

THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY: CONSPIRACY THEORIES

SUMMARY

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas. The alleged assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was never brought to trial, as he was shot and killed by Jack Ruby, a Dallas nightclub owner. Ruby was convicted of killing Oswald and sentenced to death, but his conviction was overturned on a technicality on appeal. He died of a blood clot in his lungs while awaiting a new trial.

The Commission to Investigate the Assassination of President Kennedy (Warren Commission) concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed President Kennedy. Many books raising objections to the findings of the Warren Commission followed the release of the Commission's Report. The skepticism voiced by Warren Commission critics appeared to be shared in some measure by the general public.

One congressional response to public pressure for a new investigation was the creation in 1976, of the House Select Committee on Assassinations. In its final report, released on March 29, 1979, The Committee agreed in some respects with the Warren Commission, but it departed from the Warren Commission's conclusions in its finding that ". . . on the basis of the evidence available to it, that President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy."

Director Oliver Stone's recently released and very controversial movie, *JFK*, calls for further investigation into the facts surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy and for the opening of all of the official records pertaining to that assassination. Following the film's release and attendant publicity, many Americans have indicated that they support this position.

Responding to public pressure to open the records, legislation mandating release of all Kennedy assassination records has been introduced.

The assassination of President Kennedy was a defining event in the lives of many living Americans. The response to *JFK*, especially the groundswell of letters to Congress requesting that all files be made public, suggest that the Kennedy assassination will continue to be an unsettled issue for many.

THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY: CONSPIRACY THEORIES

INTRODUCTION

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas. The alleged assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was charged with the murder of President Kennedy on the following day, November 23, 1963. On Sunday, November 24th, as Oswald was being transferred from the city jail to the Dallas County jail, he was shot and killed. His murder was viewed by millions on television. Oswald denied any guilt throughout his questioning. Jack Ruby, a local nightclub owner, was indicted and convicted of murdering Oswald, and was sentenced to death. Ruby's conviction was overturned on a technicality on appeal, and while he was awaiting a new trial, he died of a blood clot in his lung in Dallas, Texas, on January 3, 1967.

Director Oliver Stone's recently released movie, *JFK*, calls for further investigation into the facts surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and for the opening of all of the official records pertaining to that assassination. Based in part on a book by former New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison,¹ the only person to bring criminal charges in the Kennedy murder, the new movie suggests that the President's assassination was planned and executed by a well organized conspiracy which included elements from the United States military and intelligence communities, as well as organized crime figures, anti-Castro Cubans, and the Dallas police. It also leaves the impression that then Vice-President Lyndon Johnson was involved in the massive conspiracy.

Critically acclaimed as dramatic cinema art on the one hand, and condemned as a "big lie" ² on the other, *JFK* focuses new attention on the Kennedy assassination. Although the assassination was the subject of two major Federal investigations, it apparently never has been explained satisfactorily for many Americans.

¹ Garrison, Jim. *On the Trail of the Assassins*. New York, Sheridan Square Press, Distributed by Kampmann, 1988. 342 p. For other theories see, Belin, David W. *Final Disclosure*. New York, Scribner's, 1988. 249 p., Lane, Mark. *Plausible Denial*. New York, Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991. 393 p., Marrs, Jim. *Crossfire: The Plot That Killed Kennedy*. New York, Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1989. 595 p., and Summers, Anthony. *Conspiracy*. New York, Paragon House, 1989. 657 p.

² See for example, "JFK" Director Condemned. *Washington Post*, Dec. 16, 1991. p. D14.

This report presents the conclusions of the President's Commission to Investigate the Assassination of President Kennedy (Warren Commission), and summarizes challenges to the report. It reviews the subsequent investigation conducted by the House Select Committee on Assassination (HSCA), and the conclusions reached by that panel. Finally, it discusses efforts to unseal records pertaining to official investigations of the murder of the late President.

WARREN COMMISSION AND ITS AFTERMATH

On November 29, 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson issued Executive Order 11130, creating a Commission to Investigate the Assassination of President Kennedy. The Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren, was appointed chairman of the Commission, and its members included two United States Senators (Richard Russell and John Sherman Cooper), two members of the House of Representatives (Hale Boggs and Gerald Ford), a former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (Allen Dulles), and a former Commissioner for Germany and public servant (John McCloy). The Commission's staff of 83 conducted its investigation over a 10 month period, interviewing several hundred witnesses.³

In its September 24, 1964 report to the President, the Commission concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed President Kennedy.⁴ From the time its report was made public, the Commission has been criticized for its methods, comprehensiveness, and findings. While there have been many challenges to conclusions of the Warren Commission, the critics are not in agreement with respect to the Commission's findings. The most frequently cited criticisms of the Commission are as follows:⁵

- The Warren Commission's goal was to dispel rumors of a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy—thus its function was more political than

³ The Commission relied directly on Federal and State investigative agencies to carry out its investigation. See *The President's Commission on the Investigation of the Assassination on President Kennedy. Report*. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1964. p. xii. Hereafter referred to as Warren Commission Report.

⁴ Warren Commission Report, pp. 18-25.

⁵ See, for example, Epstein, Edward Jay. *Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth*. New York, The Viking Press, 1966. 224 p., Hoch, Paul, Peter Dale Scott, and Russell Stetler. *The Assassinations, Dallas and Beyond*. New York, Random House, 1976. 552 p., Lane, Mark. *Rush to Judgement*. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966. 478 p., Lifton, David. *Best Evidence: Disguise and Deception in the Assassination of John F. Kennedy*. New York, Macmillan, 1980. 747 p., and Meagher, Sylvia. *Accessories After the Fact: the Warren Commission, the Authorities, and the Report*. Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1967. 477 p.

investigative. It assumed that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin and set out to prove the assumption by giving undue weight to any evidence that could be used to support the theory that Oswald acted alone.

- The Commission concluded that three shots were fired, that one of those bullets fatally wounded President Kennedy, and that the same bullet that exited through the President's throat wounded Governor John Connally, who was riding in the car with the President. Critics argue that at least four bullets were fired, and that the "single bullet" theory is incorrect.

- The Warren Commission concluded that all of the bullets came from behind. Critics allege that some of the bullets came from the front, and that the wound in President Kennedy's throat was an entrance, not an exit wound. Some critics question whether President Kennedy's body arrived in Bethesda Hospital in the same condition that it left Dallas, asserting the wound had been altered to appear like an exit wound. Some of the descriptions of the wound by doctors at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas allegedly were ignored or discounted by the Warren Commission.

- The Warren Commission discounted witnesses who insisted that some of the shots that struck President Kennedy came from a grassy knoll in front of him.

- Critics argue that the fatal shot came from the right and to the front and could only have been fired from the grassy knoll. In addition, a film taken by Abraham Zapruder showed President Kennedy's head moving backward after the bullet impact. The film, some argue, indicates that four bullets were shot--one from the Texas School Book Depository, hitting the President in the back; a second from the County Records Building, hitting Governor Connally; a third from the rear, hitting President Kennedy in the back of the head; and a fourth from the front, hitting the President in the head. An investigation conducted by CBS television in 1975 concluded, on the basis of a study of x-rays and photographs taken at the autopsy, that only two bullets hit President Kennedy and that neither struck the President from the front.

- The Warren Commission reportedly ignored an FBI Summary Report which allegedly stated that President Kennedy and Governor Connally were wounded by separate bullets. The FBI Report also is said to have placed President Kennedy's two wounds 6 inches below the neck and in the head. The Warren Report placed one wound at the base of President Kennedy's neck, apparently contradicting the FBI Summary Report.

- Another allegation of those who fault the Warren Commission is that the Commission did not give sufficient attention to the autopsy report. Critics claim that an examination of the wounds in President Kennedy's brain could resolve the question of whether or not the President was shot from the front as well as from behind. Physical evidence, including President Kennedy's brain and tissue slides from the bullet wounds, had been collected by the Warren

Commission and were turned over to the Kennedy family, who subsequently deeded various medical items to the National Archives. The tissue slides and brain were not among the items turned over to the Archives.

- There have been numerous allegations that Lee Harvey Oswald had some connections with the intelligence community. Supporters of this theory point to Oswald's training in the Russian language while in the military, his defection to the Soviet Union and the ease of his re-entry to the United States, and to his alleged meetings with Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency agents. On May 14, 1964, J. Edgar Hoover testified before the Commission that Oswald had no connections with the FBI, and the Warren Commission did not pursue the matter beyond Hoover's testimony. Allegations that Oswald was involved with the CIA were rejected by the Commission; critics charge that a less than thorough investigation was conducted.

- Finally, there have been various allegations of a Cuban connection--either governmental or private--with Lee Harvey Oswald. The Senate Select Committee to Study Government Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities (Church Committee) found in 1976 that the CIA was involved (with organized crime figures) in plots to assassinate Cuban leader Fidel Castro. The Church Committee said that the Central Intelligence Agency had withheld information about such plots from the Warren Commission.⁶ Oswald had distributed pro-Cuban literature while residing in New Orleans; at the same time, he was involved with anti-Castro Cubans who were allegedly seeking revenge against President Kennedy for his role in the aborted Bay of Pigs invasion.

Many books raising objections to the findings of the Warren Commission followed the release of the Commission's Report. Although the focus of the objections varied from book to book, one theme remained constant --that the Commission's Report was incomplete, and that further investigation was necessary. The skepticism voiced by Warren Commission critics appeared to be shared in some measure by the general public; it was reinforced by the disclosures of the Church Committee. A Gallup poll dated February, 1977 revealed that 81% of those surveyed believed that more than one person was involved in the assassination of President Kennedy, 11% believed that one man was responsible, and 8% expressed no opinion.

The records of the Warren Commission were transferred to the National Archives. Most of the files, 98 percent, are available to the public, although some restrictions have been placed on their use. Information whose release would (a) violate a Federal statute, (b) endanger the national security, (c) reveal

⁶ U.S. Congress. Senate. Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities.. The Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: Performance of the Intelligence Agencies. Final Report. Senate Report No 94-755, Book V, 94th Cong., 2d Sess. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1976. 106 p.

the identity of confidential sources, or (d) that might embarrass innocent individuals, is not open to the public.⁷

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

One congressional response to public demands for a new investigation was the creation, in 1976, of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA).⁸ The Select Committee was directed to:

...conduct a full and complete investigation and study of the circumstances surrounding the assassination and death of President John F. Kennedy and the assassination and death of Martin Luther King, Jr., and of any other persons the select committee shall determine might be related to either death in order to ascertain (1) whether the existing laws of the United States, including but not limited to laws relating to the safety and protection of the President of the United States, assassinations of the President of the United States, deprivations of civil rights, and conspiracies related thereto, as well as the investigatory jurisdiction and capabilities of agencies and departments of the United States Government, are adequate either in their provisions or in the manner of their enforcement;

Further, it was to determine:

whether there was full disclosure and sharing of information and evidence among agencies and departments of the U.S. Government during the course of all prior investigations into those deaths; and whether any evidence or information

⁷ At the request of the Kennedy family autopsy material is available only to "serious" researchers. Use restriction pertaining to the Kennedy assassination records are as follows: "records withheld from disclosure by specific statutes, such as income tax returns; records related to national security; records withheld as part of investigatory files compiled for law enforcement purposes, the public disclosure of which would be detrimental to law enforcement, might reveal confidential sources of information, or would be a source of embarrassment to innocent persons; and personnel and medical records, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy" are withheld from research except as authorized by the originating agency. See, Guide to the National Archives of the United States. Washington, National Archives and Records Administration, 1987. pp. 128-129.

⁸ Created by H. Res. 1540, 94th Congress, 2d Session, adopted on Sept. 17, 1976, the House Select Committee on Assassinations was extended until March 31, 1977 by H. Res. 222, adopted Feb. 2, 1977, and was extended for the duration of the 95th Congress by H. Res. 433, adopted Mar. 30, 1977.

which was not in the possession of any agency or department of the U.S. Government investigating either death would have been of assistance to that agency or department, and why such information was not provided to or collected by the appropriate agency or department; and shall make recommendations to the House, if the select committee deems it appropriate, for the amendment of existing legislation, or the enactment of new legislation. ⁹

On March 8, 1977, Representative Louis Stokes was named Chairman of the Committee. Two subcommittees, one on the Kennedy assassination, and the other on the King assassination, were created. Staff was divided into two task forces to assist in each investigation.

The Select Committee reviewed the findings of the Warren Commission, evaluating the evidence presented to it by official bodies, including the FBI and intelligence community. The Kennedy phase of the investigation ¹⁰ addressed charges related to the pro and anti-Castro Cuban connections, the "single-bullet theory," the involvement of organized crime, the alleged complicity of CIA, the FBI, and the Secret Service.

In its final report, released on March 29, 1979, ¹¹ the Committee agreed in some respects with the Warren Commission, concluding that "Lee Harvey Oswald fired three shots at President John F. Kennedy. The second and third shots he fired struck the President. The third shot he fired killed the President." The Committee found that President Kennedy was struck by two rifle shots fired from the sixth floor window of the southeast corner of the Texas School Book Depository Building; that Lee Harvey Oswald owned the rifle used

⁹ U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee on Assassinations. Report. House Report No. 95-1828, Part 2, 95th Cong., 2d Sess. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1979. p. 10. In 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy were killed by assassins' bullets. Originally the House considered authorizing the committee to investigate the deaths of President Kennedy, Dr. King, and "of any others the select committee shall determine." The resolution that was adopted limited the investigation to the assassinations of President Kennedy and Dr. King. Hereafter this Report will be referred to as House Report No. 95-1828.

¹⁰ Rep. Richardson Preyer chaired the Kennedy subcommittee. Its members were Reps. Yvonne Burke, Christopher Dodd, Charles Thone, Harold S. Sawyer, Louis Stokes, and Samuel L. Devine. The King subcommittee was chaired by Rep. Walter E. Fauntroy. Its members were Reps. Harold E. Ford, Floyd Fithian, Robert W. Edgar, Stewart B. McKinney, Louis Stokes, and Samuel L. Devine.

¹¹ A summary was released on December 31, 1978. Four of the twelve members of the Committee filed separate views.

to fire the shots; that Oswald was present on the sixth floor of the building before the assassination; and that Lee Harvey Oswald's other actions tend to support the conclusion that he assassinated the President.¹²

Departing from the Warren Commission on the question of whether Oswald acted alone, the Committee concluded:

Scientific acoustical evidence establishes a high probability that two gunmen fired at President John F. Kennedy. Other scientific evidence does not preclude the possibility of two gunmen firing at the President. Scientific evidence negates some specific conspiracy allegations.

It stated further:

The committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy. The committee is unable to identify the other gunman or the extent of the conspiracy.¹³

The Committee found no involvement by the Soviet or Cuban Governments in the assassination or any complicity by the Secret Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or the Central Intelligence Agency.¹⁴

With respect to the involvement of anti-Castro Cubans in the President's assassination, the Committee found, on the basis of available evidence, that anti-Castro Cuban groups, as groups, were not involved, "but that available evidence does not preclude the possibility that individual members may have been involved."¹⁵

The Committee also concluded that "the national syndicate of organized crime, as a group, was not involved in the assassination of President Kennedy,

¹² House Report No. 95-1828, p. 1.

¹³ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 1-2. The Committee criticized the performance of those three agencies, saying that "the Secret Service was deficient in the performance of its duties; the FBI performed with varying degrees of competency in the fulfillment of its duties; and the CIA was deficient in its collection and sharing of information both prior to and subsequent to the assassination."

¹⁵ Ibid.

but that the available evidence does not preclude the possibility that individual members may have been involved."¹⁶

One of the recommendations of the Select Committee was that the Department of Justice review its findings to determine whether further official investigation was warranted.

After a two year, \$5.5 million dollar investigation, the Select Committee on Assassinations went out of existence at the expiration of the 95th Congress.

THE JFK FILES

The files of the Select Committee were deposited at the National Archives, where, in accordance with prevailing House rules, they are effectively sealed for 50 years, until 2029.¹⁷ Waiving the rule would necessitate a majority vote of the House of Representatives. A resolution to open the files of the Select Committee was introduced in 1983 by the late Stewart McKinney who served on committee, but it was never reported to the floor for a vote.¹⁸

While the finding of the House Assassination Committee raised new questions about who or what was behind the murder of the 35th President, the assassination debate gradually faded from public attention until the release of Oliver Stone's *JFK* in late December 1991. Following Stone's publicized demand that all files pertaining to the assassination of President Kennedy be opened,¹⁹ many Americans have indicated that they support this position, some reportedly seeing the closing of the files as evidence of a conspiracy. A *Time* Magazine/CNN poll released on January 13, 1992, showed that 72% of those questioned believed that the American people had not been told the truth about the assassination, and that 73% believed that Lee Harvey Oswald was part of

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ U.S. Congress. House. Constitution Jefferson's Manual and Rules of the House of Representatives. Rule XXXVI. House Document No. 101-256, 101st Cong., 2d Sess., Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1991. p. 724. H. Res. 288, June 16, 1953, p. 6641 authorized the Clerk of the House to permit the Administrator of General Services to make available for use certain records of the House transferred to the National Archives. The rule requires that the Clerk of the House transfer non-current records of the House to the National Archives. Investigative records are to remain there under seal for fifty years; routine records for thirty years.

¹⁸ H. Res. 160. 98th Congress, 1st Session.

¹⁹ At the end of the movie Director Oliver Stone urges that viewers write to their representatives in Congress demanding that all files pertaining to the assassination of President Kennedy be made public.

some conspiracy. When asked which groups may have been involved in a conspiracy, 50% named the CIA, 48% the Mafia, 34% the Cuban Government, 19% anti-Castro Cubans, 18% U.S. military leaders, and 13% the Dallas police.²⁰ A recent Wall Street Journal poll indicated that 69 percent of those asked think that Oswald was part of a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy; in a 1978 poll, fewer than half shared that feeling.²¹

Responding to public pressure to open the records, former President Gerald Ford, who served on the Warren Commission, several Members of Congress, as well as thirteen former Warren Commission counsel and staff members,²² have urged that all Federal records compiled in investigations of the assassination of President Kennedy be made public.²³ Representative Stokes, who chaired the House Select Committee on Assassinations, has indicated that he is willing to reconsider the opening of the files of the Committee.²⁴ Two bills mandating the release of all Kennedy assassination investigation records (H.R. 4090, introduced Jan. 3, 1992, and H.R. 4108, introduced Jan. 24, 1992), and two House Resolutions directing the unsealing of the records of the Select Committee have been introduced in the House of Representatives (H. Res. 325, introduced Jan. 22, 1992, and H. Res. 326, introduced Jan. 24, 1992). More recently, on February 21, 1992, Central Intelligence Agency Director, Robert M. Gates, announced a willingness to declassify secret agency files on the assassination of President Kennedy. The CIA's files on the Kennedy assassination reportedly number close to 300,000 pages.²⁵

HISTORY, DOCUDRAMA, AND CONSPIRACY

Nearly 30 years after the assassination of President Kennedy, many people refuse to accept official explanations and adhere to one or more of the conspiracy theories. The vitality of conspiracy theories may be explained in part by the extraordinary circumstances of the event—that three people were killed, the President of the United States, his alleged assassin, and an officer of the Dallas police force. Fueling conspiracy speculation were beliefs that the Warren

²⁰ Time Magazine, vol. 139, Jan. 13, 1992. p. 56.

²¹ Wall Street Journal. Jan. 24, 1992. p. A1.

²² Washington Post. Jan. 31, 1992. p. A7. Former General Counsel J. Lee Rankin, and former assistant counsels Arlen Specter and David Belin have announced their support for opening the remaining Warren Commission closed files.

²³ Washington Post, Jan. 30, 1992. p. A12 and Jan. 31, 1992. p. A7.

²⁴ New York Times, Jan. 22, 1992. p. A1.

²⁵ Washington Post. February 22, 1992. p. A4.

Commission's investigation was less than thorough. To the extent that the House Select Committee on Assassinations left certain questions open, after re-analyzing data gathered by the Warren Commission, that inquiry lends support to these perceptions. The sealing of the Committee's records, even though in accord with House rules and accepted investigative practices, piqued the interest of those who believe that the President Kennedy died at the hands of conspirators. Committee Chairman Louis Stokes, who now favors unsealing the records, asserts publicly that the records contain no evidence of Government complicity in the assassination of the former President.²⁶ Of particular interest to some is a report of Lee Harvey Oswald's activities in Mexico City, allegedly prepared by the staff of the House Assassinations Committee. However, past experience suggests that release of the records may provide fuel for new theories or rekindle old ones, resolving little.

The House Assassination Committee's conclusions—that scientific acoustical evidence established a high probability that two gunmen fired at President Kennedy, and that, on the basis of the evidence available to it, President Kennedy probably was assassinated as a result of a conspiracy—lend support to the conspiracy explanations of the death of the President. Oliver Stone's *JFK* may dramatically seal that explanation in the minds of many, particularly for those who have no independent memory of the events or have not critically thought through the problems in the conspiracy theories. Stone's melding of fact and fiction in *JFK* has led some to question the use of docudrama,²⁷ especially if it is presented as history. In his review of *JFK* Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. queries:

... what does "JFK" have to do with truth? After all, the movie purports to tell the story of the murder of a president of the United States. What responsibility does a film maker have to the facts? Is even a virtuoso film maker justified in raiding history for his own purposes as if he were Shakespeare ransacking Holinshed's "Chronicles"? Is he justified in weaving fact, conjecture and fiction into an indecipherable mass posing as a bold, quasi-authoritative, historical narrative?²⁸

Another commentator suggests that Stone's film substitutes a new myth for the prevailing one:

²⁶ Stokes, Louis. The Assassination of John F. Kennedy. Remarks in the House. Congressional Record, Jan. 28, 1992: H87.

²⁷ "Docudrama" is a combining of factual events with fiction to create additional drama. It permits the director to use creative license in the presentation of the art form.

²⁸ Schlesinger, Jr., Arthur. "JFK": Truth and Fiction. Wall Street Journal, Jan. 10, 1992. p. A8.

Stone neither deconstructs nor debunks. His method is to substitute another myth—consistent, compelling and just a little unconvincing—for the "official" one that seems to have been a comfort for so long but is so shot full of holes by now that it can hardly float. Certainly he has every right to do what he does. John Ford's *December Seventh*, recently remembered as the fiftieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor came around, also mixed documentary footage with reconstruction and simulations, inserted historical speculations as ironclad fact and gave heroic (or villainous) dimensions to ordinary people. It was great fun and brilliant propaganda, which is to say, what movies ought to be.²⁹

JFK's release has led some to speculate about why conspiracy theories refuse to disappear or fade. Such theories fascinate most people. Perhaps, as one columnist argues, it is easier to accept conspiracy theories than to believe that important events may have no rational explanation of moral or political significance. As one author explains:

Few of us like to think too deeply about the Lee Harvey Oswalds or Travis Bickles [Taxi Driver] of the world: The randomness of their violence is too scary. We much prefer to worry about political or governmental conspiracies. To do so implies that if we steer clear of politics or government intrigue we'll never wander into the sights of an assassin's rifle. Yet our times repeatedly tell us otherwise.³⁰

The assassination of President Kennedy was a defining event in the lives of many living Americans. Lingered questions about the investigations have fed the ongoing doubts about the conclusions of official panels. The response to *JFK*, especially the groundswell of letters to Congress requesting that all files be made public, suggests that the Kennedy assassination will continue to be an unsettled issue for many.

²⁹ Kopkind, Andrew. *JFK: The Myth*. The Nation. Jan. 20, 1992. pp. 40-41.

³⁰ Ringle, Ken. The Fallacy of Conspiracy Theories. Washington Post, Jan. 19, 1992. p. G1.