

November 22, 1963:

YOU ARE THE JURY

DAVID W. BELIN, ESQ.

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My primary acknowledgment is not to any single person but rather to our American system of government and justice. There are few places in this world where the investigation of the assassination of a fallen leader would be conducted by an independent commission, just as there are few countries in this world where the combination of a free press and separate judicial and legislative branches of government could lead to the expose of Watergate.

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INTRODUCTION

Harrison E. Salisbury

Ten years have passed since that bright Dallas morning when a sniper took the life of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, ten years which have not eased the anguish of the hour, the tragedy, the mystery. Although President Kennedy's death lies a decade behind us the nation has not ceased to mourn the malevolent circumstances which robbed us of a leader so young, so bold, so promising.

No death in our time has so concentrated a nation's emotions as that of John Kennedy. The fact that his was first in a macabre procession which claimed the lives of his brother, Robert, and a pleiad of Americans—Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, George Lincoln Rockwell, Joseph Yablonski and his family, a remarkable succession of Black Panther figures, including Fred Hampton and George Jackson—and came within a hair's breadth of taking the life of another presidential candidate, George Wallace, has only intensified the nation's concern.

To many it has seemed that some mad spirit of the Dark Ages has been unleashed within our technological society, striking at random but seeking its victims, in large measure, among men who have sought to put themselves at the service of their fellow citizens through political leadership. To many it has seemed there must be a dark conspiracy running from death to death, linking them all in a sorcerer's web of evil.

Our logical minds have rejected again and again the tawdry evidence which exposes these crimes as the haphazard acts of random psychotics, the by-products of our computerized electronic society, fallout of a civilization programmed to produce metal-and-plastic rather than flesh-and-blood.

In our agony we instinctively clutch for the supernatural. It has seemed too banal to believe that John F. Kennedy could have died less regally than Caesar. Lee Harvey Oswald was a man too trivial to have brought down Camelot. And as the succession of murders thudded across our bulldozed landscape, our minds grasped feverishly at the possibility that there was more in these accidental crimes than met the eye—that behind them all lay some master mind, some sinister power, some ring, some conspiracy of a grandeur to match the stature of the victims.

Particularly in the early months and years after November 22, 1963

there were projected into public consciousness theories to suit the taste of all for whom the dismal facts were unpalatable.

But, let us be realistic: In the ten years since John Kennedy's death not one important clue or fact has been added to that mountainous store so painstakingly and, on the whole, carefully inquired into by the Warren Commission. *Not one fact.* Let us be precise. Theories have been propounded without number. Claim after claim has been advanced—conflicts of evidence, telltale clues overlooked or misinterpreted, and misfeasance and malfeasance by the Warren Commission.

But in all this pawing over the evidence—not one new fact has been turned up. Not one new witness has been ferreted out and brought forward trumpeting: "Yes, I saw the killer!" Not one more bullet than those found immediately after the assassination has been discovered. Not one more weapon which might have been fired at the President. Not one name of a possible co-conspirator of Oswald's. No investigator has produced a link between Oswald and Jack Ruby. Between Ruby and anyone else. Between Oswald and right-wing groups. Between Oswald and left-wing groups. Between Oswald and foreign powers. Or domestic enemies and rivals of the President.

Nothing. Nothing but theory, speculation, sensationalism, juggling and transposition of facts, reordering of what we already knew in order to raise questions (but not to provide answers).

Ten years have passed. It is time to look back to that sunny day in Dallas and, in patience, in quiet, with care and with logic to sum up what we really know. This David W. Belin has done with patience and with eloquence. He has done what no one yet has done (except, of course, for the original Warren report). He has taken all of the evidence and sifted it through. He has concentrated, in particular, on those theses and theories which have been spun by that group which he calls the "assassination sensationalists." He has gone over every one of their contentions, returning to the original testimony, the original evidence, to show how it has been tortured and twisted in order to support cardboard structures. In particular, he has reestablished what has often been overlooked—the primacy of the Tippit killing as demonstrating Oswald's obvious guilt. The evidence here is simply overpowering.

This has been no easy task even for one like Belin, who handled very important segments of the Warren testimony, the processing of evidence and questioning of witnesses. He has had a decade to think and study. He is by no means uncritical of the Commission, of some of its procedures, of some of its methods. But his careful reexamination does not invalidate a single Warren finding. He believes the Commission and Chief Justice Warren, in particular, were too easy in their examination of Marina Oswald. He believes they should have insisted upon the X rays and medical photographs of the slain President's body. Not because this data

would have changed the findings.

I believe Belin simply on the facts—first, direct who, in the first uncovered much ground independently directing, two years designed to access every major of *Times* team was never carried assignment to say, however, 1 volume.

I do not believe embracing as Kennedy's death Abraham Lincoln advanced. I believe Siberia, in the China—a connection his death from Russia, in China aberrant assassinations popular belief

This volume But for anyone actually occur that which the better than it

would have changed their conclusion but because it would have buttressed the findings and blocked off avenues for turgid sensationalism.

I believe Belin is right. I do not come to that judgment out of hand or simply on the basis of his work. I, too, have labored over the Kennedy facts—first, directing a remarkable team of *New York Times* reporters who, in the first few days after the President's death, themselves uncovered much important information about Oswald and his background independently and before any official investigators; second, in directing, two years later, a careful restudy of the assassination that was designed to accomplish many of the tasks of this book, that is, to examine every major challenge to the Warren thesis (as well as any which *The Times* team was able to generate on its own). That study, unfortunately, was never carried to completion, having been interrupted by my own assignment to Hanoi from December 1966 to January 1967. It is fair to say, however, that our preliminary findings fully support those of this volume.

I do not believe that the Belin study, meticulous, precise and all-embracing as it is, will bring to an end the questions about John Kennedy's death. More than 100 years after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln a new theory of how he met death is periodically advanced. I have found in every part of the world—deep in Soviet Siberia, in the high Himalayas and even in the People's Republic of China—a continuing unwillingness to believe that John Kennedy met his death from a random bullet fired by an insignificant psychopath. In Russia, in China, in France and in England, the theory of the single aberrant assassin is not believed. "There must be more to it." That is the popular belief.

This volume will not crush the mystique of the Kennedy assassination. But for anyone who wishes to know how the crime of this century actually occurred and why it could have occurred in no other way than that which the Warren Commission described, this work tells the story better than it has been told at any time before.

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