

The Chairman: John J. McCloy, the Making of the American Establishment. By Kai Bird. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992. Pp. 801. \$30.00.)

Modern America presents a great paradox. On the one hand, convention maintains citizens control government. On the other hand, many basic policies have been articulated, promoted, and implemented by several men of extraordinary influence. Kai Bird's John J. McCloy (1895-1989) is one of these "wise men."

Reared in straightened circumstances, McCloy, by dint of a keen mind, fierce drive, and a mother's sacrifice, went to a private school, then Amherst and Harvard Law School. He then practiced law on Wall Street and rose to the top of his profession. McCloy was noted for his analytical powers, ability to work, and a knack for harmonizing personal relationships. He became an assistant secretary of war during World War II, president of the World Bank, high commissioner to occupied Germany, chairman of the Chase Manhattan Bank, Ford Foundation, and Council on Foreign Relations, legal counsel to top U.S. corporations, and major advisor to every president from Franklin Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan. He blocked the bombing of the Nazi death camps, interred the Japanese Americans, and gave clemency to Alfred Krupp and dozens of other Nazi war criminals. He participated in the Wall Street circles that from 1939 planned the postwar American Century for a worldwide pax Americana, laying the foundations for the reconstruction of Europe along lines Bird sees as positive, but some see as flawed.

McCloy also served on the Warren Commission. Bird gives him a light dusting, demonstrating a lack of deep research and an odd use of flawed secondary

works. A wrong, simplistic picture emerges as he soft-peddles McCloy's role in corrupting the evidence to charge Lee Harvey Oswald with the crime.

Like the Warren Commission and McCloy, Bird accepts that Oswald was an assassin, either alone or with others, when no credible facts sustain it. It is irresponsible not to have questioned the official "evidence," from the phony reconstructions used in the absence of facts to the faked transcript of Commissioner Richard Russell's dissent. Contrary to McCloy's later claims, and Bird's acceptance of them, the commissioners did consult the conspiracy-proving autopsy film and x-rays, which Robert Kennedy freely permitted, although they masked it and publicly blamed the president's brother for blocking them.

Bird largely focuses problems of the notorious single-bullet theory on the right location of the hole in John F. Kennedy's back. But much more is involved: the scientific testing of the president's shirt collar for the impact of bullets (which conclusively ruled out that a bullet inflicted the damage), the throat x-rays, the bogus "bullet tears" to the shirt, and the condition and weight of the recovered bullet. Every part demolishes the lone-assassin theory.

McCloy's role in the assassination inquiry demonstrates as no other in his long career why U.S. leaders erred in permitting vital national issues to be decided outside the realm of genuine public examination.

3/30/95

... review of the Kai Bird whitewashing of McCloy. I particularly like the
begin and how you ended. Copy laid aside for Jerry.

Reminds me that when they first began what was then a joint project, at the suggestion
of someone at ^{The Nation} ~~The Nation~~ both here. To the best of my present recollection I showed them
Commission executive-session and McCloy files, they copied what they wanted, and they
made or virtually no questions to ask about him and the Commission's work. Which may or
may not be the basis of the split between them, disagreement over content, political
differences.

Probably Navasky / suggested they come and I think wrote me first.

I've not bothered to look at Bird's droppings.

The biblio suggestions in your 3/25 and excellent. They represent a much better way
what I'd already started.

What you suggest makes a much better record both for history and for the present
and (hopefully) the reader in the present.

The form is what is different. The form you suggest should have been obvious to me
but it wasn't.

It will mean much ~~more~~ more as you suggest doing it,

Thanks,

Harold