

Dear Dave,

4/23/01

In between dozing at dialysis this morning I thought about Kurtz and Briggs. I do not know if it is the right thing to do, you and I being different people, but if I face that proble<sup>my</sup>, and possibly others from Kurtz, I'd be inclined to add<sup>ress</sup> what he said separately. I'd tell Briggs that most of what Kurtz said was about Weisberg, with no proofs of any kind and to the best of your knowledge not a word of it is true. Then with that I'd have the index of his book, enclosed. I'd also use the JAH review with the highlighting I've added. It will disappear if xeroxed. Tell him that if he needs more than the JAH review to let him know that Kurtz is not really an assassination scholar and that, without question, he is prejudiced against Weisberg who tells, e that to the best of his recollection he and Kurtz were never in touch with each other

Right off the bat I'd say that Kurtz obviously does not like Weisberg and, in spite of what he now says, even did not mention him <sup>in his 1982</sup> ~~when by the time Kurtz's book appeared~~ <sup>Before this</sup> I had published the first book on the subject and five more, had filed and won about a dozen FOIA lawsuits, mostly against the FBI, and in the legislative history of the 1974 amending of FOIA, I was credited with causing some of the need for those amendments, the investigatory files exemption, which opened FBI, CIA and similar files under FOIA.

Ignoring this in his book, aside from not being scholarly, is a clear sign of having a strong prejudice at that time.

Think about it. This may not be the best way. But it includes what Briggs should know or you'll never get Kurtz off your back and if Briggs is not off<sup>ended</sup>, as he should not be when you are giving him fact, you'll have no more Kurtz trouble at Kansas.

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*Crime of the Century: The Kennedy Assassination from a Historian's Perspective.* By Michael L. Kurtz. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982. xi + 291 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$17.50.)

In *Crime of the Century* Michael L. Kurtz laments that "professional scholars" have neglected the assassination of President John F. Kennedy; he also disparages the works of Warren Commission critics for their "obvious bias" and lack of "the careful analysis of objective evidence that characterizes the scholar." Having set the stage for his own entry, Kurtz announces "an original interpretation based on carefully calculated scrutiny of the most reliable and convincing sources" and promises "much new evidence." He vows to avoid speculation because it "is not within the realm of the historian."

Kurtz concludes from his examination of the evidence that there clearly was a conspiracy to kill Kennedy and that the probes of the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations were seriously flawed. Although these conclusions cannot be faulted, there is virtually nothing of any consequence in this book that is new. With minor exceptions, its valid points derive from the very critics Kurtz deprecates. For example, Kurtz relies heavily on the work of Harold Weisberg and offers little information that Weisberg has not previously revealed.

This book lacks scholarship. The author makes blatant factual mistakes and important errors of omission: Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* (1966) is not the first book on the subject; the wounding of James Tague is totally ignored. There are falsehoods: the Warren Commission was not "[u]naware of the FBI's real attitude toward it"; to the contrary, its members stated in their secret sessions that the FBI "would like to have us fold up and quit," and they also asserted that the FBI had concluded that Oswald was the lone assassin without having "run out all kinds of leads." Kurtz relies on commission testimony by an FBI agent contradicted by FBI records and on the results of tests performed for the House committee on evidentiary items inexplicably different in size, shape, and weight from the original FBI specimens without evincing any awareness of the discrepancies. The book's footnotes retard rather than advance scholarship: they generally do not support the assertions made in the text, nor do they identify with requisite specificity the materials cited.

In his last chapter Kurtz forgoes his vow against speculation—already broken—and reconstructs the assassination. He hypothesizes that a shot that hit Kennedy in the back—he asserts at an upward angle—was fired from the second floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building. Here he whooshes across the line separating speculation from fantasy. His assertion that "the first two floors of the Depository were lower than the limousine at the time of the shots" requires a feat of levitation that is neither recorded on any film of the assassination nor testified to by any eyewitness.

Kurtz rightly calls attention to the need for professional historians to appraise the assassination of President Kennedy and the official investigations into the crime. Unfortunately, this book does not measure up to the demands of that gargantuan task.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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