

Mr. Richard Lingeman, executive editor
The Nation
72 Fifth Ave.,
New York, NY 10011

cl 9/95

Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Rd.
Frederick, MD 21702

Dear Mr. Lingeman

A friend sent me copies of pages from Alexander Cockburn's "The Golden Age Is -n Us" in which he refers to the JFK assassination. Based on those pages it is safe to say there is nothing golden in Cockburn or in his intentions. A few of those pages lead me to take the time to ~~provide~~^{provide} you with the opportunity + have no reason to believe you (plural) want or will use in a belated effort to recapture the personal and professional integrity you all threw away after your first few stories on the JFK assassination. However, for my purpose, the time this takes will not be entirely wasted because it provides me with the opportunity to add to the doctrine of my work on the assassination, that in that time of stress and ever since all the basic institutions of our society failed and persist in failing. ~~Witness~~^{Witness} Cockburn down on his knees kowtowing to the official mythology. And flaunting the most astounding ignorance of well-established facts, such abysmal ignorance a writer with any self-respect would have the common sense to keep his mouth clamped. But that is not a Cockburn practise, is it.

Please excuse my typing. I'm 82, limited in what - am able to do although I have continued writing, and I must keep my legs elevated when I am not on them. I'm sorry my typing and writing cannot be any better.

Because to The Nation I am a nonperson and my work, now consisting of nine published books, does not exist, I suggest a few qualifications for what I say.

In one of the dozen or so FOIA lawsuits + filed to bring suppressed assassination information to light, the Department of Justice told that court that I know more about the JFK assassination than anyone working for the FBI. Several of those lawsuits were precedential and one contributed to the 1974 amending of the Act to make FBI, CIA and similar agency files accessible under it. ~~These~~^{These} are the only books on either side of the controversy that eschew theorizing and are limited to what the government says is the actual evidence. My current book is NEVER AGAIN!, in the sense this should never happen to us again. If you or your David Corn are interested, I am not far from his home or office and he is welcome to see what I think you ~~and~~^{and} he may regard as the most unusual documentary basis for my work, about 60 file cabinets of it, mostly formerly withheld official records most of which came from the FBI and all of which will be a permanent public archive as for practical purposes it has always been because I have always given unsupervised access to it and to our copier to all working in the field. And I do know that all or almost all of them will write what + do not agree with.

On page 17 Cockburn says that Tom Schmidt's mimeograph machine was "the

112
the machine that had produced the leaflets that eventually reached Lee Harvey Oswald and were handed out by him in Dallas." almost all of what Oswald handed out - in New Orleans, not Dallas - were handbills printed for him in New Orleans. The few pieces of FPCC literature he had and gave out were printed.

This is Cockburn's reflection of his knowledge and it is also his high point.

Of the political stupidities in which Cockburn indulges I cite only that on page 29, that "Whether J.F.K. was killed ... by a conspiracy has as much to do with subsequent contours of American politics as if he had tripped ~~one~~ one of Caroline's dolls ~~and...~~"

Referring to his interview of Wesley Liebeler, former Commission counsel who has trouble living with his Commission record and trouble telling the truth even by accident, he quotes Liebeler as saying on page 259 that "The Warren Commission didn't know anything about this evidence, this evidence being the ^{recorded} ~~transcribed~~ broadcasts of the time ^{of the} ~~for~~ an assassination by the Dallas police. The Commission knew so little about those recordings that it had the FBI dub them and transcribe them and as Liebeler knows very well, it then published them.

Referring to the position in which then Texas Governor John B. Connally was when he was wounded, with the conditional to avoid deliberate lying, this is on page 260: "If his hand is on ~~the~~ this thigh, which is consistent with the Zapruder film..." As Liebeler knew very well, that film shows Connally with his Stetson in his elevated right hand when he was hit.

What is next on the position of the bodies of both victims is not true but I do not take time for it. Later on that same page is the overt, deliberate lie that when JFK received the fatal shot in the head "It doesn't move backward. It moves slightly to the left and downward." There is nothing more graphic in that film than that "President's head goes sharply forward and then ever so much more violently straight back. ~~After~~ after that it moves ~~right~~ "slightly to the left and downward." He falls over entirely to his left, onto his wife.

Cockburn has a long and clear history of hating JFK so he must have welcomed what only a subject-matter ignoramus would not have known is deliberately false. He asked Liebeler "why didn't the Warren Commission have access to the autopsy photographs and X-rays?" to which Liebeler responds, "Warren didn't want to ~~press~~ Bobby Kennedy, who controlled them, for their release." I add the emphasis to underscore ~~that~~ Liebeler's deliberate dishonesty. "Release" was never a question and the truth is that Bobby never denied the Commission the use of them. I go into this with the unpublished official evidence in the chapter "Hades Not Came, lot" in my 1975 Post Mortem. It was Arlen Specter, like Liebeler and the others always covering his own ass, who made the records (page 549 of that book, in facsimile) of the fact that Bobby's only condition on the use of anything

at all was that it be "necessary." Specter added those films would be seen by the staff only and then for the sole purpose of validating the drawings used instead of the film, with the film itself not to be even in the "Commission's records."

In Whitewash IV, which I published in 1974, on page 133 I printed facsimile a page from the Commission's executive session of January 21, 1964. There Commission ^{er} John McCloy asked, "...They talk about the color^{ed} photographs of the President's body -- do we have those?" General counsel J. Lee Rankin responded, "Yes...."

Specter had already been shown at least one of those color pictures by the Secret Service, as he told The US News and World Report three decades ago.

So, this is still another lie, ~~and~~ blaming the ^{ed} dead Bobby for their own shortcomings.

There is another lie on the same page, "it would be nice to have an eyewitness who said that when he ^{Oswald} gave a ride to work that morning he had a bag with him, and there was one." There were in fact ^{ed} two, and both described a package that could not possibly have held that rifle. In addition to which the only person who saw Oswald enter that building swore he had no package at all. Liebel also said that the "bag" in which the rifle allegedly was "had Oswald's palm print." My recollection is that it was a thumb print but if it was a palm print it was on the inside the so-called bag and there was not a single print of any kind on the outside where Oswald was ^{ed} seen to carry it first by the top, which was entirely uncrumpled by that, and on the bottom as he carried it toward the building. So we have a magic bag that is even more magical than this: it held ^{the} the rifle the FBI described as "well-oiled" without picking up the tiniest smidgeon of oil while Oswald carried it and for the miles the rifle bounced around in it as the car took them to work.

Liebel and Cockburn say of the Tippit killing on page 262 that, "we've got forensic evidence that shows clearly Tippit was killed by bullets from the gun Oswald was carrying." They got no such "forensic evidence" from the FBI. Its lab said it could not associate any one of those four bullets with that ~~particular~~ gun.

On page 352 Cockburn says that the Commission's lawyers had what "they used to call the 'washing machine' construct of Oswald's personality, meaning that if only he had been able to afford to buy Marina a washing machine he would not have felt impelled to kill the President." In fact, they planned to get their own apartment in Dallas and the ~~nothing~~ of the assassination Oswald left for Marina, as the long statement she wrote out for the Secret Service before the FBI started threatening her with deportation is specific in saying, the money with which to buy that washing machine!

The lying Commission lawyers' lie eliminates their imagined motive for Oswald to do the killing.

Which the official evidence actually proves he did not do in any event.

I doubt you'll get my NEVER AGAIN! although I think it would not hurt you to at this late date have some slight contact with reality, not the guff you have believed and infrequently said for years, so - enclose a few pages.

What is most important in the official evidence is whether Oswald could have been the assassin who fired those three admitted shots in less than six seconds ^{as} the Commission said. Liebelier goes into the ^{dubious} claim of the House assassins committee of the late 1970s, that the first shot was fired a tiny bit more than a second earlier than the Commission said. With both it is conjecture. But Liebelier lies about the timing to say that for Oswald "There was enough time in the conjecture/6.72 seconds of the House committee's conjecture. Liebelier lied and he knew he lied. I do not go into ^{all} aspects of this because that is not necessary. Liebelier knew about the tests conducted for the Commission on just that point and ^{it} ignored in its report. I first ^{begin} brought the results of those tests to light in my first book, which was the first book on the Commission. Whitewash: the Report on the Warren Report was finished mid-February 1965. I added to it by much in NEVER AGAIN! of that I enclose the pages on which it is without question that the best shots in the country, under vastly improved conditions and after that rifle was overhauled, could not duplicate the shooting attributed to Oswald!!!

Now if by any remote chance Liebelier missed this in the Commission's work and files and volumes, he got it from me when he bought a copy of that book from me. And I had to keep dunning him to get paid for it.

All the Commission lawyers knew that there was no bullet hole in the President's shirt collar. They avoided getting ~~from~~ the FBI its picture they had in a composite that proves it. I have a replacement copy that is not much good while out is being repaired so that page is not very clear. However, if you look at this poor xerox it is obvious that the only ~~damage~~ damage to that collar was from a scalpel, as the actual evidence is, during the emergency procedures at the hospital. Those two slits are not the same length and do not coincide with each other as would have happened with the collar buttoned. The one closer to the nurse is much longer, the slit to the right as you look at that page.

On the next two pages I have copies of the pictures of the tie of the knot that in the official mythology that bullet went through. There is no hole of any kind in it at all. There is the visible scalpel cut and the little nick where the FBI removed a small sample that did not even include any of the tie lining for spectrographic analysis. Which proved that no bullet had struck it. Overkill save for The Nation, its Cockburn and those uppity-mobile Commission lawyers who failed themselves when they failed the country and have perpetuated the lie they foisted off on us then,

Cockburn on his knees before the government a la Orwell is a beautiful picture. But the record The Nation has made for itself on this crime that turned the world around is ~~is~~ anything but pretty. Since ely, Harold Weisberg *Harold Weisberg*

in the assassination and criticism of the Report. As Roffman also noted, the one of these four bullets in this "classified" photograph that was least deformed appears to be the only one of those ten wrist test fired bullets that was entered into the Commission's record. It appears to be Commission Exhibit 856.

From what Dolce told Selby, it was obvious that if Specter had intended honesty he would have introduced those pictures into evidence during Light's testimony—handed them to him and asked him to describe them and what they showed. But that would have aborted his beloved bastard, so Specter did not ask the obvious and required questions.

They danced a stately minute around it, never once getting into the nitty-gritty.

Nor did he ask them of the Olivier, whose testimony preceded Light (5H74-90).

Then there is the testimony of Ronald Simmons. It, too, utterly destroys the fraudulent official "solution" that also served to protect any military conspiracy.

Chief of the Infantry Weapons Evaluation Branch of the Ballistics Research Laboratory at Aberdeen proving grounds, Simmons testified to the results of other and irrelevant shooting tests that in part established the impossibility of Oswald's having fired those three shots in a fraction of more than five seconds, the absolute essentiality of the official "solution." His testimony as published, naturally for this Commission, is separated from that of the others like Light and Olivier. It was published two volumes earlier, in Volume 3, pages 443-51.

Oswald was officially rated by the Marines in its Warren Commission testimony as a duffer, "a rather poor shot." To determine whether he could have performed the superhuman assassination feat attributed to him, the Army used three riflemen all "rated as Master by the National Rifle Association," the most expert of all expert riflemen (3H445). Toward the end of Simmons's testimony, Commission member McCloy, who was also present at the conference at which Dolce had spelled out how completely impossible the Commission's "solution" was, asked Simmons what the "master" rating was. He asked, "Is that a higher grade than sharpshooter in the Army?" Simmons told him that the master rating was the very high-

est, so high "there is really no comparison between the rating of master in the NRA and the rating of sharpshooter in the Army." Rather than being a sharpshooter, Oswald scored only the minimum required of all in the military. His Marine mates indicated to the Commission that his shooting was so bad even this minimum score was their gift to him.

What Simmons testified to was only the beginning of the Army's stacking of the evidentiary deck.

With the official solution having the shots come from more than sixty feet in the air, from that sixth-floor TSBD window, the Army built a platform at Aberdeen that was only thirty feet high. With Oswald allegedly shooting at a moving target, the Army had fixed targets planted in the ground at the distances the Commission said the limousine was from that window.

While this reduced the serious shooting problems of that steep angle and a moving target, the Army, in its test with "master" riflemen, still encountered a serious problem when the riflemen moved the rifle from one *still* target to the next. This caused misses.

The Mannlicher-Carcano rifle when compared to our rifles is a piece of junk. It was in poor condition when it reached the FBI in Washington. The FBI overhauled it and put it in its best possible condition. But even then the Aberdeen tests required additional improvement. As Simmons testified, his shooters "could not sight the weapon in using the telescopic sight" in some tests. So, "we did adjust the telescopic sight by the addition of two shims," one to adjust it vertically, the other side to side [3H443].

Even then, to begin with, "for the first four attempts the firers [i.e., the best shots in the country] missed the second target" [3H446]. In part this was because they had to reorient the rifle, and at that a to *still target they'd had time to adjust to*, not at a moving target without time to make any adjustment. In part these misses were because "of the amount of effort required to open the bolt" to remove the empty shell after a bullet was fired and close the bolt to chamber another time to be fired and because of "the trigger pull . . . a two-stage operation where the first—in the first stage the trigger is relatively free, and it suddenly required a greater pull to actually fire the weapon" [3H447]. This would "obviously require considerable ex-

perience . . . because of the amount of effort required to work the bolt" [3H449].

How serious a problem was this for the country's very best riflemen under the vastly improved and easier conditions?

"In our experiments," Simmons testified, "the pressure to open the bolt was so great we tended to move the rifle off target" [3H449].

With all that shooting expertise, the very greatest in the country, with all that improvement in the rifle and its sight and the shooting conditions, at a distance of 270 feet, the estimated distance of the rifle from the President's head when blown apart by the fatal shot, the country's very best riflemen could not duplicate the shooting attributed to Oswald. Simmons was asked by Melvin Eisenberg, the Commission counsel who questioned him, about an answer he had expressed in a tiny decimal, an evaluation of 0.4. Does 0.4 mean you have four chances in 10 of hitting?" Simmon said merely, "Yes" [3H449]. This means that unlike the poor shot Oswald, these "masters" missed—under vastly improved conditions—six times out of ten!

And even this is not all. Could they do it in the *time* Oswald had in the official solution? No pun intended, this is the killer! Eisenberg was careful not to ask Simmons for the results on all their shooting, which in this test was of forty-seven bullets (3H449). One series was of twenty-one shots [3H445]. The only test that fairly can be compared to the assassination, in which with the rifle that Oswald was never known to have fired, he allegedly fired the three very accurate shots of the official account, three, and no more. No dry runs for him. No practice shots. No shots to set the sight—which according to the FBI would not hold a setting in any event and which Aberdeen had to shim to use at all—the first three and that was it for him, and that was that.

Simmons testified of the three "masters" shooting that "on the first four attempts [all] the firers missed the second target" [3H446].

Of a master rifleman whose name is given only as "Mr. Hendrix" in Simmons's testimony, his "time for the first exercise was 8.25 seconds; the time for the second exercise was 7.0 seconds." The second master rifleman whose name Simmons gave only as "Mr. Staley" did "6 3/4 seconds" on his first try and 6.45 for the second

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(3H446). This is 15 percent more time, regardless of his misses, than Oswald had.

The third master rifleman did not use the telescopic sight so that did not count for Simmons (3H446).

Remember that missing of the fatal shot six times out of ten? Here the first four shots at the second target also missed.

And these "masters" could not even approach the extremely rapid shooting attributed to as poor a shot as ever disgraced the Marines, Lee Harvey Oswald, the Commission's and Specter's William Tell.

Conspicuously Commissioner McCloy, the wily, worldly international lawyer, did not ask for a tabulation of the time required by each master for each series of shots. Eisenberg did not even ask if such a tabulation had been prepared or could be prepared.

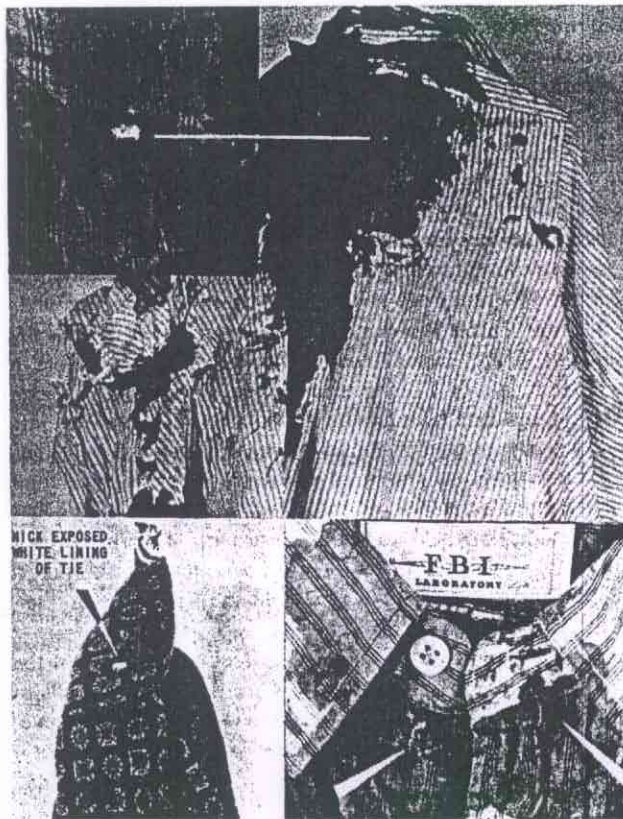
For all the hemming and hawing, all the discussion of the arcane and irrelevant that could be impressive to the uninformed, the record that between them McCloy and Eisenberg made is that the very best riflemen in the land could not begin to duplicate the shooting performance officially attributed to Oswald.

Shooting is a mechanical skill. Good shooting requires regular practice. Oswald is known to have fired a rifle, a different and a much better weapon, only twice, years earlier, when he was in the Marines. Save for hunting squirrels with his brother, Robert, one time with a boy's .22 caliber rifle—and then he could not hit the side of a barn—Oswald is not known to have ever fired *any* rifle at any other time in his entire life. This includes that Mannlicher-Carcano he supposedly fired in the assassination. There is no evidence that he ever fired it and no reason to believe that he did.

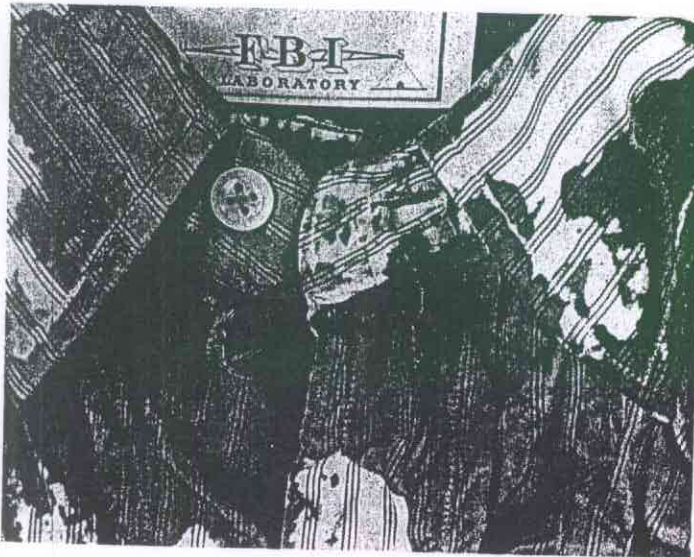
The Army knew its tests proved the official "solution" was impossible. Neither Simmons nor any other witnesses testified to this shocking truth, that they knew the official concoction was an absolute impossibility. They all were careful in their testimony to steer clear of that.

This means that whatever its reason the Army knew there was a conspiracy, and it protected the conspirators. If it did not know earlier, it knew there had to have been a conspiracy because at Aberdeen it proved exactly that.

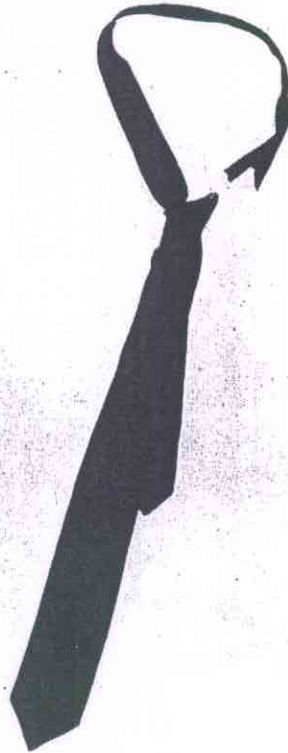
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This is FBI Exhibit 60, which the Commission did not dare print because it contains evidence destructive of its conclusions and its and the FBI's integrity. It is described in chapter 30, beginning on page 328. The enlargement of the bullet hole in the back of the shirt was printed by the FBI upside down. The actual hole coincides exactly with the real location of this wound, which was lied about. The FBI even twisted the tie to make it appear that there was a hole in the center. Actually, this small nick was made with a scalpel and was on the very edge of the knot. It was enlarged with removal of a sample for scientific testing. The tests were suppressed because they proved no bullet hit the tie or shirt front. This combination of suppressed pictures alone proves that the President was not hit in the back of the neck but in the back and that the bullet hole in the front of his neck was above the shirt. Either is total disproof of the entire "solution."



This is an actual FBI print, not from the Warren Commission's files, obtained as described in chapter 30, especially beginning on page 328. It has this caption typed on the back: "Photograph depicting portion of Exhibit 60." It is less clear as part of FBI Exhibit 60 (page 597), but in even that form shows much more than any picture the Commission dared print. In itself this picture, presented here for the first time anywhere, destroys the entire Warren Report and means the falsity could not have been accidental. It shows not bullet holes but slits. It also shows that when the shirt is buttoned they do not coincide and on this added basis could not have been made by a bullet. Note that the slit on the button side is entirely *below* the neckband while that on the buttonhole side extends well up onto it. The FBI and the commission both knew their representations were false. The Commission blundered into the truth separately when Dulles asked Dr. Carrico where the President's front neck wound was and Carrico told him it was *above* the shirt. Carrico confirmed this to me when he also confirmed the obvious, that this damage to the shirt was done when the necktie was cut off by nurses under his supervision during emergency treatment.



C 31
COMMISSION EXHIBIT
395

This is the official picture of the tie with the knot cutting quite visible, as Dr. Carrico described to me. The skill with which the FBI lab made so poor a picture is apparent by comparing it with the phony picture it made and used in its Exhibit 60. There the pattern is quite visible. In this picture the unaided eye cannot be certain the tie has a pattern. ("C31" is the FBI lab's identification number, 395 is the Commission's exhibit number.)

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copy to: H. WEILBERG → from "THE GOLDEN AGE IS IN US"
BY ALEXANDER COCKBURN

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NOVEMBER 28 *Spokane*
FIRST TO THE LOCAL listener-subscribed radio station for an interview. Then in the evening I give a talk. Sue, a karate adept of high degree, musters herself and others in case one of the local Nazis makes a rush for the speaker, but all goes well.

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NOVEMBER 29 *Spokane*
WE DROVE ACROSS the plain to visit Morton Alexander on the famed Tolstoy Commune, active relic of the sixties. Here, just south of Spokane, is the site of a famous Indian victory. The ambushed soldiers broke and ran, here where now stands the gas station, there round the motel, there through the wood, hunted to earth. We found Morton's house in the canyon and swigged deeply on his plum and elderberry wine. Tom Schmidt had once owned the mimeograph machine that had been the property of the man - hero actually, mercifully hounded by the FBI - running the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. It was therefore the machine that had produced the leaflets that eventually reached Lee Harvey Oswald and were handed out by him in Dallas in 1963. Tom had trundled himself, his worldly goods and the machine down to Tuskegee, Alabama, where he sufficiently annoyed the watchdogs of the state that they burned his house down, destroying the machine in the process. Morton recalled a fabled local episode, the great Tolstoy Farm dope bust of 1972. Tom told me something I'd not known, that Elvis Presley said back in the late fifties, when asked about his views on a certain situation: 'I've only two uses for niggers - they can buy my records and they can shine my shoes.' Tom was driving through the South at the time and found a lot of black people without much use for Presley.

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DECEMBER 6 *San Francisco Bay Area*
LISTENER-SUBSCRIBED RADIO is the amniotic fluid for any progressive community. TV - outside the informality of public access cable - rigidifies, schmaltzes, ceremonializes, destroys vitality, creates the anomie of the spectacle and the atomized spectator. Radio is a web that implicates rather than excludes. With Fred Gardner I meet up with Kayo Hallinan. They'd worked together for the defendants in the Presidio Mutiny. Another defending lawyer had been Brendan Sullivan, more recently counsel to Oliver North. I'd met Kayo and his brother Ringo even earlier, when we had all gone on our first march together, from Aldermaston to London in the Easter CND march of 1959.
Fred's current breadwinning job is managing editor of *Synapse*, weekly

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P. 213

JANUARY 1

Topanga, California

THE STONE AGE ARTISTS used true paint, it turns out. The cave paintings near Tarascon in the Pyrenees had a red made from the iron oxide haematite. Black came from charcoal or manganese dioxide. The extender which made the paint stick to the wall and not crack was from four different minerals – potassium feldspar with biotite was one recipe.

They planned the paintings carefully, starting with charcoal sketches, and they were created over long periods of time.

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JANUARY 3

Topanga

WHETHER J.F.K. WAS KILLED by a lone assassin or by a conspiracy has as much to do with the subsequent contours of American politics as if he had tripped over one of Caroline's dolls and broken his neck in the White House nursery.

Of course many people think otherwise, reckoning that once it can be demonstrated that the Warren Commission was wrong and Oswald was not the lone killer, then we face the reality of a rightist conspiracy engineered to change the course of history. (After the first hours, the idea of Oswald as a leftist conspiracy of one or more has perhaps fortunately never had the popularity one might have expected.) This is the view taken by Oliver Stone.

The core of this vision of history is put by Kevin Costner in his role as New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison:

We have all become Hamlets in our country, children of a slain father-leader whose killers still possess the throne. The ghost of John Kennedy confronts us with the secret murder at the heart of the American dream. He forces on us the appalling question: Of what is our Constitution made? What is our citizenship – and more, our lives – worth? What is the future, where a President can be assassinated under conspicuously suspicious circumstances, while the machinery of legal action scarcely trembles? How many political murders dis-

guised as heart attacks, cancer, suicides, airplane and car crashes, drug overdoses, will occur before they are exposed for what they are?

Stone wrote those words himself (and at one point even planned to have the ghost of J.F.K. appear to Garrison as he stood in his kitchen making a chicken sandwich while watching news of Bobby Kennedy's assassination). It's an important passage, for in its fascist yearning for the 'father-leader' taken from the children-people by conspiracy, it accurately catches the crippling nuttiness of what passes amid some sectors of the left (admittedly a pretty nebulous concept these days) as mature analysis and propaganda: that virtue in government died in Dallas, and that a 'secret agenda' has perverted the national destiny.

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JANUARY 5

Topanga

OLIVER STONE LOOKS upon the assassination as the coffin of all the bright hopes of the early sixties. To get a truer insight all you have to do is go to a junkyard or an auto museum and look at the colors. Bright hopes were really being born in the mid fifties, with Detroit palettes of desert rose, aqua, even paisley. By the time of the New Frontier the colors had darkened into the dreary greens, tans and drab blues of combat. With their prophetic three-year lead times, the colors told the story. Kennedy had betrayed the hopes of people like Stone before he had stepped off the inauguration stand.

Kennedy, having fought the 1960 election partly on an imaginary missile gap, then acted as if this missile gap were genuine. In his vivid account in *High Priests of Waste*, Ernie Fitzgerald suggests that the military spending surge of the Kennedy years definitively undermined all rational standards of productivity and cost control achieved in the preceding seven decades (though an old autoworker from the Chrysler plant in Newcastle, Indiana, once remarked to me that such declines could be traced back to the cost-plus contracts of the Second World War). The idea that Kennedy was methodically tilting toward a full-employment civilian economy is preposterous.

The real J.F.K. backed a military coup in Guatemala to keep out Arévalo, denied the Dominican Republic the possibility of land reform, promoted a devastating cycle of Latin American history, including the anticipatory motions of the coup in Brazil, and backed a Ba'athist coup in Iraq that set a certain native of Tikrit on the path to power.

Thomas Paterson, the editor of the 1989 collection *Kennedy's Quest for Victory*, put it well. Only out of respect for history 'emerges unpleasant reality and the need to reckon with a past that has not always matched the selfless and self-satisfying image Americans have of their foreign policy and of Kennedy as

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their young, fallen hero who never had a chance. Actually, he had his chance,
and he failed.'

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JANUARY 16

Topanga

A YEAR AGO THIS MONTH, most American reporters had cleared out by the time
the first bombs began to fall on Baghdad. The first week in January the
Al-Rashid Hotel was stuffed with news people; then, as the January 15 deadline
drew near, the numbers swiftly thinned out.

Marie Colvin of the London *Sunday Times* recalls this deadline eve as 'a
moment that made one think. I remember watching Patrick Tyler of the *New*
York Times and Scott MacLeod of *Time* ... packing their bags and checking out.
The atmosphere was conspiratorial. They'd say, "We have information Iraq is
going to be bombed. You're mad to stay."'

The Americans told their European colleagues that their editors were getting
calls from the White House telling them to get their people out. 'I really believe',
Colvin says, the Administration 'didn't want anyone to report what was going
to happen. They themselves didn't expect a low body count.'

Many of the American correspondents had arranged for their home offices
to send code phrases such as 'The baby is being delivered', which would signal
the bombing was about to start. These phrases began to come in on the night of
January 16. Demoralization increased.

Some American reporters tried hard to stay. Others were eager to leave,
while protesting that though they yearned to remain they were reluctantly
following orders from home base. Two reporters from a current affairs show
left, but their cameraman stayed. The two who left got him fired, but he was
promptly hired by another organization desperate for footage. My brother
Patrick Cockburn of *The Independent*, who stayed, remembers the cameraman
spending a night in the garden of the Al-Rashid to film the bombing and lurching
in at dawn, bitten by every mosquito in Baghdad.

'The result of the flight of so many journalists', Patrick recalls, 'was that
the war was dehumanized. Most of the TV shots were going to be what the pilots
were seeing. And despite the presence of CNN or ABC, TV is easily deniable.
Anyone (i.e., government officials) counterattacking can produce lots of detail,
which only a print journalist can refute.'

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JANUARY 17

Topanga

ON HIS USUAL REGIMEN of Halcion, the jet-lag drug, Bush flew to Hawai'i,
jogged; flew to Sydney, jogged; flew to Singapore (very humid), held a news

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intrusion, even if it's the Marquis de Sade, a protective arm wrapped around Justine, beefing about the slanders and low talk put about by his enemies.

Journalists love Clinton. In a typical passage in the *Los Angeles Times*, Robert Shogan recently hailed his 'serious and well-documented problem-solving approach to national issues rather than dependence on traditional liberal formulas expressed in impassioned rhetoric and based on sweeping federal programs.' Item One on Clinton's proposed economic agenda is that emblem of the nontraditional, anti-porkbarrel way of thought: road building. More or less everything else turns to mush at the first encounter with reality.

Actually Clinton hasn't got an economic program; rather, rhetorical bric-a-brac courtesy of Robert Reich, Derek Shearer, Bob Kuttner and other up-thrusters last seen in Atlanta licking their lips at the prospect of traveling to Washington with Dukakis. Clinton has plenty of fine words about training, education and so forth. He says nothing about what those nicely equipped Americans will do once they leave the classroom and the training shop. The high-tech jobs supposedly the preserve of First World workers brimful of costly instruction might be done just as well and far more cheaply by Third Worlders. The reality of Clinton's 'good job' is some underpaid, nonunion checkout clerk in a Wal-Mart in Arkansas, burdened by a regressive sales tax and getting slowly poisoned to death by the toxins and kindred hazards of a state ranked by the Institute for Southern Studies as forty-eighth in environmental practice.

Clinton stopped pouring words into the faces of potential voters and came out with Hillary to stand in front of the pig. Then they went off. We took a closer look at the pig. The cold had kept it raw. Saved from trichinosis, we all headed down to Manchester.

FEBRUARY 20

Topanga

THREE DAYS AGO, for the benefit of television viewers in Australia, I found myself squaring off on the subject of *JFK* against Fletcher Prouty and Carl Oglesby. Perched on a stool beside me in a Los Angeles studio was my ally for the evening, Wesley J. Liebeler, a sixty-year-old professor of law at UCLA. Originally from North Dakota and conservative/libertarian in political outlook, Liebeler was one of the staff counsels on the Warren Commission. Yesterday, after *JFK* got eight Academy Award nominations, and when Richard Heffner, a Rutgers professor who is also chairman of the motion picture industry's film rating system, announced in the *Los Angeles Times* that *JFK* marked the end of the Gutenberg era and the dawn of a new way of telling history, I drove up to Zuma Beach and interviewed Liebeler.

AC: What about the speed at which Oswald would have had to fire his

Mannlicher-Carcano? Critics of the Warren Commission say Oswald could never have loosed off the shots in so short a time.

WJL: The clock for the whole thing is the Zapruder film, which runs at 18.3 frames a second. The film shows only two shots striking the people in the car. A time fix on the first shot can't be precise, for reasons I'll come back to. But the time of impact of the second shot that struck is precise. That was at frames 312-313 of the Zapruder film. At frame 313 the head just explodes. Either at 312 or 313, which is practically the same instant. And that's the last shot for which there is any evidence of anything in the car being struck.

The first shot hit, in the view of the Warren Commission, between frames 210 and 225. The commission came to that conclusion based on the Zapruder film, which shows that at a certain point Kennedy was reacting to a shot. He raises his hands up. During part of that time the limousine is behind a road sign, so it can't be seen for about nine-tenths of a second. So you can't tell how long before the reaction the shot actually struck.

The House Assassination Committee (1978) said the first shot struck around frame 190, which is a little sooner, about a second. To establish the time frame the Warren Commission subtracted either 210 or 225 from 312, and divided that by 18.3. Let's say 210. This gives us 5.6 seconds. Take 313 and subtract 225, and divide that by 18.3 and that gives 4.8 seconds. So the commission said that the time lapse between the first shot that hit and the second shot that hit was between 4.8 and 5.6 seconds.

If we assume that three shots were fired, you have the question of which shot missed. The House committee concluded that the first shot missed. The Warren Commission never decided on the matter. The evidence is consistent with the proposition that the first shot missed. If so, all Oswald had to do was fire one more shot. So in fact he would have had from 4.8 to 5.6 seconds to fire one shot, not three shots.

AC: So, on that explication, he's waiting with his gun aimed. The car comes along, he shoots and misses. But there's no time fix as to when he might have fired that shot. It wasn't in the famous 4.8- to 5.6-second interval. He reloads and then fires the shot that hits the President in the neck between frames 210 or 225 according to the Warren Commission, or 190 according to the House committee.

WJL: Right. Now he has to reload (which takes a minimum of 2.3 seconds), work the bolt once and fire the third shot that's fired (the second shot that strikes). And he has, according to the Warren Commission, 4.8 to 5.6 seconds. That is even time enough to fire twice, which he would have had to do if the second shot missed. If, as the House committee said, the first shot that hit was fired at frame 190, then Oswald had 6.72 seconds to fire either one or two shots. That is 313 minus 190, divided by 18.3. There was enough time.

You know, people harp on about the Warren Commission, which is fine. But

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the House Assassination Committee confirmed every single finding that the Warren Commission made – every one, except on the conspiracy question.

AC: Well, what about that?

WJL: The only evidence for conspiracy that the House committee had was a Dictabelt tape that recorded police radio transmissions. That was discovered long after the event in a file cabinet in the Dallas Police Department. There were two different radio frequencies that the Dallas Police Department used to transmit messages back and forth among the police. Both those frequencies were separately recorded. The Warren Commission didn't know anything about this evidence. When you listen to the Dictabelt there's no sound of shots at all. But the House committee took this Dictabelt and gave it to an audio consulting firm in Boston that did an analysis and found some pulses. The Dictabelt had been recording from a motorcycle somewhere that had its microphone stuck open. The consultants claimed they could distinguish four different pulse phenomena, three of which could be made to correspond to the shots we've just talked about, if you pushed the first shot back to frame 190. And there was a fourth pulse.

So the consultants went down to Dealey Plaza, set up microphones, fired off rifles and established what they called an audio footprint, and said initially that there was a 50–50 probability of a shot fired from the grassy knoll. This was in September of 1978. Then in December, right before the House committee closed up shop on the hearings, the audio consulting firm came up with a 95 percent probability on this same shot. So on the basis of that evidence the House committee concluded there was probably a conspiracy, that there was a guy on the grassy knoll shooting, though he didn't hit anybody. Robert Blakey, the committee's chief counsel, then gave the Dictabelt to the Justice Department to be analyzed further. Later he wrote a letter to *National Review* saying that if the Justice Department's investigation of the tape didn't bear out the 95 percent probability of another shot, he'd retract the whole conspiracy theory.

Well, the Justice Department turned all this over to a panel of acoustic experts set up by the National Research Council. They figured out that sounds on both Dictabelts could be matched, and since the one had a time reference, they could fix the time frame on the other Dictabelt as well. The NRC acoustic committee then concluded that the sounds on the second Dictabelt were recorded more than a minute after the assassination occurred. So they didn't have anything to do with the shots in Dealey Plaza.

AC: The other thing that seems to cause people a lot of problems is the 'single-bullet theory' – the first shot that hit Kennedy and also John Connally.

WJL: The first shot that hit went through the top of Kennedy's back, came through the throat to the right of his trachea, didn't hit any bones. Governor Connally was struck right below the right armpit in the back. The bullet went down through his chest cavity, came out just below his right nipple, struck him on the back side of his right wrist at the joint, broke the wrist and came out the

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front of his wrist and entered his thigh, making a very shallow hole.

The pathology panel of the House committee and also the Warren Commission concluded that the damage to Connally was done by one bullet. Work it backwards. If his hand was on his thigh, which is consistent with the Zapruder film, you know that the bullet wasn't going very fast when it came out the underside of the wrist, which has implications about how fast it was going when it entered the wrist. If it had already gone through Connally's chest cavity and the President's neck it had been slowed down. A wounds ballistic expert testifying to the House committee established that there's a range of velocity within which a bullet will break a bone without hurting the bullet, provided it's not going too fast.

Warren Commission Exhibit 399 is the so-called 'magic' or 'pristine' bullet. It is neither one. It is in good shape, but eight of the nine forensic pathologists on the House committee medical panel agreed that it had gone through the President's neck or upper back and then inflicted all of Connally's wounds. Ask yourself where the bullet went after it came out of the President's neck if it didn't hit Connally. After coursing downward through the President's body, where it hit no bone to deflect it, either it's got to hit Connally, who is sitting right in front of him, or it's got to hit the car. It didn't hit the car.

The Warren Commission did a re-enactment of the assassination which showed that the President and Governor were located in a way that the bullet would have gone directly from the exit wound in the President's neck into Connally's back. The House committee used a different method of calculating the trajectory and unequivocally confirmed the Warren Commission findings that one bullet - CE 399 - did go through the President and inflict the Governor's wounds. The House committee said flatly that the trajectory it established supported the single-bullet theory.

Oliver Stone's treatment of this question is simply a lie, and he knows it. The House committee confirmed the Warren Commission's findings on this point without qualification. But with the conspiracy Stone has fabricated, the addition of the House of Representatives won't cause any further problems. He's got half the country in on it now.

I have challenged him to debate the validity of the Warren Report. Naturally he issued a press release saying he'd be happy to do it, but he never responded to me. He's engaged in scholarship by press release. I repeat my challenge.

AC: In the Zapruder film, at frame 313, when the second bullet strikes, Kennedy's head jerks back convulsively, and people have reckoned this implies a shot from the front.

WJL: If you look at Kennedy's head, right at frame 313, just as the bullet strikes it, it doesn't move backward. It moves slightly to the left and downward, just for two or three frames, which is consistent with a bullet striking it from behind, because the momentum of the bullet is imparted instantly.

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Then shortly after frames 312-313 the President's body goes backward. The House committee said there are two explanations. One is the jet effect, caused by the skull and brain exiting and forcing the head back and to the left. Combined with that effect, the committee said, was a neuromuscular reaction. The medical evidence is the best way to determine the direction of the shots that hit the President. Take the skull. The entry wound in the back of his head is 'coned' on the inside of the skull. What can be constructed of the exit wound from the skull is coned on the outside. The House medical panel all agreed to these conclusions, and also that the wound on the President's upper right back could only be an entrance wound. Eight of the nine pathologists on that panel concluded that the President was struck by two *and only two* shots. The medical evidence excludes the possibility that the President was struck by a shot fired from any direction other than behind him.

AC: Why didn't the Warren Commission have access to the autopsy photographs and X-rays?

WJL: Warren didn't want to press Bobby Kennedy, who controlled them, for their release. The worst consequence was the idea that someone was trying to hide something. Without these materials the autopsy surgeons described to the commission their recollection of the wounds, and their medical artist drew the diagrams showing the entrance wounds in the wrong place.

AC: What happened to Kennedy's brain?

WJL: The brain was under Robert Kennedy's control when it disappeared. It is widely believed that he destroyed it. He was afraid that these materials might end up on public display.

AC: Do you think the Warren Report was flawed?

WJL: It was too oracular, overwritten. Also I think it relied too heavily on eyewitness testimony. The problem is that people will testify to damn near anything. So the commission had one eyewitness testifying that he saw Oswald sticking a rifle through the sixth-floor window ...

AC: But there was another witness next to him who saw Oswald and another man beside him.

WJL: Right. That's the problem. The only way you can avoid that is to look at evidence that can be replicated. Evidence that is here today, will be here tomorrow and 100 years from now: the autopsy photographs; the autopsy X-rays; the ballistics tests. The bullet that was found on the stretcher was fired from Oswald's rifle to the exclusion of all other rifles; the two big fragments in the car were fired from that rifle to the exclusion of all other rifles; that rifle was on the sixth floor of the School Book Depository; it had Oswald's print on it; there was a brown paper bag there that had Oswald's palm print on it; it was a long bag that would have held a rifle.

At this point it would be nice to have an eyewitness who said that when he gave Oswald a ride to work that morning he had the bag with him, and there was one.

But fine, never mind how the bag got there. We know it was Oswald's rifle because he rented a post office box and his handwriting is on the application; he ordered the rifle and his handwriting is on the paper he ordered the rifle with; he wrote out a money order and his handwriting is on that; and the rifle was sent to his post office box. There are a number of pictures of Oswald with a rifle. The House Assassination Committee, with improved enhancement techniques that the Warren Commission didn't have, was able to prove it was the same rifle. The negative was found and it had been taken from Oswald's camera to the exclusion of all other cameras. George de Mohrenschildt had a copy of that picture with Oswald's handwriting on the back. There's no evidence of tampering on the negative; the scratch marks are the same. The picture was taken six months before the assassination. We have photographic evidence, like the Zapruder film. On the Tippit shooting, we've got forensic evidence that shows clearly Tippit was killed by bullets from the gun Oswald was carrying when he was arrested. You can make out a good case just on the basis of the physical evidence.

Why did Oswald kill the President? The man was a malcontent, not happy, not stupid by any stretch of the imagination, but unhappy and discontented. I guess your typical liberal [laughs]. Not that. I guess he would have as much contempt for liberals as you or I. He was a revolutionary of one form or another. I drafted a psychological profile of Oswald for Chapter 7 of the report. It was reviewed by a panel including the chief of psychiatry at the Mayo Clinic, who threw my draft down and said, 'This is very interesting stuff, but it tells me a lot more about you, Liebel, than it does about Oswald.' So how the hell do I know why Oswald killed the President?

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FEBRUARY 27

Boonville, California

BRUCE ANDERSON and Fred Gardner and I do our quasi-annual state of the nation show at the Casper Inn. I do a monologue on Clinton's hair, which goes down well. Fred sings his 'Here & There in Mendocino County'. Bruce savages the audience.

HERE & THERE IN MENDOCINO COUNTY

Where the Rossis sell the hardware
 Where the faux professors raise goats
 Where LP is waging warfare on the trees
 There's a man going 'round takin' notes.

Who makes the beds at the inns out on the coast?
 Who makes the breakfast they serve?
 Who prunes the vines on the beautiful rolling horizon

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 Brother you got a lot of nerve.

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 And the De Vallians so liberal so respectable so mellow
 - An all too familiar pack

Here and there in Mendocino County you think you got it bad
 But it's just the same nationwide
 Hey, Bruce, where's the party, I'm ready tonight
 Count me in one more time for the ride.

Here and there in Mendocino County you think you got it bad
 But it's just like everyplace else
 That's why it's good to know there's someone speakin' for me
 Just muttering to himself.

Who makes the beds at the inns out on the coast?
 Who makes the breakfast they serve?
 Who prunes the vines? Who bottles the wines?
 Tell it like it is, brother, tell it like it is
 Brother you got a lot of nerve.

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FEBRUARY 28

Petrolia

STONE TRIES TO HAVE things both ways. He maintains that *JFK* is all true until someone demonstrates forcibly that it isn't. Then he tilts the other way and claims he is trying to construct an alternative myth. We should leave this 'alternative myth' talk to the deconstruction industry. Myth making is a two-edged sword. Disraeli promoted a Jews-run-the-world theory; not so many years later the authors of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* happily adumbrated the theme. The wizardry of the film lab, which can produce a grainy news film of L.B.J. making deals with the masterminds of J.F.K.'s assassination - part of Stone's mythic truth - can also produce Arafat urging Sirhan to kill R.F.K.

Every artist deals in myth, but anyone arguing for Stone's manipulation of history should be aware of the morally tricky terrain and of the downside of myth making. There's no 'golden key' (e.g., the 'truth' about the Kennedy assassination; 'proof' that George Bush flew to Paris on October 20, 1980) that will suddenly render the overall system transparent and vulnerable. People who look for golden keys are akin to those poor souls who thought history could be decoded by certain measurements in the Great Pyramid.

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Petrolia

APRIL 21

Dear Nation:

What we see [in Alexander Cockburn's interview with Wesley Liebler] is a merging of the far right and the far left for entirely different agendas. Liebler's operating principle is fairly simple and human: Cover your ass. Cockburn's is philosophical. His dialectic view of history precludes the possibility of individual choice affecting the outcome of events - thus, the very thought that Kennedy might have betrayed his capitalist upbringing by halting the war in Vietnam is unbearable. As Cockburn puts it: 'The effect of JFK is to make people think that America is a good country that produced a good President killed by bad elites.' While that is exactly what I believe, it's a veritable nightmare for Cockburn, who is convinced that a democratic country cannot be good, and could not elect a leader who wasn't merely another link in the inherently evil system.

As a selling point, controversy helps, but please, don't misinform the public in the name of commerce. The public is not stupid. As the polls show, a strong majority know the evidence does not support the fantasy that a lone nut shot and killed the President of the United States. Journalists (like Cockburn) and journals (like *The Nation*) should be our protection against official untruths. But in this unique instance, the media have bought wholesale the lies and distortions passed down from Washington. *The Nation* and Cockburn trivialize the event of November 22, 1963, by dismissing it as nothing more momentous than an accident. That will not do. As the record shows, Mr. Cockburn, J.F.K. did not trip on Caroline's doll. He was murdered - and history changed - by parties still unknown.

Oliver Stone

Santa Monica, California

Not to cockburn it is not!

Stone's admonition to me not to 'misinform the public in the name of commerce' is matchless effrontery. The film from which he stands to make millions is undoubtedly one of the most willfully error-riddled pieces of 'historical reconstruction' in the history of cinema. Like all demagogues Stone is now a full-blown megalomaniac given to such sentiments (announced grandly at a Nation Institute symposium at Town Hall) as 'Even when I'm wrong, I'm right.' So far as historical scruple goes, Stone makes Cecil B. De Mille look like Braudel. One of the most squalid aspects of the whole affair is that Time Warner plans to distribute 'documentary materials' about the assassination to school-children.

In tune with the fascist aesthetic of his movie, Stone now mounts the traditional fascist defense: he, like Kennedy, is victim of a gigantic conspiracy, and 'the media have bought wholesale the lies and distortions passed down from Washington.' Passed down by whom?

But then whining has been a characteristic of Warren Commission critics

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Petrolia

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down the years. Ever since the late 1960s they have successfully dominated debate, yet they still pretend that theirs is the persecuted and unpopular posture. I interviewed Liebel because I think that the commission's conclusions, particularly in light of the 1978 House inquiry, are a good deal more plausible and soundly based than is commonly supposed. Most conspiracy mongers are either imbeciles or mountebanks, as I discovered when I did several months' research, back in the early 1970s, on the murder of Robert Kennedy. In that case the 'critics' couldn't even be bothered to find out which way R.F.K. was looking when he was shot. Absent this basic information, they invented another gunman in that crowded kitchen alley.

What was striking in the wake of the Liebel interview was readers' outrage that I had presumed to take a Warren Commission lawyer seriously, coupled with attacks labelling me a Stalinist. (This latter term is being devalued with relentless speed. Before me is a letter savagely denouncing me as a Stalinist for my support of Jerry Brown.) But the commission staffers were conscientious people, of widely varied political opinion. They have been steadily libeled down the years, culminating in the oafish abuse by Stone, who espouses the most preposterous theory of all, aside from anything else requiring total suspension of disbelief, seeing as how not one among the several hundreds if not thousands party to this imagined conspiracy has ever surfaced, even on deathbed or in post mortem testimonial, to admit participating in the mighty plot.

Inference: because the credibility of the Warren Commission is low, its critics must be right. This claim is endlessly popular: 'Seventy percent of the American people now believe there was a conspiracy, the Warren Commission was wrong', etc., etc. According to a 1991 Gallup poll, 81 percent of Americans believe that the Bible is 'the inspired word of God'. Only 9 percent of Americans believe that man has developed over millions of years from less advanced life forms without divine intervention; 47 percent of Americans believe that God created man in essentially the present form all at one time within the past 10,000 years.

APRIL 28

Petrolia

CATS AND DOGS SENSE an earthquake's imminence, or so they say. Euclid, orange tomcat, veteran of at least two major quakes, snoozed through that golden Saturday morning on my garden step, his mind on mice and dying squeak of captured vole or bird. The wind rustled lightly through the cottonwoods and willows alongside the Mattole, not sixty yards from Euclid's peaceful nose.

Across the river from my house, hanging over the road to Honeydew in far northern California, six hours' drive from San Francisco, is a cliff face some 300 feet high - a constantly changing testament to the subterranean upheavals

that make this continent. In tumbling down against the Gods is Elysium to g swarming over

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NOVEMBER 20

Petrolia

THE KENNEDY YEARS saw six military coups overthrow popular regimes. In those Camelot years the Central American death squads were conjured into being. Like Reagan, Kennedy was enamored of covert operations, nowhere more than in the attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro and topple his regime.

Kennedy courtiers have been eager in trying to claim that the President and his brother, Attorney General RFK, were shielded from the CIA's sponsorship of Mafia hit teams and other assassination bids. Years later, Winn Taplin, a CIA career operations officer, acknowledged that following the Bay of Pigs, the CIA's covert operation planning and control were taken into the White House and that 'there were few in the Agency operational offices in the early 1960s who did not know that Robert Kennedy was the driving force on the special group working to topple Castro.'

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NOVEMBER 21

Petrolia

THE NOTION OF OSWALD as a person who acted out of radical political motives runs athwart the propositions proposed by conspiracy buffs that he was an agent of the right. It also challenges what Warren Commission lawyers used to call the 'washing machine' construct of Oswald's personality, meaning that if only he had been able to afford to buy Marina a washing machine he would not have felt impelled to kill the President.

To ascribe rationality to Oswald is to invest him with a comprehensible mission rather than the homicidal petulance of a psychopath. In the immediate aftermath of the killing of Kennedy, the left was terrified that it would be scapegoated. Most people initially thought Castro was responsible. The National Security Agency's electronic intercepts assured Johnson and his advisers that Castro was stunned and indeed terrified by the killing, lest he be held responsible. Fearful of a stand-off producing nuclear war, the US elites insisted from the start that there was no international sponsor of the assassination. The first big cover-up was of any suggestion that the Commies had shot JFK. When the district attorney in Dallas wanted to charge Oswald with being the agent of a Communist conspiracy, the White House and Justice Department turned white hot in a successful effort to shut him up.

Oswald was a subscriber to such periodicals as *The Militant*. He described himself as a Marxist. In the brief period between his arrest and his murder by

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Jack Ruby he had given the clenched fist salute. My friend Frank Bardacke vividly remembers the frightened outrage this caused to socialists in Berkeley on November 23, when they saw the Communist salute on television.

As Leon Day of Oakland recalled to me last year, "The witch-hunt was barely over in 1963, and the Smith Act and McCarran Act were at hand if the government wished to use them. In liberal New York City the evening of the killing saw city police closing a legal and routine meeting of the Socialist Workers Party. Would the JFK killing provoke the internment of all radicals, as the Wall Street bombing had the Palmer raids of 1919? That night, none of us could be sure.

'For the first year or two after the killing most books and articles postulating a conspiracy came from left-wing publishers. This repeated almost exactly what the Louisiana Republicans had done back in 1935 after one of their fellows shot Huey Long. Not wishing to run as the assassination party, they spread the rumor that Long had really been shot by his own guards. Not only did this ploy work, but it's still working on some people to this very day, without a figleaf of fact to cover it.'

In all in the assassination I've read or seen, Oswald is always unpersuasive. In *JFK* Oliver Stone hadn't the slightest idea how to portray him, which pointed up the weakness of his artistic insight and the preposterous premises on which it was based.

I see Oswald as one of those guys in the left-wing meeting who is by the door selling *The Militant* or pamphlet of choice as you go in. Then, in question time, he's up on his feet, asking WHAT SHOULD BE DONE? The people up on the platform haven't - as always - got much by way of convincing suggestion, and Lee goes into a tirade about THE NEED FOR ACTION and the urgency of defending the Cuban revolution and ... This is where folks in the audience begin to say, What's the question? Ask the question, and finally Lee either sits down or fumes out of the room, goes home and reaches for the mail order catalogue for Mannlicher-Carcanos.

Of course no leftist is ever going to say that he saw Lee at a meeting. How many rolodexes in America after November 23 had Lee's name still lodged there? Never, ever heard of him.

Perhaps one day Oswald will be recognized as a leftist who came to the conclusion that the only way to relieve the pressure on Cuba and obstruct the attempts to murder Castro was by killing President Kennedy. In this calculation he was correct. A year and a half later after the killing in Dallas, Lyndon Johnson suspended the CIA's assassination bids. Oswald's ambush was one of the few effective assassinations in the history of such enterprises. Today this radical exponent of the propaganda of the deed is traduced by assassination buffs as a creature of the right, the pawn of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and of other right-wing forces supposedly trying to bring Kennedy down.

NOVEMBER 22

Petrolia

In her recent song about satanic abuse, 'Play Me Backwards', Baez has the words 'There's a sacrifice in an empty church / Of sweet li'l baby Rose / And a man in a mask from Mexico is peeling off my clothes.'

The notion that Satanic abuse came across the border from Mexico (paired with another version, having it imported by a Jew from Europe) goes back to the so-called WICCA Letters, discussed by David Alexander in *The Humanist* for March/April 1990. (WICCA here stands for Witches International Covenant Council, the 'A' having no explanation.) These cognates of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' surfaced in the early 1980s in a report for a fundamentalist periodical, *Exodus*, by Dave Gearin, a sheriff's deputy in San Diego who claimed to have decoded them. They supposedly record a meeting of the Covintern in Mexico in 1981, intent on subverting the United States and attaining world domination through satanic abuse in day care centers.

All we need now is an alliance between Baez and Catharine MacKinnon, who lives the other side of the Santa Cruz Mountains from J.B., in Half Moon Bay, home of Horse Boy.

Recently in *Ms.* MacKinnon offered a ghastly account of torture and murder in Serbian-occupied Croatia and concluded, 'Change the politics or religion, and victims of ritual abuse in this country [the United States] report the same staged sexual atrocities ending in sacrifice.'

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NOVEMBER 23

Petrolia

READING THE PHOTOGRAPHER Danny Lyon's fine *Memories of the Southern Civil Rights Movement*, published last year by the University of North Carolina. It has the uncensored text of John Lewis's speech at the March on Washington, August 28, 1963. Lewis was chairman of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee.

His prepared speech had lines like 'We are now involved in a serious political revolution. This nation is still a place of cheap political leaders who build their careers on immoral compromise and social exploitation. What political leader can stand up here and say, "My party is the party of principles"? The party of Kennedy is also the party of Eastland. The party of Javits is also the party of Goldwater. Where is *our* party?'

Lewis went on to attack Kennedy for sabotaging civil rights legislation and for appointing racist judges. 'We shall march through the Heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did', he wrote for his finale. 'We shall pursue our own "scorched earth" policy and burn Jim Crow to the ground - nonviolently. We shall crack the South into a thousand pieces and put them back together in the image of democracy.' These lines were, as Lyons puts it, 'apparently unbearable to some

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members of the grand coalition that now rode the coattails of the movement.' They were cut. So was 'We Shall Overcome', considered too provocative for the official program.

Lyons also gives the minutes of the discussion in SNCC's Atlanta office on November 22 and 23 of JFK's assassination. For example,

Foreman: Johnson is taking over now, without hesitation. We can not be shocked, it slows our intellect. We can't delay ...

Price: From experience in this field, he knows that sentimentality can mess you up terribly. SNCC can not lose a week because of sentimentality ... In this case as in others, sentiments will develop either negatively or positively ...

Dinky: Only by taking the offensive will we prevent a purge.

Foreman: The rightists and birchists etc. will attempt to use this killing against the Civil Rights Organizations. We must take a positive stand ...

Shira: We are on the defensive, true. But the best defensive will be a strong offensive. While the country is in shock, we should come on with a strong offensive ...

Boy next to Iris: I do not want to demonstrate for a guy who sold out on Civil Rights, not demonstrate as if he had not sold out ...

Dinky: I want to use him and his death, not eulogize him. 2. The establishment will oppose us under any circumstance ...

Foreman: ... I was surprised the killer was not a rightist. Because he is a leftist, we can not take the position this was the same thing that killed Evers. We must take the position he died a martyr's death, like the others. Demonstrations will occur for the monument of legislation, not for the president alone ... After all our political discussions on tactics and policy, we must always remember that in the end, the highest considerations are moral principles.

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NOVEMBER 24

Petrolia

MY DWORKIN PROJECT lumbers along. More on Stoltenberg's penis:

Dear Alex,

Had a long chat with your Brooklyn informant, who described to me how Andrea Dworkin, occasionally sighted around Park Slope snacking on ice cream with her (undoubtedly flaccid) companion Stoltenberg, declines to take her frozen treats from a cone. No doubt, her penised friend has dissuaded her from any action that smacks of 'verticality'. After all,

'Manhood is a vertical palisades, perpendicular to a base line of female bodies ... Authentic human selfhood can only be horizontal ... [I'm happy to send to you copies of the accompanying diagrams.]

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'How is it', the editorial asked, 'that the United States can engage in pinpoint night bombing over Iraq in the face of fierce enemy fire and yet cannot drop water in the dark over Topanga Canyon?'

This is a version of the old 'How is it we can put a man on the moon and yet' construction favored by every bar-stool pundit. It yokes faulty premise to silly conclusion. The American electronic record over the Iraqi battlefield was scarcely impressive. Not a single SCUD missile site located or hit, despite all-out efforts; Saddam's Winnebago mobile hq - the target at one time of up to a third of all US aerial sorties - either never located, or if located, never hit. Not a single Patriot missile found its mark.

This rousing record of achievement is to be transferred to pinpoint nocturnal water-dumping on firestorms in the Santa Monica Mountains, saving California's aerospace economy in the process. God save us from the techno-fix mentality.

Fighting wildfires could be a way of soaking up the ag surplus. Shift California's ag investment out of water-intensive cotton and rice cultivation and into tomato production. Scoop the tomatoes into giant spheres a hundred yards across and launch them into space, flying in geosynchronous orbit fifty miles above fire-risk areas of California. At the first sign of trouble, douse the hot spots in a shower of ketchup. It used to be my plan for Moscow in the Star Wars era, but with a nice little MacArthur grant - say, \$300,000 over a couple of years from their 'peace and security' gravyboat - I'd be happy to redraw the plans.

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NOVEMBER 29

Anderson Valley Advertiser

Boonville, CA

Dear Mr. Anderson

Cockburn has finally taken the great leap forward and has propounded a theory of his own. And he's done nothing less than create a new Oswald for us. To the existing Oswalds - the disgruntled loner, the Castro/KGB/FBI/Mafia hitman, the radio-controlled Manchurian Candidate, the switched-in-Minsk Russian, the CIA/FBI/ONI agent, and the fall guy - Cockburn adds his own Oswald model: The Trotskyite dweeb.

Cockburn finds it telling that Oswald supposedly subscribed to the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party newspaper, *The Militant*. Here's the problem. Remember the Judi-Bari-esque Oswald pin-up on the cover of *Life* magazine? Oswald is supposedly in his back yard posing with his weapons and two newspapers. Oswald was shown the original photo during his interrogation and said it was a falsification. Cockburn, as a believer, must, however, accept the photo as a true relic. Nevertheless, forget the analysis of the shadows and the

Petrolia

unnatural way Oswald's body is poised in relation to his head. Here's the really weird part: Oswald is holding a copy of *The Militant* and a copy of *The Worker*.

First some quick background: One of the intense, bloody, and pointless political controversies of the 20th century is over who was the true messenger of Lenin: Stalin, or one of the original disciples Stalin had killed, Trotsky. The socialist *Militant* hated Stalin, the betrayer of the revolution; and the communist *Worker* hated Trotsky, the enemy of the people.

So why is Oswald standing there proclaiming conflicting ideologies? One can argue that high school drop-out Oswald was unschooled in the subtleties of Marxist/Leninist dogma. Very unlikely. Oswald spent two years in the Motherland, spoke Russian like a native, married the niece of a GPU officer, is reported to have read the primary works, and intelligently discussed the distinctions between Soviet Communism and Marxism/Leninism during a debate on New Orleans television. With that background, it's unlikely that Oswald couldn't decide whether he loved Joe or loved Leon. Of course, he loved neither. He wasn't a Trotskyite or a Stalinist. The pictures of Oswald in his back yard are fakes. The agent who doubled for Oswald and the agent who took the picture probably assumed that two commie papers were more damning than one.

Sincerely,
Jock Penn
San Rafael, California

DECEMBER 3

Dear Bruce,

As a published author on the history of American Communism, as well as a former Marxist-Leninist, I would like to offer some comment, based on personal experience, to the Oswald debate.

Penn did not make clear - perhaps he does not know? - that there are two separate photos, showing two separate papers with the rifle, not one photo with the Trotskyist *Militant* and the Stalinist *Worker*, an argument that the photos must be faked, since, according to him, no leftist in 1963 would have stood on both sides of that historical divide, the Stalin-Trotsky fight.

He is completely wrong. I know whereof I speak because, as Bruce once pointed out, in 1963 I was one of the most obnoxious members of the CPUSA's youth wing, the W.E.B. DuBois Club.

In that period the disagreements between Stalin and Trotsky had long faded into rhetoric, if not irrelevance, for both groups. Beginning in 1956, after the 'secret speech' of Khrushchev on Stalin's crimes, a number of prominent CPers

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For example, in 1956 George Hitchcock, former educational director of the state CP and a close friend of my parents, publicly endorsed Farrell Dobbs, the SWP candidate for president; so, as I recall, did Vincent Hallinan, who had been the presidential standard bearer of the CP-lining Progressive Party in 1952. In 1958 there was a joint CP-SWP political effort in New York.

In 1963 Khrushchev was still in charge in Russia. He had presided over the rehabilitation of all the military figures killed in the Stalin purges and had either rehabilitated or partially rehabilitated numerous other old Bolshevik victims of the same massacre. At the time I joined DuBois, many people in the CPUSA thought the rehabilitation would extend all the way to Trotsky.

In addition, *de facto* united fronts between the CPUSA and SWP existed in two areas: the civil rights movement and Cuba. CPers and SWPers also worked more or less harmoniously in the student movement in Berkeley. In the anti-discrimination demonstrations in San Francisco at that time (Mel's, Auto Row, Sheraton Palace), the two groups worked together. CPers were well aware of the SWP's then-important influence with Malcolm X and other militants in the Black movement.

Most importantly, the Castro regime had taken a certain distance from Moscow in openly accepting support from Trotskyists (especially in Europe and the US) and Maoists. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee, to which Oswald claimed to belong, was in fact an SWP front group, to which the CPUSA deferred in Cuba work. When I inquired of the CP's leaders in San Francisco at that time about Cuba, I was specifically directed to a member of SWP which was considered closer to the Cubans and more active on that issue than the CP.

I do not think it was at all rare at that time for independent Marxists, which is what Oswald claimed to be, to feel that Stalin vs. Trotsky was ancient history and that both the CP and SWP, as well as the tiny Maoist tendencies in existence in the US then, were part of the same international Communist movement, each with a different contribution to make. Even a pro-CPer would be interested in the SWP's work if only because of Cuba. That, of course, was Oswald's main obsession, we are told.

I, like Oswald, read both *The Worker* and *The Militant* regularly in 1963, buying the former at the CP bookstore and subscribing to the latter as well as to the *Workers World*, then the only weekly Maoist-lining periodical in the US. (*Progressive Labor* had already started coming out at that time, but was a monthly.) Perhaps I was naïve to think of them all as more or less alike.

In my recollection that was the situation, anent CP-SWP relations, obtaining until the middle of 1964 and the launching of DuBois as a national organization, when DuBois and the SWP's Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) became serious and more hostile competitors. And, of course, when Khrushchev was replaced by Kosygin and Brezhnev, a re-Stalinization began.

Unfortunately the Trotskyist movement did not undergo a similar 're-Trotskyization'. Trotsky, after all, had called for the overthrow of the Stalinist regime, a position from which the SWP retreated after his death, and to which they never returned.

Stephen Schwartz
San Francisco

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DECEMBER 5

Petrolia

AMERICANS LIKE A GOOD SNIGGER now and then about English class systems. But Americans like to ponder those quaint English ways, courtesy of Masterpiece Theater or long articles in the *Wall Street Journal* about the House of Lords, partly as a way of avoiding the realities of their own class system which is different, but in many ways more drastic.

After all, as Jim Britell recently remarked to me, between 1965 and 1985 slavery was successfully reintroduced into the United States. In 1960 one college graduate with a C average could earn enough to buy a house with three bedrooms, a garage, basement and an attic; own a two-year-old Chevy; and raise four kids. Today it takes two childless wage slaves to afford the rent on a one-bedroom apartment. The upper classes have succeeded in enslaving the middle and lower classes. Or perhaps the older generation has succeeded in enslaving the younger.

The English have been at it longer, so the refinements of class distinction have been aging longer in the cask. Americans in the 1980s would sit in front of re-runs of *Upstairs, Downstairs* at the English Museum. Meanwhile a new American class was solidifying out of the magma of the Roaring Eighties before their very eyes.

Short of shooting every member of a particular group the old contours persist. And even efforts far more determined than any launched in English history have been doomed to failure. I remember touring Albania in 1965, a country led by Stalin-fan Enver Hoxha and widely advertised as having taken a stern, even blood-thirsty, line with the old order. Our official guide was a young fellow called Dino Bashkim who kept the nail on the little finger of his right hand untrimmed at a conspicuous three-quarter-inch length, thus signaling him as a man apart from the toilers. By now Dino is no doubt back in his townhouse in Tirana, the Hoxha years an increasingly blurred memory.

Back in the early eighties - 1880s, that is - Lord Derby urged a Parliamentary survey to refute 'wild and reckless exaggerations' to the effect that most of Britain was owned by a very small number of people.

Bateman's *New Domesday Survey*, later expanded as *Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, duly established, much to Derby's mortification,

that no less the people, with a c the Scottish Hi immortalised ir million acres.

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