

# THE POLITICS OF CONSPIRACY, THE CONSPIRACY OF POLITICS

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Dealey Plaza, Nov. 22, 1963

The low long limousine turns off Houston onto Elm at Dealey Plaza in what may be the single most important piece of film of this century. It is the Abraham Zapruder color home movie of John Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, and the audience at "The Politics of Conspiracy Convention" at Boston University is watching the clearest print ever shown to the public (Time-Life refuses to release the original; this is a bootleg). The limousine is traveling slowly, 12, maybe 14 miles an hour, as it passes the Book Depository Building where Lee Harvey Oswald is supposed to have been perched in a sixth-floor corner window. The Dealey Plaza crowd is thinner than the throng that met the President in downtown Dallas. Still, Kennedy waves in the bright sun.

## The Shooting of Pres. John F. Kennedy

Shortly before the car passes behind a large traffic sign for Stemmons Highway that will momentarily obscure Zapruder's view, Kennedy's head flicks quickly to his left and then back again, facing us. According to Robert Groden, New York film specialist and Kennedy assassination researcher, this gesture, which occurs in about one-ninth of a second, or two frames, was cut out of the official copy of the Zapruder film sold to Time-Life shortly after the killing, excised perhaps by FBI or CIA representatives. Groden has restored the two frames. The sudden gesture's meaning may be ambiguous, but the gesture itself is not. It looks as if Kennedy may have heard something to his left, or maybe he unexpectedly recognized someone in the crowd.

## Bullets

It might also be that he heard a warning. He resumes his waving and disappears behind the traffic sign. When he emerges a couple of seconds later, his head has begun to shrink down into his shoulders. He slowly brings both hands up to a position in front of his neck — it looks for just a second as if he is only about to straighten his tie.

In fact, the first bullet has already hit him, either beneath the right shoulder blade or in the neck. He slumps in his seat. Governor Connally, at first unaware that the man sitting directly behind him has been shot, soon turns to look over his right shoulder, is suddenly hit himself, and falls into his wife's arms.

"The brutal transfer of power and the constellation of mysteries that surround it remain unresolved."

In the back, Jackie inclines toward her husband and for a brief instant brings her head close to his, her right arm edging around him along the top of the seat.

## Explosion of the President's Head in the Zapruder Film

Then the right half of the top of the President's head explodes, recorded in a frame of the retired garment manufacturer's movie as a starburst of blood and brain matter. Few have seen this particular sequence either. A piece of his head rockets three feet in the air above the limousine. Kennedy is thrown slightly forward by the blast and then, almost immediately, appears to be hit again from the front and is hurled violently back against the seat. Blood spills from his head and splatters Jackie's dress. As Kennedy begins to topple to his left, toward his wife, the film clearly shows that the entire side of the President's head above the right ear has been blown away.

## Man With a Rifle

As the limousine accelerates onto Stemmons en route to Parkland Hospital, Zapruder follows it with his camera. Unknown even to himself, as well as, ostensibly, to the Warren Commission, Zapruder's lens captures perhaps the single most startling piece of evidence supporting the conspiracy theory of John F. Kennedy's assassination. On the actual film, it is no bigger than a pin prick, but with the help of a computer Robert Groden has blown up that portion of frame 413 to reveal in the foreground, behind a retaining wall on the grassy knoll that abuts Elm, a man with short hair aiming a high-powered rifle at the fatal spot the limousine has just passed. Unless this unidentified marksman just happened to wander off a shooting range and quite by accident point his gun at the Presidential limousine, the Warren Commission's finding that a man named Oswald acted alone is no more credible than Nixon's profession of innocence in the Watergate affair.

## The Umbrella Man

The filmed evidence of an assassination conspiracy provided at the convention at Boston University is itself enough to alter radically the opinion of anyone who has blithely accepted the Warren Commission's conclusions. In addition to showing that Kennedy was unmistakably shot three times; that he was almost

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\* HOW CLEAR IS THIS GUNMAN?

certainly shot at least once from the front or side: that a man partially obscured by leaves in the foreground is aiming a rifle at the Presidential route -- the Zapruder film also shows the famous Umbrella Man. This figure stands in the foreground by the highway sign with an umbrella. It has not rained in Dallas since that morning and no one else appears to be carrying one. Just before the first shot, he opens his umbrella, which can be seen rotating slightly. After the last shot has been fired, he closes the umbrella and, while spectators are running in various directions, the Umbrella Man almost casually starts walking down the sidewalk. Was he signaling to marksmen?

Another of the many films and snapshots of the assassination, a movie taken by Orville Nix, shows a figure high up on the grassy knoll behind a small barricade. Though considerably less distinct than the gunman in the Zapruder film, this figure appears to be sitting in a military firing position.

#### Inability of FBI Expert Marksmen to Validate the Warren Commission's Theory

Warren Commission investigators agreed that 5.6 seconds elapsed between the first and last shots, but an FBI weapons specialist was unable to shoot with the type of rifle allegedly used by Oswald any faster than at 2.3 second intervals, which would allow for the absolute maximum three shots. To circumvent this discrepancy, the Commission subscribed to what has become known as the "magic bullet" theory: one bullet passed through Kennedy, hit Connally, made a U-turn and hit Kennedy again. According to assassination expert Mark Lane, a motorcycle policeman escorting the Presidential limousine was quoted afterwards as saying he saw Kennedy hit in the face, but he was never called before the Commission to testify. He was just one of numerous key witnesses selectively ignored by the Commission. Perhaps the most crucial of these was Jack Ruby, who wanted Earl Warren and the Commission's counsel, Leon Jaworski, to take him to Washington where he felt he could safely testify; Ruby stated that his life was in danger in Dallas and that the truth would never be told if he remained there. The Commission refused to remove him to Washington and remained relatively indifferent to his claims. It left Ruby to die of cancer in Dallas and never gave him a chance to reveal his full story. (Ruby said of Warren: "A very nice man, but so naive.")

#### Why Was Nixon in Dallas the Night Before? and Other Questions

Participants in the conference also raised a great many disquieting questions. What were Nixon and J. Edgar Hoover doing at the home of Dallas billionaire Clint Murchison the night of November 21, 1963? What was the role of Gerald Ford, one of the Warren Commission's most outspoken advocates of the lone assassin theory, in the coverup? Why was a bullet mark on the sidewalk near the assassination site covered by police squad cars immediately after the event? What is the long object protruding from the first floor window of the Dallas Textile building (a location with a clear view of the back of Kennedy's head)? Why did a man on the fire escape two floors above that window suddenly drape himself over the railing during the shooting to look down? And why, asks Penn Jones, former editor of the Midlothian (Tex.) Mirror and a conspiracy researcher, have numerous key persons investigating the assassination mysteriously died before they were able to publicize their findings (among them Dorothy Kilgallen, who died of an "overdose of sleeping pills on top of alcohol" after

saying publicly she would break the whole story in five days, using her exclusive interview with Jack Ruby)? Who are the three "tramps" photographed in Dallas on November 22 while being "arrested" by Dallas police? Do two of the tramps bear more than a passing resemblance to F. Howard Hunt and Frank Sturgis? And why does one of them look as though he's wearing in his ear a hearing aid or small receiver that can also be seen in the ear of one of the policemen?

#### Pressure to Reopen the Case

Evidence of this sort, research data and questions have been compiled over the past 11 years by conspiracy theorists, many of whom appeared at the Politics of Conspiracy Convention. They are applying pressure to reopen the case that J. Edgar Hoover, on page 100 of volume five of the Warren Commission report, said "will be continued in open classification for all time." Yet FBI and CIA files crucial to the case are held secretly in the archives, to remain so until the year 2039. Other relevant articles have disappeared.

#### The Confiscation by the Secret Service of the Autopsy Photographs

The naval doctor J. J. Humes, who performed Kennedy's autopsy, stated to the Warren Commission that his X-rays and photographs were confiscated by the Secret Service before they were developed and were never returned.

The unanswered questions and unexamined evidence have prompted Representative Henry B. Gonzalez of Texas to prepare legislation calling for a full Congressional investigation into the killings of President Kennedy, his brother Robert, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the attempted assassination of George Wallace.

#### Charach's Movie: "The Second Gun", on Robert Kennedy's Assassination

At the BU conference, West Coast broadcast journalist Ted Charach screened his documentary on Bobby Kennedy's assassination, entitled "The Second Gun", which cast substantial doubt on the lone-assassin theory of that killing. Wayne Chastain, the Memphis reporter who covered Martin Luther King, Jr. before his murder and has since investigated his murder, spoke about new evidence in that case.

#### Solid Evidence vs. Not So Solid Evidence

The theories aired ranged from incontrovertible filmed evidence to certain undocumented assertions by researchers like Mae Brussell and Chicagoan Sherman Skolnick. The latter claims to have found impaled on a shrub in the yard of "a little old lady" in Chicago an incriminating government document that had fluttered from the "sabotaged" plane carrying Dorothy Hunt that crashed near Midway Airport in December of 1972. HAHA!

#### The Assassination Information Bureau

By the conference's end, the Assassination Information Bureau was calling for nationwide action and handing out a petition calling on Congress to investigate the JFK assassination. But caution in presenting the conspiracy evidence was encouraged by the AIB.

The Assassination Information Bureau, the conference's sponsor, comprises a small circle of friends,

all diligent conspiracy-watchers. The earliest public presentation of the group was a slide-show in Cambridge about two years ago. Along with pictures of Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby and others who figure in conspiracy theories, a rough bootleg copy of the Zapruder film was shown. Bob Katz, who assembled the slide-show, managed to get himself booked on the college lecture circuit in 1973-74 and became a veritable conspiracy circuit rider, his friends supporting him and filling in when necessary. He appeared almost exclusively at little-known state universities and colleges in the Midwest and West; he estimates that at least 25,000 people have seen his show. During the question-and-answer periods, he says, not a single person expressed doubts about the existence of a murderous cabal. Many wondered if Katz worried for his personal safety. He does not.

The AIB had planned on a conspiracy conference for over a year. As the Watergate inquiry proceeded and investigative news reports exposed Nixon's shady entourage and operations, the AIB believed that links between the assassinations and contemporary political skulduggery were implicitly being forged. They sought to make the connections explicit. The conference was designed to provide a forum for every variety of conspiracy analyst; it was to join the veteran Dealey Plaza investigators to those tracing the threads of the Watergate nexus back to past occurrences.

#### Mark Lane's Report

Mark Lane, author of Rush to Judgment, the best-selling attack on the Warren Commission published in 1966, came to the conference as a prodigal conspiracy theorist returned to his original commitment. Since his entry into public life (and some notoriety) with Rush to Judgment, Lane has probed the war crimes committed by U.S. forces in Vietnam and has served as a legal adviser to the Indian occupiers of Wounded Knee. Speaking before the crowd of about one thousand attending the first session of the conference, Lane recounted Earl Warren's public presentation of his Commission's completed report to President Johnson. Johnson, awkwardly holding the thick volume, could think of nothing to say but, "It's very heavy." "Inadvertently giving," Lane remarked, "the best short analysis ever of what happened in Dallas." He characterized Watergate as the "tip of the iceberg" and accused Gerald Ford of being "guilty today as an accessory after the fact in the murder of JFK." Ford, a member of the Warren Commission, wrote his only book, Portrait of the Assassin, on the subject of Lee Harvey Oswald's guilt.

#### Other Speakers

Other speakers, including Executive Action author Donald Freed, journalist Jeff Gerth, Dick Gregory, writer Peter Dale Scott, Mae Brussell and Sherman Skolnick covered a wide range of topic with varying degrees of credibility. **QUITE AN UNDERSTATEMENT!**

Smilg Penn Jones is the dean of conspiracy analysts. On November 22, 1963, Jones was waiting at the Dallas Trade Mart for the President to arrive and address the throng. Two days afterward, Jones began working to uncover the conspiracy he felt was behind it. The newspaper he edited until his retirement last year, the Midlothian Mirror, has published, he says, more material on the subject than any other. Jones has interviewed hundreds of people and written a four-volume account of his investigations entitled Forgive My Grief. Jones, not a man of awesome height, introduced himself to the convention as "a Texan, but I'm a shorthorn." At 60 years of age, he views the increased

interest in the JFK murder as a vindication. "I don't have time to wait," he says.

#### Carl Oglesby's Report

While the slenths aroused the curiosity and received the close attention of conventioners, Carl Oglesby, a member of the AIB and former national president of SDS, was given an enthusiastic reception. His two-hour speech to about 300 people interweaved detail and worldview, describing "the theft of popular sovereignty in Dallas" and interpreting it in terms of ruling class conflict. He began with the June 23, 1972 White House tape in which Nixon and Haldeman expressed fear of offending Howard Hunt and thereby reopening "the whole Bay of Pigs thing." Oglesby shifted smoothly to the Civil War, the suppression of the Confederacy and its subsequent reconstitution as Cowboy entrepreneurial capitalism, the vanguard of Manifest Destiny, linked but hostile to the dominant Yankee monopoly capitalists. He pursued this antagonism through Dallas to Watergate and beyond, employing metaphor and history to depict the differing sensibilities of the power elite competitors. He followed with a micro-analysis of areas such as Nixon's early career and his Cuban connection, which, Oglesby said, involved him in Meyer Lansky's interests. Explicating the history and internal conflict of the Howard Hughes empire, the significance of the Clifford Irving case, and the central role Hughes played in Watergate, Oglesby, who amplifies his theme in his forthcoming book, Yankees and Cowboys (Sheed and Ward), suggested that perhaps he was straying too far into a thicket of facts and losing sight of his over-arching conception. Shouts came from the audience: "No! No! More! More!" There was a spontaneous burst of applause. (It is impossible to convey the effect of his speech; it is enough to say that the Boston Globe reported it "spellbinding".) Oglesby ended with a flourish, reading from Bernard Bailyn's Ideological Origins of the American Revolution. "I'm not sure that Bailyn would approve," he said as he quoted colonists' pamphlets decrying the trespasses of tyranny. He called the American revolutionists "us people two hundred years ago," invoking their authority and example in demanding the restoration of democracy today. Oglesby was given a standing ovation.

#### Showing the Zapruder Film to the Rockefeller Commission on the CIA

As the convention ended, the AIB attempted to turn its momentum into political movement. It presented a petition calling for a Congressional investigation of the assassinations. Later that week Dick Gregory and Robert Groden showed the computer blow-up print of the Zapruder film to the Rockefeller commission investigating the CIA. Jack Nelson, the in-crack investigative reporter of the Los Angeles Times, called the AIB the day after the convention to tell them he had begun to look into the Wallace shooting. John Kifner, the New York Times' correspondent covering the affair, assumed the stance of a sympathetic skeptic and asked Mark Lane, "Have you got any new evidence?" Lane replied, "What's wrong with the old evidence?"

#### The Most Crucial Event in Recent American Politics

The death of President Kennedy is no mere whodunit; the murder was perhaps the crucial event in recent American politics. JFK's tentative moves to establish detente with the Soviet Union, draw back from Vietnam involvement, and stifle CIA covert activity were superseded after his killing by a less

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there is clearly a limit. Almost all societies in fact, even if not informed, do limit their population. I do not believe that overpopulation is as much a cardinal problem as some of the others. I fancy that once we get a relatively well fed world, then you will find mysteriously that the population will level off.

### One-Third Rich, Two-Thirds Poor

I cannot believe that the world can survive in peace, one-third rich and two-thirds poor. I simply do not believe it. I believe that this tension is the profound conflict of these days, and is being reflected in the events of this tumultuous century. People, once they get a little above the subsistence level, want much more, and it is right that they should want much more. I therefore believe, that all the rich countries, chiefly this one, but all of Europe, will have to get seriously to work if we want this world to be morally tolerable or even, in my view, practically viable at all.

As I said, this country can contrive to grow enough food for itself with probably the effort of two or three percent of the population. Some of the best calculations suggest that if we spend a few billion dollars, nothing like what we spend on space or on war, we could get the agriculture of these countries really going on their own terms. Then we might help them keep up, keep up only this subsistence level at which they are now existing. That is the best we can do by any contribution in terms of skilled agriculturalists and skilled equipment, and so on, for the poor of the world for fifteen years.

Then, if we're going to make them slightly better nourished, get them off the subsistence level, give them enough energy ultimately to cope with their own problems, it will need a contribution in actual kind, a contribution in terms of actual food. Again, the amounts involved don't seem to be out of question large. It would mean paying the farmers. It would mean some people working perhaps on the land who now don't work on the land. But it looks like a realistic prospect, that the 3% of your farmers who are now feeding the United States could in fact grow a bit more without much effort if they were paid for it. Thus, again, is not beyond question. And we have made the same calculations for Europe. It seems a perfectly feasible proposition.

If we do not cope with this task, then I'm afraid my view of the world will become very dark. I cannot see any conceivable solution for the world where we sit well fed as though we were in a kind of fortress, heavily armed, trying to guard ourselves from the hordes outside. This is not tolerable, at least not tolerable to me, and I can't live like that. This is not a situation which a self-respecting human being should be placed in.

### The Effects of Science

But I'm on the whole optimistic. We've been talking about science. Science is a future directed activity. Optimism is in the very thread and cloth of science, because science has always had its eye on the future, has always progressed, and has always become better. Really, by and large, despite all the stagnating half-intellectuals, its effect has been ultimately beneficent.

I believe we shall cope with the challenge. Challenge is a thing meant to be picked up and coped with. Despair is a vice and hope, certainly, cannot flourish. And we can do something.

### The Solving of Problems

I sometimes ask myself, though, what will happen when we really have got some kind of moral policy around the

whole of this planet, when in fact everybody is living at a modest level, something like, say, North Italy today: not as well as you—that's very difficult—but something which is perfectly tolerable. North Italy or say Yugoslavia today. What happens then?

Now, will all men, having solved all the gross problems, all the problems we must solve if we're to think of ourselves as human at all—when people are no longer hungry, no longer short of medical attention, no longer seeing their children die, no longer illiterate—will they then succumb to boredom, ennui, all these things which in your literature are so strongly represented?

Well, it may be, but I would doubt it. I think in fact that men are much tougher than we think. The men of the future won't have our problems, that's clear. They'll have other problems. I believe in fact they will think our fears were slightly absurd, though they will probably have their own. There will be some of them who feel outside their society, because there have been some people in every age who feel outside their society. But the better spirits, the people who really know that man is a wild animal, that he is at his best when he is living in society—that he is a wild and beastly animal often, but has certain capacities for grace and certain aspirations—I believe they will say, "After all, we did it. We made these machines. We've solved these problems, and we're going to solve the others."

We came out of the caves, you know, about 12,000-13,000 years ago, perhaps. In the caves men painted pretty pictures. They were people like us, they looked rather like us, but life wasn't sweet. We've come a long way from the caves. We shall go a long way further. The thing to do is not to lose our nerve, and to remember that we're all human.

### Blumenthal & Rosen — Continued from page 26

ambiguous policy. The outcome of a decade of high-level murders has been Johnson, Nixon and Ford. Assassination has become as important a part of the political process as Presidential nominating conventions; the murders have effectively been nominations by proxy. This brutal transfer of power and the constellation of mysteries that surround it remain unresolved as America approaches its Bicentennial election.

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