and moved to South Africa. (25)

That, so far, is the extent of the evidence, though I do intend pursuing it further. Obviously such a shadowy company is open to all kinds of theories. It could have been used for economic intelligence, as suggested by Shaw. Equally, it could have been used to finance politicians. But where is the evidence for any of that? If there is such evidence I will bow to it; but for the moment it looks as if 'facts' took a back seat to the fascination with international conspiracies.

The Permindex disinformation campaign succeeded very well in Italy where it reached the level of questions being asked in Parliament and front-page media coverage. In the States though, it never really took off. The media had been turned off Garrison by the increasingly wilder theories, but it did help plant the idea of CIA involvement in the assassination in the public mind. That could be a mixed blessing - perhaps another part of the cover-up for other intelligence agencies (such as Military Intelligence) which may have played an equal or bigger role in the murder.

The Garrison inquiry turned into a massive disinformation exercise by the CIA, anti-Castro Cubans, the Teamsters and the Mafia. The fall-out is still with us.

## Notes

1. The Garrison investigation was, to some extent, intertwined with the efforts of Teamster allies to prevent/terminate the imprisonment of Teamster President Jimmy Hoffa. The inquiry became a means of applying pressure to have the Government's chief anti-Hoffa witness, E.G. Partin, recant his testimony. Partin, it was claimed, was the connection between Ruby and Oswald. On this see P.D. Scott's *Crime and Cover-up* (Westworks, Berkeley, California; 1977) pp27/28; and Edward Epstein's *Counterplot* (NY 1969) pp41/42.
2. When Ferrie was removed from the payroll of Eastern Airlines in 1961, among those who intervened on his behalf was Long. On this see House Select Committee Hearings Vol 10 p 20 note 143.
3. See Warren Commission Vol 2: testimony of Dean Andrews.
4. Picture of Shaw and Ferrie in *JFK: The Case For Conspiracy* Peter Model and Robert Groden (NY 1976). Victor Marchetti's claim that Shaw was a domestic CIA contact confirmed recently by Freedom of Information release from the CIA.

Ferrie appears to have never been formally employed by the CIA but worked through various CIA front organisations in anti-Cuban activities. He knew Oswald when he (Oswald) was a junior member of Ferrie's branch of the Civil Air Patrol.

5. A similar 'Leon Oswald' appeared at Sylvia Odio's and at Ruby's club, though Jarnigan, who witnessed the latter, is generally dismissed. See House Select Committee Vol 10 and Penn Jones' *Forgive My Grief* Vol 1 p54.
6. See *Echoes of Conspiracy* Vol 3 No 7 December 1981. On Bannister/Oswald, a

- good account is in A. Summers' *Conspiracy* (London 1980)
7. Personally I think a more interesting figure than Shaw was Clem Sehrt, who knew Oswald's mother, had dealt with Oswald's Marine discharge, was close to Marcello's organisation, and had himself been asked to represent Oswald after the assassination. See Summers (note 6 above) p338; and HSCA Vol 9 p100.
  8. James Phelan in *Saturday Evening Post* May 6th 1967.
  9. See *Current Digest of The Soviet Press* Vol 19 No 10 1967.
  10. Lou Wiznitzer was an interesting journalist. He dismissed all American journals except *I.F. Stone's Weekly* and *Ramparts*. He was a Latin American specialist and reported the Cuban revolution in 1958, living in the Sierra Maestra with Castro and his men. He also found himself reporting on Angola, Laos, Congo, Cambodia etc. He had worked for *L'Espresso* (Rome) by which route he may have obtained the *IPS* material.

*IPS* recently came back into the news. Calvi had been playing both sides, giving money to the Christian Democrats and the CP, who used the money to finance *Il Paese Sera* from 1975 onwards. See *God's Banker* Rupert Cornwell (London 1983) p72

11. In *The Assassinations* ed. Scott. Hoch and Stetler (Pelican 1978)
12. Paris Flammonde (NY 1969) Flammonde was the producer of the Long John Knebel Show, a chat show in New York. His next book was to be on UFOs. Knebel married Candy Jones, the subject of the 'mind control' book *The Control of Candy Jones* Donald Bain (London 1980)
13. *Betrayal: A Reconstruction of Certain Clandestine Events from the Bay of Pigs to the Assassination of JFK* (Chicago 1976)

*The Torbitt Memorandum: Nomenclature of An Assassination Cabal* (privately printed US circa 1970) Apparently the work of now dead lawyer, David Copeland. One can only hope he wrote legal briefs better than he wrote this.

USLP: *Dope Inc* Jeffrey Steinberg and David Goldman (NY 1981)

14. *Il Paese Sera* was financed directly by the Communist Party of Italy who had unofficial editorial control. It's editor Mario Malloni, was a member of the Soviet-backed World Peace Council. *IPS*, it has been said "consistently released and reported anti-American and pro-Soviet bloc stories which are either distorted or entirely false." Andrew Tully *CIA* (London 1962) p 45
15. This section is based on Tully (above). Tully isn't to be taken as gospel, but in this case his account of these events has been confirmed since by others.
16. At the December 7th 1960 meeting between Bissell and Soustelle was another man who the papers failed to mention - Phillippe De Vosjoli. He was head of French Intelligence in the US, and tipped off the Americans about the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba while he was stationed there. (Events portrayed in fictionalised form in Hitchcock's film *Topaz*) Pro OAS, he was fired in 1963 because of his services for the CIA. His celebrated revelations in the CIA-sponsored *La Comite* (1975) showed the real extent of the dissension against Gaullist policy towards the US by French Intelligence (SDECE) officers. The Gaullists in France, including their loyal adherents in SDECE, and their dirty tricksters in SAC, were the CIA's arch enemies.

The murder in 1965 of Moroccan exile leader Ben Barka, had de Gaulle

fuming. He was convinced the CIA were involved (they were) but couldn't touch them. "Collaboration with the CIA went beyond certain French intelligence units to the highest circles, to the men closest to de Gaulle". (*The Great Heroin Coup* Henrik Kruger (Montreal 1980) p 67.

This included Pompidou, who was blasted verbally by de Gaulle but who could do little more than shout. One of those arrested was Marcel Leroy (later to ghost write De Vosjoli's *La Comite*). De Vosjoli managed to spring him from prison by blackmailing the SDECE and some French politicians. In a similar episode a Frenchman, believed to be a CIA agent code named QJ/Win, released 'soldier of fortune' and gunrunner Thomas Eli Davis from prison in Tangiers, just before the assassination of Kennedy. Davis knew Ruby and had a note on him referring to 'Oswald'. See *The Ruby Cover-up* Seth Kantor (US 1978)

17. Richard Helms, Assistant Director of the CIA, explained to a Senate Internal Security Sub-Committee that there was a reason why *Pravda* was a day behind *IPS* in circulating the story:

"Instead of having the story originate in Moscow, where every one would pinpoint it, they planted the story in Italy."

Helms is not a man I would normally trust, but in these circumstances, can it be mere coincidence that virtually the same process happened five years later with *IPS* and the *Pravda* articles on Permindex?

18. *Pravda* reported that "the traces of the plotters lead to Madrid and Lisbon, these hotbeds of fascism preserved intact with the money of American reactionaries and with the direct assistance of top NATO circles. The traces from Spain and Portugal lead across the ocean to the Pentagon and the CIA of the USA ...." (familiar lines).

One of the conspirators, Zellier, had specifically mentioned Portugal, South Africa and Israel as supporters of the putsch. This prompted Challe to add that he would much prefer something else - the support of the US. But General Georges Heritier, Chief of the Combined Military Staff in Algiers, testified that whilst the Generals had wanted US support, it wasn't forthcoming. *De Gaulle And The French Army* Edgar S. Furniss (NY 1964) p54

19. *New York Post* 5th May 1961. There were also reports that a determined campaign of anti-Americanism had started within Army circles in Paris. These circles made it known that they had 'irrefutable' proof of US support for the coup.
20. See *The Last Of The Giants* C.L. Sulzberger (London 1972) p 638/9
21. *Farewell America* James Hepburn (pseudonym) Frontiers Press (Liechtenstein 1968) p375
22. The story of *Farewell America* is told in Warren Hinckle's *If You Have A Lemon, Make Lemonade* (NY 1976)
23. *Farewell..* (above note 21)
24. A view recently rehashed by respected Kennedy assassination buffs Shaw and Fensterwald. In 1982 they tried and failed to obtain material on a possible 'French connection' in the JFK assassination. They were seeking material on the activities of Jean Souetre (aka Michael Roux, aka Michael Mertz) an OAS 'soldier of fortune' who may have been in Dallas on November 22nd 1963. The

Shaw/Fensterwald document contains a wealth of detail but is let down in the end by the retread of various 'Garrisonisms', including the Clay Shaw/Perminindex connection. See their *Possible French Connection* FOIA Civil Actions 80-1056

25. The material on the 'real' history of Perminindex is taken from correspondence with the Swiss and Canadian embassies in London, who have been very helpful, and from material supplied by the Swiss newspaper *Neu Zurich* *Zeitung*; specifically from 4/16 January, 16 February, 13 December 1957; 7th January, 9th May 1958; 4th May 1959; 15th March 1963.

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**THE LOBSTER** is a journal/newsletter about intelligence, para-politics and so forth. This is an atypical issue. No 1, which covered British Intelligence operations in Northern Ireland, the work of the Round Table, recent events surrounding the Papacy etc. gives a better idea of what we're interested in.

We welcome clippings, articles, letters, reviews, on these areas. Although we will exercise editorial control over any material sent to us, nothing will be cut without prior consultation with the author.

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Steve Dorril/Robin Ramsay

Issue 3 of *The Lobster* should be ready by the end of February - but no promises.

In the forthcoming issues there will be essays on:

- \*\* The assassination of Airy Neave;
- \*\* Flight 007;
- \*\* The anti CND groups;
- \*\* The SAS in Vietnam;

and a variety of bits and pieces on policing/intelligence/the Falklands/Kincoragate etc.

Plus reviews of some of the flood of books on these areas.