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Mafia Killed JFK?

WASHINGTON — There's a better case to be made for charges that the Mafia assassinated Jack Kennedy than there is for profitable efforts to implicate Bill Colby's Central Intelligence Agency.

It isn't fashionable to write kindly of the CIA these days which even now must suffer the New Delhi (India) Divine Light Mission's accusation that the CIA has actually brainwashed the 17-year-old Maharaj Ji.

The Mafia in general and the Chicago underworld in particular had motives. The CIA didn't, of course. The crime syndicate of yesterday, before all the new sophisticated electronic bugging came into play, was a blitheringly arrogant combine. It reached everywhere — repeat, everywhere. It operated in grim certainty that no one was above decision by its "hit" courts.

At the beginning of this script it must be recalled that the late Jack Ruby, once owner of a pre-discotheque Dallas joint, shot and killed assassin Lee Harvey Oswald in the cellar of the Dallas police station.

In mob jargon, this was the "cutout." It eliminates the killer, the hit man, the contract gun. Dead men don't sing. So Oswald, whose grave at least one union official sent flowers, never did get around to brooding and perhaps deciding to disclose personally whether the assassination was a one-man operation or a conspiracy.

Now back to Ruby. Before he became a Dallas saloon keeper, with girls attached, on one of its main drags, Ruby was loosely part of the toughest of underworlds — the Chicago mob. It was then (back in the '30s) and is now operated by Tony Accardo, sort of Al Capone's successor.

The mob had several account executives in charge of the newly profitable labor rackets which began making up for the big cash lost when the end of prohibition knocked off bootlegging.

So Jack Ruby had a vision in 1937. There always has been money in junk, scrap iron and waste. Why not a union of junk collectors? Ruby lunched with a lawyer friend, Leon Cook. It would be easy to get a federal union charter, Ruby said. Cook agreed. They went into business. Soon the money rolled in. Ruby was secretary, Cook, treasurer. They were good, too. So good, Cook got some slugs in the gut on Dec. 8, 1939, and died weeks later.

Ruby hung around for a while, wondering if bullet poisoning was catching. Then he finally caught the idea. He left for Dallas and opened a joint. Later this was to be the "casing" hangout for Chicago hoods — like Paul "Needlenose" Labriola who died when the boys decided to cut his breathing off with some tight wire.

But the junk union was too good to waste. So shortly after Ruby was technically removed from office, the AFL Waste Material Handlers Union 20467 was taken over by Paul "Red" Dorfman — a thick necked tough guy, indeed, who once almost broke my jaw in a corridor of San Francisco's Hotel Fairmount.

I swing the late Red Dorfman into this script to limn the milieu in which Jack Ruby had operated as a small-time, oft-frightened, Chicago thug. Dorfman has a fascinating background. There are a few Chicago labor people he didn't know. There also were few Chicago Mafiosi he didn't know. And all by first name. But Dorfman's horizons were higher than Chicago. He moved in Washington, Detroit and

wherever else there was political — and labor — power.

He was a buddy of Murder, Inc.'s long dead "Longy" Zwillman who had more political power in New Jersey and some national circles than has ever been recorded for some mysterious reason. Red Dorfman was also deep in the usual activities since he always had the nod of Tony Accardo.

There also are links between Dorfman, the restaurant racket hoods, and the whole operation which included "Needlenose" Labriola, who frequented Ruby's hangout in Dallas.

Incidentally, it was in Ruby's joint that the Chicago mob "cased" Dallas and Texas and plotted using the big state as a base for fanning out over Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. They did very well for a while, and though they scattered and Labriola was murdered, some of their boys are still in business. And they've rarely been probed.

In the federal records one can find the following on Dorfman: "Dorfman is a major figure in the Chicago underworld. He is an associate of most of the leading gangsters in the Chicago area. He is the contact man between dishonest union leaders and members of the Chicago underworld."

Then the record discloses that Dorfman was close to Accardo, Zwillman and at least one member of what is referred to as the Luchese family in the New York garment district.

And Dorfman once said of Ruby, "He's a nice guy." The question then is: with all these contacts Ruby had, was he asked by one of them, or did he get a message, to kill the killer of Jack Kennedy? If so, why? And why did some send flowers to Lee Harvey Oswald's grave?

There's more to contemplate here than in some contrived conspiracy discrediting the CIA.