

Dear Paul,

9/12/80

Glad to get your note of the 8th and the LATimes review of the Summers book.

I've been meaning to write you to let you know that on Monday I'm going into Georgetown Univ. Hospital for arterial surgery. They think I'll be there 3-9 days. I gather that this is as routine as any such surgery can be. I can't tell you much because I didn't ask any questions. So until I'm there I won't know.

I had my local doctor send me down for examinations with some of the wonderful modern electronic gadgetry. It disclosed a partial blockage in the left femoral artery. I was then admitted for a day for an arteriogram which disclosed that it can be fixed and another one of which I know nothing. All I asked is whether they could do it immediately and about how long I'd be in. The doctor has an international reputation. He was the consultant on Nixon's thigh surgery, the same approximate location.

Sorry the strike has had you out of work for so long. It is in the news around here pretty much every day but I recall no suggestion that the issues will be resolved soon. Hope they are, not because I look at those shows because I don't, but because of all the jobs of so many people. Reminds me of the business of the musicians and composers not getting paid for their records that were used on radio in the early days.

Summers has gone a craftsmenlike job of puffing up a readable and impressive book. However, it cannot survive close analysis and only those buffs who are for anything that is against the official story think well of it. His theories do not survive close examination of them, but they are attractive.

He simply is not honest. You have detected his purloining of my work. Why trust a man who does that and goes to such extremes to make it appear that he cites his sources?

His claim that those people were not interviewed also is untrue.

Some of those in whom he puts great store, often with no corroboration or any kind of confirmation, have no credibility at all.

The Times review is not an unusual one. Those who are not blindly against any criticism of the official mythology like both what he has fabricated and how he did it.

I have no reason to have any question about the known account of the tragic murder of Lowenstein, that it was by a sick man.

Our summer appears finally to have ended. The last couple of night have been in the low 60s, most of the days now do not get to a 90 - for maybe a week or less, although some have gotten that hot. The best set an all-time record here, and with it we've had and are having a drought. Now the trees are beginning to turn, those that do earlier, a few leaves have fallen, the Japanese beetles are gone and there are other signs of fall. Glad your summer was not too unpleasant.

Our best,

PAUL WURTZEL
1688 SUNSET PLAZA DR., LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90069

Sept. 8, 1980

Dear Harold;

Well, out of work again since I last wrote to you. The actors strike. I hope the citizens of this country will put two and two together and see what they will get if they elect Reagen. Do you think the public is stupid enough to elect him as president?

I have finished reading Summers book on the JFK murder. I found it very interesting. Of course he used much of your original work and that of others but what he presents makes sense to me as far~~a~~/as theory goes. Do you find any validity in any of his work? I found a copy of the LA Times book review on it (enclosed).

I hope you and Lil are well and have survived the summer without too much discomfort. It has been a relatively cool summer for us, but we may get the heat later in September.

Do you have any thoughts on the Allard Lowentain murder other than has been in the paper?

Best,



Resurrecting the specter of doubt from the Dallas J.F.K. assassination

Conspiracy by Anthony Summers (McGraw-Hill: \$17.95; illustrated)

The specter of doubt about the assassination of John F. Kennedy appeared in the nightmare hours after he was killed in Dallas and has not been allayed or exorcised in the 17 years since. Was the crime the result of a conspiracy? Were secret intelligence agencies

Reviewed by Robert Kirsch

involved? Was it the work of left-wing or right-wing groups, organized crime, anti-Castro or pro-Castro forces, or some combination of these? British investigative reporter Anthony Summers became interested in the Kennedy case while producing a BBC-TV documentary on it, decided to pursue the matter not only in archive research but in tracing and talking to surviving witnesses, some of whose testimony

For Weekly Times Book Reviews July 6, 1980

was ignored by the Warren Commission or remained unpursued by the House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations because of lack of time and funds. The Select Committee report last year concluded—on the basis of new acoustical analyses of tapes of a motorcycle officer's open microphone—that at least two gunmen fired at the President on Nov. 22, 1963, one from the Texas Book Depository, the other from the "grassy knoll" on Dealey Plaza.

The committee's detailed and compelling account of its investigation of the assassinations of President Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King was published just less than a year ago and still is available in "The Final Assassination Report" (Bantam Extra Edition: \$3.95; illustrated, with a foreword by Tom Wicker and an introduction by Robert Blakey, chief counsel of the committee.) Despite the dramatic conclusions of evidence of

conspiracy in the killing of President Kennedy and of another conspiracy in the murder of King, the report met public apathy and the customary hostility in the press toward any who dissented from the orthodoxy of the Warren Report, which had Lee Harvey Oswald as the sole assassin and Jack Ruby as an emotional avenger, a small-time nebbish whose only motive was to save Jacqueline Kennedy from a harrowing ordeal at Oswald's trail. Amazingly, when the Select Committee report appeared, some editorial writers expressed the view that it did no service to history, that it prolonged confusion. One newspaper said with confidence, "Few Americans are very fervent these days to know the single, burning, absolute truth about the killings." Seen across the chasm of Watergate, in the light of revelations about the CIA and FBI in domestic intel-

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J.F.K. Assassination

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Both the report of the Select Committee and the "Conspiracy" have claims on our attention. Summers' "Conspiracy" has done what American journalists, with a few rare exceptions, should have done in seeking the truth about Dallas, 1963. There is more than sufficient data to establish that the Warren Commission, however noble its motives in seeking to allay the fears of the American public, however capable its staff, simply did not have all the information to work with, tended to ignore testimony that did not comport with its theory of the single assassin. We know now that the intelligence agencies were disingenuous and misleading in their denials of knowledge about Oswald. It is not to attribute sinister motives to the Warren Commission to see that it functioned—with at least one member, Allen Dulles, who was former head of the CIA—to provide some reassurances that have turned out to be pure fiction.

Indeed, the Kennedy case is filled with myths and anti-myths. One myth is that the Kennedy case received the best scientific, expert investigation modern America could muster. That simply isn't the case. Any Saturday night murder in a big city receives more experienced autopsy procedure than the slain American President did. Even with the confusion and emotion of the moment, some of the poor handling of evidence is shocking. The struggle over the President's corpse resulted in the Secret Service taking it away from expert Dallas authorities at gunpoint, flying it to Bethesda Naval Hospital where doctors, according to the expert study commissioned by the Select Committee, "had insufficient training and experience to evaluate a death from gunshot wounds." None was a forensic pathologist and the dean of that profession, Dr. Milton Helpern, former Medical Examiner for New York City, said of the President's autopsy, "It's like sending a 7-year-old boy who has taken three lessons on the violin over to the New York Philharmonic and expecting him to perform a Tchaikovsky symphony. He knows how to hold the violin and bow, but he has a long way to go before he can make music."

Those who remained skeptical of the official version of the assassination, the people passed off as cranks, neurotics, obsessives and lunatics—and there were surely some sensation-seekers among them—were far from alone in the post-Watergate view, it is not impossible that they were victims of intelligence "disinformation" efforts. Yet many of the "assassinologists," as they were sometimes called—among them Mary Ferrrell of Texas, Paul Hoch of California, Sylvia Meagher and reporter Earl Goltz of the Dallas Morning News—through meticulous scholarship and zeal kept alive the investigation, which should have been the work of official agencies. Even more so now. If the Select Committee's conclusion is valid, then simple justice demands that leads be followed before more time passes.

Summers was surprised and even shocked that he found a "journalistic vacuum" when he sought out testimony, "repeatedly found myself the first reporter to interview relevant witnesses." These included Warren Commission staffers who expressed dissatisfaction with the "evidence" they were given by the FBI and CIA. One former Warren Commission counsel, Judge Burt Griffin, told Summers, "I feel betrayed. I feel that the CIA lied to us, that we had an agency of government here which we were depending upon, that we expected to be truthful with us, and to cooperate with us. And they didn't do it. The CIA concealed from us the fact that they were involved in efforts to assassinate Castro which could have been of extreme importance to us. Especially the fact that they were involved in working with the Mafia at that time." Griffin felt the same about the FBI: "What is most disturbing to me is that two agencies of the government, that were supposed to be loyal and faithful to us, deliberately misled us."

The strength of Summers' book is in the increment of detail, carefully woven, organized around the physical evidence, around the personality and politics of Oswald, the associations and friends of Ruby, the situation in Cuba that brought gangsters and anti-Castro forces together, the Kennedy policies that aroused hostility in both these groups, and, not least, the host of official intelligence agents and the network of smaller fish, avocational secret agents, people used by semiofficial informers and provocateurs. Oswald was in this world, no matter the denials issued at the time. Names and places are given. The setting of those years is brought alive. Summers' own conclusions are tentative. It is no part of his brief to solve the problem. That is the obligation of this country and its institutions, but his own detachment, his magisterial way of handling the evidence, gives the work great credibility. At the very least, it shows the many areas that need to be examined more closely: A deeper study of Mafia figures, American intelligence personnel (including military intelligence) and anti-Castro activists is arguably necessary after the revelations in this book.

"It is certainly possible that a renegade element in U.S. intelligence manipulated Oswald—whatever his role on Nov. 22, 1963. That same element may have activated pawns in the anti-Castro movement and the Mafia to murder the President," Summers writes. It is a scenario that is unpalatable to most Americans, the notion that the very agencies charged with protecting this country could unleash forces that would kill the President. But such things have happened before at the courts of kings and in that world of mirrors we know so well from espionage fiction.

The case is unraveling. Old FBI and CIA hands proved more willing to talk, to reveal what they had

held back—contacts with Oswald, strange coincidences and contradictions, efforts to build a pro-Castro, leftist identity for Oswald in Mexico at a time when the real Oswald was in the United States; evidence that Oswald Far Play for Cuba activities were part of the attempt to embarrass pro-Castro forces. Oswald met with an important U.S. intelligence official before the assassination. This man, after the assassination, attempted to manufacture a link between Oswald and Cuban Communist envoy. There is further evidence that when President Kennedy was considering normalizing relations with Cuba, the CIA was planning assassination attempts against Castro, a possible "staged" attempt to subvert national policy, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. told Summers. At the fringes, the agencies could be out of control.

Ruby's connections with Cuba, with Mafia chieftains (and particularly several who had vowed to erase President Kennedy), his need for money, his cryptic remarks in jail after the killing of Oswald suggest that this act was neither spontaneous nor passionate as it has been represented.

Summers takes these intricate matters, this cast of characters from the nether-world of operators, political fanatics, double agents; from the ordinary folk brought in by accident or coincidence to be witnesses—taxi drivers and passers-by, aides and officials; shows the methodology of spying—Oswald's "detection" to the Soviet Union almost certainly was engineered by American intelligence, a classic ploy in the period—weighs the quality of testimony, the matters of means, motive and opportunity, brings us the ingredients of suspense fiction with this difference: On every page, the connection between actions and events, between halted and vengeance and the terrible doom of the young President is made. This is an awesome work of reportage, an overview of years of study of the assassination with the power of a plea as from Zola for justice. In its clear and understated style, it is a model of its kind of journalism.

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