

Leftists Stoking Fires of 'Conspiracy' Theory in JFK Death

By ALLAN CRAWFORD

Anyone who remembers a Broadway play, *MacBird*, or a motion picture called *Executive Action* that caused a stir last year, is aware of a movement spear-headed by a number of self-styled "researchers" to discard the findings of the Warren Commission and replace them with a conspiratorial explanation of grandiose proportions.

MacBird, you will recall, linked Lyndon Johnson to the Kennedy murder, and *Executive Action* argued that a gang of paranoid Texas oilmen engineered the assassination, choosing Lee Harvey Oswald for its patsy by means of computer printout.

None of this would be too alarming, of course, were it not for the fact that, in the wake of the Watergate revelations, the conspiratorial notions are gaining a rather disturbing following among a public grown suspicious of its elected officials.

Moreover, the "findings" of the researchers are now beginning to be given a hearing by the universities as well as by the non-academic intellectual community.

Take, for example, a multimedia presentation entitled "Who Killed JFK?" which is reportedly the most popular attraction of the year on the college campus lecture circuit.

Presented by a Boston-based group of self-styled political researchers who call themselves the Assassination Information Bureau, the program has been drawing capacity crowds on the campuses where it bombards the indiscriminating viewer with a simply stupefying mishmash of truths and half-truths characterized by cases of guilt-by-association, unfounded allegations and fantastic conjecture.

"It's our contention," begins Harvey Yazjian, a Wesleyan College graduate and one of three men representing the Assassination Information Bureau, "that the assassination of John F. Kennedy was only part of a much larger conspiracy which can be linked to the murders of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King."

"Furthermore," the bearded young man continues, "our group believes that the subsequent cover-up by the Warren

Commission, if revealed in its true magnitude, would dwarf the recent Watergate coverup."

What follows is a two-hour elaboration of the group's contention, supplemented by a side show and screening of an illegally obtained copy of the famous Abraham Zapruder film, now in the legal possession of Time/Life, Inc.

I will spare the reader the details of the group's argument—or its supposed evidence. You have no doubt heard it all before: that Oswald was not a lone assassin, but a stooge; that the shots were fired from the so-called Grassy Knoll as well as from the Texas School Book Depository; that the Warren Commission closed its investigation before considering all possible explanations.

In fact, the Assassination Information Bureau admittedly offers no new evidence; 90 per cent of their findings they say have been previously unearthed by former D. A. Jim Garrison of New Orleans and radical author Mark Lane. The rest, they say, can be found in any public library.

It is, however, in the Assassination Information Bureau's concept of the scope and nature of the conspiracy that the group differs from previous Warren Report detractors.

Ironically, the group's scenario of the alleged conspiracy reads like something out of an E. Howard Hunt spy novel: not only did the plot include such shady characters as Jack Ruby, the Dallas nightclub owner and alleged Mafia bagman, and homosexual pilot David Ferrie (who conducted private cancer research on rats in his New Orleans apartment) but also a cast of thousands all up and down the political and social ladder.

Fact is, the entire Dallas police force was in on the plot, as well as the staff of Parkland Hospital, numerous *mafiosi*, the Secret Service, the military, wealthy industrialists, high-ranking CIA operatives, FBI agents, anti-Castro Cuban refugees, and a number of individuals presently influential in the government.

Such as?

Well, such as Gerald Ford, whose complicity is established, the Bureau maintains, by the fact that he served on

the Warren Commission—and was one of the most adamant supporters of the "lone assassin" theory. Likewise Leon Jaworski.

Richard M. Nixon was involved as well, and we are told, "a circumstantial case exists to implicate Lyndon Johnson not only in the coverup but in the assassination as well."

In fact, the pardon of Nixon was arranged by the same anonymous forces who masterminded the Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations—to preclude the possibility of the deposed President turning canary on the witness stand.

We learn, too, that Robert Kennedy was shot not only from the front by Sirhan Sirhan (a patsy, too, you understand) but also from behind where stood a mysterious part-time security guard hired only that morning by the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, part-owner of which was said to be Roy Cohn! Hence, the complicity of Cohn.

The Cohn story is significant, I think, because it demonstrates the Bureau's method of ascertaining historical truth. Significant too is the group's convenient memory of recent history: Yazijian, in attempting to establish Nixon's complicity, stated that Jack Ruby, then Rubenstein, was once an "informant" to the House Committee on Un-American Activities—"which was headed at the time by Richard M. Nixon!"

Now it would appear obvious to you and me, gentle reader, that the Assassination Information Bureau's "findings" are simply so much swamp-gas, and ought to be treated as such. Yet, when this reporter witnessed the "Who Killed JFK?" program, the crowd of an estimated 1,600 university students sat enthralled through it all and numerous times during the presentation burst into wild applause. And there is no reason to assume that the crowd in which this reporter mingled was exceptional.

It is safe to assume, then, that a good number of college students are going away from the presentations at least partially convinced.

Which is precisely what is disturbing about the entire affair. In fact, Yazijian reports that Rep. Henry Gonzalez (D.-Tex.), who has been following the investi-

gations conducted by Lane and others, is sponsoring legislation the object of which is to re-open the Warren Commission.

Boston University has consented to host a seminar in late November on the subject, "The Politics of Conspiracy," which will feature the Assassination Information Bureau, Lane and others, and the combined forces of these outfits plan

to begin lobbying in Washington come spring.

In short, this conspiratorial mania is gaining an undeniable foothold in the American public. The entertainment world, with its enthusiasm over *Executive Action* (actor Donald Sutherland was the film's initial sponsor), has shown its sympathy with the conspiracy theory, and the academic world is presently doing its best to lend respectability to these reckless theorists and their fantastic notions. And that, as you know, is one way in which lunacy can become transformed into fact.

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14 / Human Events / JANUARY 4, 1975