Post 6/8/91

The JFK Conspiracy

In his criticism of Oliver Stone's upcoming film on the JFK assassination ["Just a Sloppy Mess?" Outlook, June 2], George Lardner condemns the assertion that your paper stood by "silently" while agencies it covered for the public "allowed historical documents to be stolen or destroyed."

It is not the destruction of documents related to the Kennedy assassination that concerns me here, even though it probably occurred on a grand scale (with or without the knowledge of your paper). What I am concerned about is your paper's silence when a pertinent document is released to the public about the Kennedy assassination.

The document that I'm referring to is a memo from J. Edgar Hoover to the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, dated Nov. 29, 1963, and discovered in 1988, which refers to a George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency. According to the memo, the FBI briefed George Bush on the reaction of the anti-Castro community one day after the Kennedy assassination.

(1) Why did your paper devote little more than a descriptive article on this back in 1988?

(2) Why did your paper later take Bush and the CIA's spokesmen at their word when they claimed that the Bush mentioned in the memo was another George Bush?

(3) Where was your paper when it was shown that the other George Bush who was said to be briefed by the FBI was a 24-year-old, GS-5 research analyst who had worked at the CIA for only six months and who claimed he never had an "interagency meeting" while employed there?

—Jeremiah Cohen

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Lardner is no doubt correct that the forthcoming movie about the Kennedy assassination is a "mishmash" of inaccuracies. But let's place the blame where it belongs—on the original, official investigations that were badly bungled by design, incompetence or both.

The Warren Commission appeared bent on proving the single-bullet, fired by a lone nut, theory. Witnesses to the contrary were ignored or intimidated. Evidence to the contrary was lost or destroyed. After it became evident the single-bullet theory could not be supported, there was a House of Representatives investigation, but it did almost nothing to dispel the fog.

The official version also had Jack Ruby as a "loner" nut, which turned out to be far from the truth. He had close ties with the underworld, having helped ransom gangsters from Castro's clutches. The part played by organized crime simply cannot be ignored by any objective study of the assassination.

Important records of this situation have been sealed until the year 2039. That leaves things wide open for amateur sleuthing and conclusions that can only be conjecture.

God and the perpetrators know what really happened that terrible November day in Dallas. No one else does. But that won't stop the stories, or the movies.

—H. Paul Murray

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It is depressingly predictable that your paper and Lardner would seize on Stone's film project in Dallas in yet another attempt to discredit critics of the "official" findings in the assassination of John Kennedy.

One hardly need argue for Jim Garrison as a paragon of prosecutorial propriety to recognize the many half-truths and superficialities in Lardner's account of the New Orleans district attorney's 1966-69 investigation of conspiracy. To raise just two examples: There is ample evidence that David Ferrie (1) had been active in anti-Castro operations during the Bay of Pigs period and thereafter, both in New Orleans and elsewhere; and (2) had worked in several capacities for a reputed mobster (Carlos Marcello) who had expressed in forceful, concrete terms his intention to "get" the Kennedys. It is also highly relevant that top officials of the Central Intelligence Agency were much concerned to assist Clay Shaw in fighting Garrison's prosecution and that Shaw's death in 1975 raised all sorts of questions about handling of the body, failure to order an autopsy etc. But the gestalt of such matters lies outside Lardner's journalistic curiosity.

Lardner sustains for your paper what Hugh Aynesworth (whom I interviewed for a book on the JFK case in the early '70s) sustained for Newsweek (under Post ownership): a hopelessly slanted approach to "the crime of the century" and its meaning for our country. If your paper had spent as much energy on an open-ended and honest probe of the JFK case as it has expended for decades in putting down the "conspiratorialists," the American people might have in hand today—almost 30 years after the fact—the truth about the murder of the 35th president and the many repercussions of that pivotal event.

What goes around comes around. Do your readers imagine, for example, that there is no connection between John Kennedy's assassination and the unprecedented audacity of a "stolen election" in 1980, engineered by the likes of William Casey? If so, they should think again.

—H. C. Nash

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I enjoyed Lardner's "Dallas in Wonderland" [Outlook, May 19] article very much. I'm one of the journalists who met and photographed Lee Harvey Oswald in New Orleans in August 1963, three months before the assassination of President Kennedy. I took the pictures of Oswald handing out pro-Castro leaflets at the International Trade Mart.

Stone's film company contacted me in February and asked if I would send them a copy of my old Oswald footage. They said Stone is going to restage the leafleting and wants the scene to be historically accurate. I was led to believe I might be used as a technical consultant for that scene, but I've just learned that since I'm convinced Oswald acted alone and was not involved in a conspiracy, they won't let me go anywhere near the movie's shooting locations in New Orleans.

Last Friday I went to Camp Street in New Orleans to shoot a little video of the movie-making, but one of Stone's security people called over a cop who ordered me to stop taking pictures and leave.

Earlier I put the film company in touch with Carlos Bringuier (the Cuban exile who scuffled with Oswald on Canal Street) and Bill Stuckey (the freelance reporter who interviewed Oswald for WDSU Radio), but Stone is not going to use either as a consultant—even though I understand these two are going to be portrayed in the movie.

It appears that Stone is rewriting history again and doesn't want any of the people who actually met Oswald to confuse him with the facts of the case.

—Johann W. Rush