

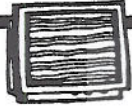
The Forces of Dimness

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By DOROTHY RABINOWITZ

As of this writing the Freemen remain bunkered behind their ranch walls. That is to say that the latest mob of antigovernment protesters to lurch into the news remains holed up in its headquarters, surrounded by exceedingly patient federal and local lawmen. The Freemen, who do not recognize the legitimacy of U.S. laws, are not popular in the Montana community where they have threatened clergymen and issued "licenses" to kill government officials and anyone else in their way. Besotted, as so many citizens now are, by preachments identifying the government as the source of all that is evil, the locus of all affliction, etc., the Freemen refuse to pay taxes, or to consent to any requirement of government, including laws against bank fraud.

All told, the infuriated citizens of Jordan, Mont., had reason to welcome the lawmen. "We want the FBI here, we want the government here, we've worked for months



Television

"World News Tonight"

"Primetime Live"

"The Men Who Killed Kennedy"

to get them here," one told ABC "World News Tonight" correspondent Barry Serafin last week. It was, by all accounts, the prevailing view in this community, where, at least for now, seldom is heard a discouraging word about the evil federal government and its machinations. When anarchy and mayhem threaten, the citizens want their government and its armies to come on down, and they want them yesterday.

This is a point worth remembering in a time awash as ours is now in antigovernment drivel. From movies, television and a good part of the news media, from the ludicrous posturings of candidates running against Washington—consider the recently expired Republican primary season—there emerge roughly similar suggestions of a threatening, vaguely malevolent and never-to-be-trusted power known as the government. The government of the United States, that is. This attitude toward government is, of course, far from new. It is an attitude, indeed, that has been seeded into the culture from its earliest days, and one that periodically has its consequences—among which we can count the encouragement given the more deluded quarters of our lunatic fringe.

The number of alleged government de-

ceits and plots against the citizenry that are uncovered daily in, say, a single night's TV watching is dizzying to contemplate. In the same hour as its extended report on the Freemen, ABC's "Primetime Live" last Wednesday brought news of the Centers for Disease Control—and a "government coverup." This plot, it turned out, concerned the malady known as chronic fatigue syndrome—an illness, we were informed, whose true and serious nature the Centers for Disease Control has deliberately suppressed. Why the government should deliberately set about to suppress facts about the disease no one troubles to explain.

There were explanations and motives galore, on the other hand, in The History Channel's recently repeated conspiracy gala titled "The Men Who Killed Kennedy." In this series by Nigel Turner, and its new hour-long sequel, also recently aired on The History Channel, there is revealed a network of government conspiracies as fantastic as any ever imagined by Oliver Stone. The difference

is that Mr. Stone's "JFK" did not—as Mr. Turner's film does—purport to be a documentary. Its inquiries into the question of who killed John Kennedy yield any number of suspects, prominent among whom we find the Corsican Mafia, working along, needless to say, with the CIA. An "assassination researcher"—as the army of retirees, students, assorted obsessives and similarly qualified sleuths serving as authoritative sources here—narrates a long, richly complicated story of Corsican Mafia connections.

The key to the Kennedy assassination, and the Corsicans and the CIA, etc., it is revealed here, lies with a man called Michel, a drug dealer—who unfortunately insists on being released from prison before yielding up his secrets. The film's roster of assassination suspects is a long one and so, too, is its roster of those who conspired to conceal the truth about the assassination—among them Earl Warren, chief justice of the Supreme Court, the FBI, the police, surgeons, autopsy physicians and, as numbers of the film's authoritative sources charge, the entire media. One such source—an alleged witness, or, as a voice-over describes him, "a deaf-mute interviewed here for the first time"—relates a tale of frustration at the hands of officials evidently involved in the coverup. When he had tried to submit testimony about two suspicious men he had seen that day in Dallas, this witness testifies, the FBI offered

him money to keep quiet. The FBI didn't understand it was more important to get the truth out, the witness explains.

Such is witness testimony in "The Men Who Killed Kennedy," which has but one coherent theme, namely the vast scope of the government conspiracy to suppress the truth about the Kennedy assassination. In the film's new sequel, subtitled "The Truth Shall Make You Free"—which a senior vice president of The History Channel describes as a brave attempt to uncover the truth, etc., etc.—we encounter more witnesses. Here is a former Green Beret who thinks he heard two of his CIA instructors crowing over their accomplishment in Dealey Plaza—a conversation he was privileged to overhear during a coffee break. His is a long story.

Another authority, described as "a pilgrim" seeking truth, has gleaned new facts about the conspiracy via computer technology—facts, he bitterly reports, the media refuses to acknowledge. Apparently no one has as yet informed this pilgrim that the media are part of the conspiracy. We learn from another source that the bullet that killed the president came from a sewer. Marina Oswald, too, is on hand to reveal that the press has refused to seek the truth about the CIA and the Cubans and much more. By now we are longing to hear more about Michel and the Corsican Mafia, about whom there is, in fact, no further word.

Program host Roger Mudd notes that the willingness of so many people to air such views of the assassination is in itself "one measure of the disconnect between the American public and its leaders." There are two proper replies to this conclusion: one being that what it is a measure of is, rather, the lush profusion of paranoid claims against the government, ground out by theorists of the Left and the Right and varied hordes of the demented these many decades—and which only the governed of a free and robust democracy would dare voice. The second is that thousands would also gladly appear on The History Channel tomorrow to offer proof that the government is engaged in a ruthless conspiracy to suppress the news of UFO landings—testimony likely to be roughly equal in substance to Mr. Turner's Kennedy opus.