

Unlock the Dallas Secrets

As it has a way of doing from time to time, the Kennedy assassination has crawled out from under the Warren Commission Report and back into the news. Sherman Skolnick, a legal researcher in Chicago, filed suit last week in an effort to unlock secret information salted away in the National Archives until the year 2039. Skolnick says he has evidence that President John Kennedy was killed by a conspiracy and not by a mentally unstable individual acting alone, as the Warren Report contends.

Specifically, he is tracking a man named Thomas Arthur Vallee, "a double for Lee Harvey Oswald," and one of five conspirators who allegedly planned to kill the President at the Army-Air Force football game in Chicago on November 2, 1963. The lawsuit states that after Kennedy canceled his Chicago appearance at the last minute because of a cold, the assassination attempt was rescheduled for Dallas. The suit cites a recently declassified Warren document that discloses an FBI freeze on all information regarding Vallee's automobile registration.

Regardless of the merits of Skolnick's case, at least his theory about an assassination conspiracy is not without some substantiation. Richard Russell, a member of the Warren Commission and one of the most respected men in the U.S. Senate, said in a rare television interview earlier this year that he never has believed Oswald planned the assassination alone. Because of his doubts, Senator Russell said he insisted on a disclaimer sentence in the final Warren Report before he would sign it.

Six and a half years after the assassination, the FBI still is trying to unravel a number of mysteries surrounding the activities and affiliations of Oswald. As Columnist Paul Scott

has pointed out, one of the most baffling questions concerns a letter Oswald wrote to the Soviet Embassy in Washington on November 12, 1963 — only ten days before the Dallas tragedy. Mrs. Ruth Paine, with whom Oswald's Russian wife, Marina, was staying, told the Warren Commission that she managed to copy the letter during the weekend of November 9; she turned it over to the FBI the day after the assassination.

In this letter, Oswald asked for another Soviet visa and referred to the then unannounced recall of Eusebio Azque, a Cuban Embassy official in Mexico City with whom he had dealt during his visit there two months earlier. Oswald's mention of "Comrade Kostin" confirmed a CIA report that he also had met with Valeriy Vladimirovich Kostikov, a Soviet consular officer and one of the top KGB officers in the Western Hemisphere. What baffles the FBI is how Oswald came by inside information about the Cuban Consul's recall some time before the transfer took place on November 18, 1963, just four days before the President was murdered. Among the documents ordered sealed by the Warren Commission are reports about this letter and about Oswald's contacts with various Soviet and Cuban officials in Mexico City.

If "people in high places" are suppressing facts about President Kennedy's death, as the assassin's assassin Jack Ruby alleged, one wonders just what is being kept from the American people and why. This question should be answered once and for all by the Nixon Administration. According to the Justice Department, the President is now free, under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1966, to make public all documents sealed by the Warren Commission. This he should do without further delay.

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