

THE AMERICAN JAMES BOND:

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A TRUE STORY

article By DAVID C. MARTIN

OVERTHROW OF CASTRO is possible," Bobby Kennedy told Richard Helms amid the controlled chaos of his fifth-floor office at the Justice Department. An aide to the CIA clandestine services' Helms wrote rapidly to keep up with the Attorney General's staccato cadence. "A solution to the Cuban problem today carried top priority in U. S. Government. No time, money, effort—or manpower—is to be spared. Yesterday . . . the President had indicated to him that the final chapter had not been written—it's got to be done and will be done."

President John F. Kennedy was still smarting from the Bay of Pigs fiasco and, as his brother had told Helms, was determined to settle the score. Helms's response was to place William King Harvey in charge of what would be known within the agency as Task Force W. Two-gun Bill Harvey, foiled of Soviet spy Kim Philby, foreman of the Berlin tunnel, was the CIA's heaviest hitter. Harvey's appointment, more than anything else Helms could do, would convince the Kennedy Administration that the CIA meant business.

Brigadier General Edward Lansdale, Kennedy's "Cuba Commander," was suitably impressed. He introduced Harvey to the President as the American James Bond.

The President's enthusiasm for Ian Fleming and the improbable escapades of his British superagent, 007, was well publicized, so Lansdale must have been more than a little flattered when John Kennedy remarked to him one day that he was America's answer to Bond. Lansdale, with all due modesty, demurred, suggesting that the real American 007 was this fellow Harvey, whom Helms had just put on the Cuba case. Naturally, the President wanted to meet the man, and before long, Harvey and Lansdale were sitting outside the Oval Office, waiting to be ushered in.

As Lansdale told the story, he turned to Harvey and said, "You're not carrying your gun, are you?" Of course he was, Harvey replied, pulling a revolver from his pocket. Aghast at what the Service might do if this strange man were suddenly to draw a gun, Lansdale quickly told Harvey to keep the damn thing in his pocket until he could explain to the President that the gentleman would like to check his firearm. Harvey turned over the gun and was about to enter the Oval Office when suddenly he remembered something. Reaching behind him, he whipped out a .38 Detective Special from a holster snapped to his belt in the small of his back and handed it to the startled Secret Service agents.

The President left no record of his reaction to the sight of his American Bond—this red-faced, popeyed, bullet-headed, pear-shaped man advancing on him with a ducklike strut that was part waddle and part swagger. Harvey's deep, gruff voice must have restored the President's faith in 007 somewhat, but Ian Fleming would never read the same again.

William Harvey's father was the most prominent attorney in Danville, Indiana, a small town 20 miles west of Indianapolis, and his grandfather was the founder of the local newspaper. In 1936, on the strength of his father's name and the endorsement of his grandfather's newspaper, Harvey himself ran for prosecuting attorney in Hendricks County while still a student at Indiana University law school. Despite *The Danville Gazette's* promise that "Billy is a keen student and his election would be a great benefit to the people of Hendricks County," Harvey was a Democrat in a staunchly Republican county, and he lost by 880 votes out of 12,000 cast.

headquarters in Washington as part of a small vanguard of three agents—himself, |

Robert Collier and Lish Whitsun—targeted against America's ostensible ally, the Soviet Union. "We were the first ones to be fighting the Soviet side of it," Collier recalled.

It wasn't long before Harvey found himself sitting in a small room in New York City, listening intently as a plump, dowdy, brown-haired woman named Elizabeth Bentley confessed that she had been a courier for a Soviet spy ring. If she was telling the truth, Bentley represented the bureau's first big break in combating Soviet espionage. Harvey left the interrogation to other FBI agents while he sat quietly and simply tried to get a feel for this woman who would consume the next two years of his life. During 14 days of questioning, Bentley reeled off the names of more than 100 people linked to the Soviet underground in the United States and Canada. "Fifty-one of these persons were deemed of sufficient importance to warrant investigative attention by the bureau," an FBI memo stated. "Of those 51 individuals, 27 were employed in agencies of the U. S. Government." One of those 27 was named Alger Hiss.

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