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America's Newspaper

JFK: After 30 Years

The 30th anniversary of the murder of President John F. Kennedy, like most of its earlier anniversaries, revolves less around the character and historical meaning of the assassinated president than it does on who assassinated him, and — again, like most of the earlier anniversaries — brings the nation no closer to a consensus on that question. Having exhausted all of the obvious and most of the not-so-obvious conspiracy theories, those who push them are now having recourse to the outright obscure. Nevertheless, there at last appears to be some firm ground developing for the thesis that Lee Harvey Oswald killed Kennedy and that he acted alone — and this only 29 years after the Warren Commission reached the same conclusion.

The major support for the Oswald-as-Lone-Assassin theory is a book by Gerald Posner published this fall and entitled "Case Closed." The title tells you most of what you need to know. Mr. Posner's work is largely a biography of Oswald, and he shows persuasively that Oswald was sympathetic to communism from the age of 15 and that he was governed by a violent and neurotic personality. That, of course, does not prove he killed Kennedy, but it does contradict the characterization of Oswald that conspiracy buffs have been forced to concoct.

Oswald himself told the press that he didn't kill anyone, that he "was just a patsy," and building on that claim, the conspiracy industry has tried to show that he was not a communist but some kind of "agent" for "U.S. intelligence" and was involved in provocations against Cuban communists. By so characterizing him, the conspiratologists can have it both ways: If Oswald killed Kennedy, they can blame it on "U.S. intelligence"; if he didn't kill Kennedy, "U.S. intelligence" still killed him and blamed it on Oswald. It will be noted that the real villain in either case is "U.S. intelligence," and that, of course, reveals the political agenda behind most of the conspiracy theories.

But if Oswald was a communist, then those theories pretty much fall apart. Why would any U.S. intelligence service make use of a committed communist to spy on and provoke other communists? And in fact there is no evidence that Oswald was such an agent.

Then there is the response of national leaders after the assassination, as discussed in the three-part series by Walter Pincus and George Lardner Jr. in The Washington Post last week. If the series proves anything, it is that Lyndon Johnson and a good many other national leaders suspected a communist conspiracy to kill Kennedy and that if there was any conspiracy at all, it was by these same leaders to deflect or outright suppress such suspicions through the Warren Commission.

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But the fact that American leaders, including those of the intelligence community in the FBI and CIA, suspected a communist conspiracy shows that they were not themselves involved in the assassination. That in itself disposes of the Oliver Stone "coup d'etat" theory in his film "JFK." Mr. Stone's theory, the most elaborate to date, holds that these same leaders were behind the assassination because Kennedy planned to pull out of Vietnam and let it go communist.

Finally, there is a good bit of technical evidence that either fails to sustain the conspiracy theories or points again to Oswald. Indeed, one of the less exhilarating aspects of state-of-the-art conspiracy theory these days is that it is so technical. You now need to know about things like neutrino analysis and the anatomical pathology of bullet wounds, and Mr. Posner as well as others have now built strong cases that the technical evidence, based on scientific procedures not available at the time of the Warren Commission or even the 1978 House Assassinations Committee investigation, does not bear out more than one gunman and in fact points to Oswald himself.

Which is where we came in. Oswald's guilt, in retrospect, is fairly obvious. He was at the scene of the crime; he fled the scene shortly after the crime; he resisted arrest; the murder weapon belonged to him; etc. On such circumstantial grounds alone, a competent prosecutor could have obtained a conviction had Oswald lived to stand trial. Of course, you can construct a conspiracy so large and competent that it can cover and explain all these facts, and you can do so today, even with all the evidence accumulated by Mr. Posner and others. But even if you do so, it remains at best a hypothesis, without fleshly players or motivations.

It is probably impossible to "prove" once and for all the Lone Gunman theory, though it remains possible to disprove as impossible or implausible most of the competing theories. But, of course, there is little reason to prove or disprove any theories, since almost all the usual suspects in this crime of the century have long since answered to tribunals higher than that headed by Earl Warren.

What there is reason to do is expose the bankruptcy of the conspiracy industry and the hidden political agenda that always drove it. That industry exploited the Kennedy assassination, one of the great tragedies of American history, as one of the last whipping boys of the Cold War, useful for claiming that Everything was America's Fault and that Communism Never Hurt Anybody. It is entirely fitting that in the aftermath of the Cold War, that industry, like the political mythology on which it was founded, also has gone bankrupt.

1432 Blandfield Ct.
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10 December 1993

The Editor
The Washington Times
3600 New York Ave., NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Sir:

Having been away from the area for a short time, I must reply belatedly to your Nov. 22 editorial on the JFK assassination. It demands a reply to several if not many issues raised in the editorial. Let me address these point by point.

I am not a member of the "conspiracy industry" which, if it exists at all in the body that you envision, perhaps deserves a little dressing down. Still, I must strongly contest your main point that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin and that the matter should be laid to rest. You seem to give an almost audible sigh of relief that someone at last has come out with a supposedly definitive book defending the lone assassin theory after 29 years. Whew!

Your first point is that conspiracy buffs must resort to the outright obscure, having exhausted all other theories. While it is true that a number of different theories have been proposed from time to time, i.e., Kruschchev killed Kennedy (in revenge for the humiliation of the 1962 missile crisis), Castro killed Kennedy (in retaliation for alleged CIA plots against his life), and the most recent one, that Viet Nam hawks killed Kennedy (to prevent a U.S. withdrawal from Viet Nam), and while it is true that members of the "conspiracy industry" may have grounds for inventing more far-out theories, most serious students of the assassination will agree that the basic theory has remained the same for many years, that certain elements of organized crime, certain anti-Castro Cubans, and certain dissident elements of the CIA were working together, with probably different motives, in an unholy alliance resulting in the President's assassination. Almost all the known facts point to this.

You next state that there has at last appeared a book which tells you all you need to know. Unfortunately, the book, from what you cite, seems to again fall back on the pathetic theory that because Oswald supposedly suffered from this and that psychological problem when he was young, it is obvious that he could do nothing but kill the President. This approach is so ludicrous and so demonstrative of the lack of supporting evidence for this theory that it falls flat on its face. It is reminiscent of a similar situation during the Watergate affair when Nixon-haters were trying to blame him for everything because a psychiatrist had said that he

didn't like lumps in his mashed potatoes when he was younger and this demonstrated he was a psycho of sorts who brought it all down on himself.

You yourself admit that this approach proves nothing, but at the same time weakly try to defend this by saying that it contradicts the characterization of Oswald by conspiracy buffs that they have been forced to concoct. You misunderstand. No conspiracy buffs will say Oswald was completely innocent of the whole affair; indeed we admit that he was involved in the web of intelligence in some fashion and drawn into the affair in order to serve as a patsy. Indeed, if you are willing to admit additional evidence, even now such evidence is emerging to the effect that had the assassination taken place elsewhere, other people were being set up to take the blame there. To refuse to admit this is blindness or ignorance on your part.

Next, faced apparently by irrefutable evidence that Oswald, probably as a low-level agent-provocateur, participated in certain activities relating to anti-Castro Cubans and also pro-Castro Cubans, as is well-established by this time, you try vainly to avoid this plain evidence by blaming the conspiracy buffs for trying to have it both ways. Well, you can't deny facts, and the fact that "they" can have it both ways as a result is not their fault and proves nothing other than the lack of substantive arguments on your part. It is you, sir, who seemingly fail to understand the workings of the intelligence world.

In your statement that "there is no evidence that Oswald was such an agent", one presumes that you mean a Communist agent. Although "no evidence" is a strong term, I tend to agree with you. On the contrary, available evidence all points to the fact that he was a low level U.S. intelligence agent, for whatever reason.

I daresay you are right that Johnson and others possibly feared and probably had good reason to fear at that time that there was a Communist conspiracy to kill Kennedy. The consequences of such an assassination, as Johnson perceptively recognized, might well have lead to immediate nuclear war, or might have been the precursor of a direct nuclear first strike upon the U.S. No one can blame him for so thinking. In fact, it would have been irresponsible to do otherwise, i.e., to be oblivious to such a possible threat and not take proper precautions to protect the security of the nation.

Afterwards, how much easier it would be for everyone if the case could be made against Oswald as the lone misguided assassin so that the case could be resolved, especially before the elections, so that the nation could get back to normal. Ford did a similar thing when he pardoned Nixon, for which he was widely assailed.

The problem of the assassination was so traumatic that it had to be cut off lest the nation suffer further agony. I don't really blame them then. I, like other conspiracy buffs, simply want the

truth to come out now, and have the government admit that the Warren Report was a coverup for those specific purposes and that Oswald was set up and that the evidence points to involvement by others, and therefore a conspiracy is demonstrated.

I haven't seen Oliver Stone's movie, and I don't want to contaminate my view of the assassination with it. I believe it did not purport to be a documentary, though, and if it is anything like his "Platoon" it is a mixture of fact and fantasy designed for only one purpose, to make money for Oliver Stone. I think if you examine the situation existing at that time, while Viet Nam hawks may ultimately have benefitted from JFK's death, it was Cuba, not Viet Nam, that was the issue of the day. Even the most casual reading of the Warren Report will reveal the constant reiteration of one continuing theme: Cuba, Cuba, Cuba. The drawing of Viet Nam into the JFK assassination is a comparatively recent invention of Johnnie-come latelies. JFK's death may have cleared the way for full-scale intervention in Viet Nam, but the only fact that cannot be denied is that a possible obstacle to such policy had been removed. Everything else is mere speculation. Even so, all of JFK's advisers, with the possible exception of his brother Bobby, remained advising Johnson for a number of years.

Now to your main, but indefensible, point. You say that there is evidence brought out by the book that points to Oswald. I suspect that what Posner says is a rehash of what was expounded in the Warren report. You state that his guilt is obvious. On what grounds?

You say he was at the scene of the crime; there were hundreds of people there. You say he "fled" the scene of the crime shortly afterward; far from fleeing the scene, as pointed out below, he calmly remained at the Book Depository long enough to purchase a soft drink and drink it. Also, I daresay hundreds of people there also had their day disrupted and "fled" home to watch the events on TV. You say he resisted arrest; who wouldn't have under the circumstances, when it suddenly must have dawned on him that he was being set up? You say the murder weapon belonged to him; here you presuppose a "fact" that has not been established and is in fact the subject of considerable contention: it has not been shown that this was the murder weapon; it has not been shown that this weapon was brought into the Book Depository by Oswald; and it has not been shown that this was the same weapon allegedly ordered by Oswald from a mail-order house. You conveniently avoid the evidence that Oswald passed paraffin tests indicating that he had not fired any weapon at all, apart from whether this particular weapon was the murder weapon or not. In any case, mere ownership of such a gun proves nothing. In short your case against him is nothing more than circumstantial, and any good defense attorney by utilizing some known facts that no one disputes would shatter your absurd case to smithereens.

One main fact that no one disputes is that Oswald was found by Officer Marrion Baker and Book Depository Superintendent Roy Truly on the stair landing on the second floor adjacent to the cafeteria entrance, calmly sipping a soft drink, some ninety seconds after supposedly committing the crime of the century. Faced with this incontrovertible evidence that completely exonerates Oswald in the shooting, the Warren Commission concocts an absolutely ludicrous scenario that has Oswald completing his firing of three shots, manually chambering another round from the clip of this bolt-action rifle, pausing for a moment after the last shot to survey the scene below, picking up the ejected cartridge cases, secreting the rifle and the cartridge cases in another area of the sixth floor, running frantically down four flights of stairs with no one seeing him although there were persons adjacent to the stairs, entering the lunchroom, and purchasing a soft drink, opening it, and calmly drinking it as the police officer charges up the stairs and into the room with gun drawn. [These facts are noted by many authors and are not denied. Here I am relying mainly on the accounts in "Conspiracy", by Anthony Summers, (pp. 105-113 and notes) and "Whitewash" by Harold Weisberg.]

You end your editorial with a condemnation of the conspiracy industry, implying that they are all of the same ilk as the Flower Children who have blamed America for everything. This is a superficial view which does not take into consideration the views of persons such as myself, a long-time conservative Republican hawk, as my many letters to your paper will attest, who otherwise normally agrees with your paper, who have no axes to grind and have never made a dime from the assassination, but who have the sense to see a gross miscarriage of justice and a blindness and a reluctance on the part of others to view the evidence in a dispassionate fashion. If we all refuse to speak out against such a miscarriage of justice, we are all condemned to the same fate.

In wartime, it has been said, truth is so precious that it must be guarded by a bodyguard of lies, and at the time the decision was made to cover up any possibility that it was other than the act of a lunatic assassin, war may have seemed possibly very close. However, those times are thankfully past, and there is no need any longer to fear nuclear war with the Soviet Union because the facts might emerge over the JFK assassination. Let the facts emerge now.

Yes, the assassination was a great American tragedy, but equally as great is the reluctance of the American government and simple-minded souls like yourselves to admit that the government decided to accuse Oswald of being the assassin before any facts were in and to pin it on him and to settle the case once and for all so that the justifiable feelings of unease of the credulous American public could be laid to rest before the 1964 Presidential election.

The ultimate tragedy is the cynicism engendered in the American public and the loss of confidence in the integrity of its leaders. Showing that the collective wisdom of the American people, if informed, is superior to the pompous assertions of a government commission who were determined to make facts conform to a preconceived notion rather than investigate anything, recent polls have shown that a large majority of the American public no longer believe the conclusions of the Warren Report. They cry out for the truth. I condemn your editorial, along with other articles of the same vein, as irresponsible journalism, and dare you to publish this letter.

Sincerely,



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