

EIR's Chaitkin seeks Graham death records

The following is the petition filed by investigative reporter Anton Chaitkin on Nov. 14, with Judge Robert W. Duling's Circuit Court of the City of Richmond, Virginia.

In re records of deceased Philip Leslie Graham

This is a petition under 32.1-271 C of the Virginia Code, for an order allowing copying of death records. A hearing is scheduled before you for Courtroom 304, on Thursday, December 4, 1986 at 11:30 A.M.

Petitioner requests from the court an order compelling the State Registrar of Vital Records to release to the petitioner certified copies of all records in the Registrar's possession concerning the death of Philip Leslie Graham, deceased August 3, 1963 in Fauquier County, Virginia; and compelling the State Chief Medical Examiner to release to the petitioner all the information in his possession concerning this death.

Petitioner Anton Chaitkin is a reporter for *New Solidarity* twice-weekly newspaper and *Executive Intelligence Review* weekly magazine, both publications distributed internationally. Chaitkin is co-author of a series of articles on the last years and death of Philip Leslie Graham; four articles have so far been published.

It was as a result of Mr. Graham's death that his widow Katharine Graham came to own the *Washington Post* newspaper and *Newsweek* magazine. Stories printed in the *Washington Post*, and released to other news media by the *Washington Post*, have been the only publicly available account of the cause and manner of Mr. Graham's death, purportedly a suicide.

Important changes in our country's political system occurred because of the death of Philip Graham. The *Washington Post* has great influence in global affairs, and its present owner, Mrs. Graham, has intervened in American public life perhaps more than any other publisher. The public has a substantial interest in knowing how she came to have that position.

There are substantial grounds for the suspicion that Mr. Graham died from other causes than have been announced by his widow, who received great material benefit and political power from the death of her husband. He had separated from Mrs. Graham, and had been in a personal and political battle with her for at least two years at the time of his death. This was not merely a personal problem, but involved differences on the gravest issues of national concern.

Philip Graham tried very hard to stop Mrs. Graham from being his "next of kin," including hiring a lawyer to institute divorce proceedings. This lawyer, later hired permanently by Mrs. Graham, admits destroying the will Mr. Graham drew up leaving his estate to his intended new wife.

If Philip Graham was killed, to his estranged wife's benefit, then Mrs. Graham's lack of consent should not be allowed to block serious research into the official records of Mr. Graham's death, on the grounds that she is the next of kin. The death certificate and medical examiner's report will provide vital clues, for example, into whether there was official corruption in the handling of Mr. Graham's death.

As far as public information is concerned, there is no "official story" of Philip Graham's death. The medical examiner in the case refused comment and moved away from his longtime home and place of employment when petitioner's investigation was publicized. The Sheriffs Department of Fauquier County maintains they have "lost" all records of the investigation they did at the time of the death.

On May 20, 1986, petitioner Anton Chaitkin requested the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Vital Records to furnish him with copies of the death records of Philip Leslie Graham. Instead of supplying the records, or giving any other alternative, that office returned to Chaitkin a consent form to be signed by the next of kin of the deceased. On June 1, 1986, Chaitkin delivered the form with a request to Mrs. Katharine Graham to sign the form. Mrs. Graham declined to return the form or to cooperate in any fashion, and the petitioner filed for relief under the cited Virginia code.

A hearing was scheduled for Sept. 22 before the Hon. Willard I. Walker (since deceased). Three days before this scheduled hearing the petitioner received notification that the Virginia Attorney General's office had intervened in this case to prevent disclosure. In order to prepare a reply to their arguments, the petitioner asked for and received a postponement of the hearing.

Less than three weeks later, on Oct. 6, 1986, the Attorney General and over one hundred state troopers and many federal agents entered the petitioner's editorial offices, and removed a mass of documents. A suit has been filed to recover those documents. Following a delay caused by this disruption of business functions, the petitioner has reinstated this case.

Attached hereto is a copy of a registered letter, by which Mrs. Katharine Graham was informed about the scheduled hearing.