

HAROLD WEISBERG

7627 Old Receiver Rd.
Frederick, MD 21702

11/17/93

Dr. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.
Graduate School, CUNY
33 West 42 St.,
New York, NY 10036-8099

Dear Dr. Schlesinger,

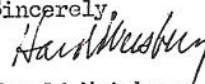
Among the innumerable outrages and indecencies in Max Holland's total abandonment of all principles of responsible writing and of scholarship in the current *The Nation*, one of the most offensive to me is his joining the campaign to hold John and Robert Kennedy responsible for the President's assassination. His reference to you on page 654 leads me to send you relevant CIA records disclosed to me under date of February 14, 1989 only because of their referral from the FBI. By then the CIA had contrived a scheme for disclosing nothing at all to me. The record is clear: no Kennedy was involved in or was aware of the CIA's efforts to kill Castro. A few similar pages released to me earlier have disappeared from the file.

Posner's is perhaps the most intendedly dishonest of all the assassination books. The rough draft of my book on this, Hoax, is currently being retyped. I expect it to appear early next year. Unlike NEVER AGAIN! I am not concerned that what may be edited out might be significant information.

Based on the information I was able to obtain almost two decades ago I included in Post Mortem what amounted to a campaign to get Robert Kennedy to endorse the Warren Report before it was written. It is in Chapter 27, "Hades - Not Camelot." I'll send the book separately. All the evidence is, I believe properly, that he was completely divorced from the investigation. To say that he is responsible for withholdings from the Commission is an infamous lie. The campaign to get him to endorse the unwritten Report seems to have been led by one he had reason to trust, Howard Willens, his own employee. Willens was the Commission's third in rank on its staff and its liaison with Justice. As soon as he was working for the Commission he saw to it that the index being prepared of the Commission's record was killed as not necessary. His last public attention of which I am aware is as one of Caspar Weinberger's lawyers.

That Holland made no effort to seek confirmation of anything or any reason to question anything he wrote confirms to me all over again that there is no people who can't happily staff a KGB or a Gestapo or an operation like Goebbels'. Holland, Kai Bird and both where here and copied whatever they wanted when their book in McCloy was being researched. Holland knew where he could get a peer review but like Random House and Podner, he wanted none.

This letter requires no response. Again, apologies for my typing.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

Like the assassination itself, the Warren Report could not exist apart from history. General acceptance of its conclusions was susceptible to revision, especially as Americans' general attitude toward the federal government underwent a sea change. Over a period of ten years, the Vietnam War and Watergate turned the public's attitude from one of trusting predisposition into skepticism. Watergate then spawned a wave of investigations that finally touched theretofore sacrosanct security agencies. Press revelations forced Congress to launch its first genuine investigations of the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. Eleven years after the Warren Report, Senator Frank Church's Select Committee revealed the extent of anti-Castro covert operations, including the assassination plots, and the no less damning fact that the F.B.I. and C.I.A. had withheld relevant information from the commission. It is hard to overestimate the impact of these findings. The notion that the C.I.A. had dissembled in the midst of a national trauma was incomprehensible to Americans not schooled in the niceties of compartmented information and the "need to know." If the government could lie to itself in this situation—let alone to the public—then anything seemed possible. The Warren Report, of course, had been dogged by critics since its 1964 publication. But as healthy skepticism became corrosive cynicism, a milestone in Americans' disbelief passed by, almost unnoticed. Now the burden of proof shifted decisively and unfairly from critics to *defenders* of the official story.

The difficulty of parsing the truth was compounded by a new round of historical dissembling and denial. This time the exigency was not so much the continuing cold war but the reputation of the Kennedys. In the midst of his own hearings, Senator Frank Church floated the notion that the C.I.A. was a "rogue elephant rampaging out of control," even though the anti-Castro operations had been under the tightest presidential control imaginable. "I will have no part in pointing a finger of guilt toward any former President," said Church. Perhaps the capstone in this effort to blur the Kennedy brothers' driving role came with the publication of Schlesinger's R.F.K. biography in 1978. Wrote Schlesinger, "The available evidence clearly leads to the conclusion that the Kennedys did not know about the Castro assassination plots. . . ."

Given this confusion, another official inquiry into the assassination could hardly be expected to allay suspicion. Thus,

it scarcely mattered when a House Select Committee, formed in 1976 to reinvestigate the assassinations of J.F.K. and Martin Luther King Jr., corroborated every salient fact developed by the Warren Commission.* After a thorough exploration the Select Committee concluded that the sins of the C.I.A. and F.B.I. stopped at omission (the role of Robert Kennedy being typically glossed over). Nevertheless, a Pandora's box had been opened. A *Newsweek* poll taken on the twentieth anniversary of the assassination showed that 74 percent of Americans believed that "others were involved," while only 11 percent believed Oswald acted alone.

Almost any claim or theory, regardless of how bizarre, could now be presented in the same sentence as the Warren Report's conclusions and be half-believed. The 1990s opened with the film *JFK*, a reprise of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's theories with the added suggestion that Kennedy was murdered because he wanted to end the arms race and U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Hollywood is one thing, but even reputable magazines like *Tikkun* and *The Atlantic* lent some respectability to the conspiracy choir. Today, debates about the assassination resemble epistemological discussions.

One salutary development occurred as a consequence of *JFK*. In 1992 Congress passed a sweeping law that placed remaining government documents pertaining to the assassination in a special category, and simultaneously loosened normal classification guidelines. About 98 percent of the documents assembled by the Warren Commission were open in 1991, but 2 percent remain closed. Why? Has the government all along been hiding some piece of information that contradicts the Warren Report?

In fact, according to knowledgeable sources, the 2 percent doesn't contradict the Warren Report; like the information omitted in 1964, it only helps to affirm Oswald's sole guilt. Among the 2 percent gathered by the commission is important information derived from signals intelligence and human intelligence sources.† After the assassination, as Helms said, the U.S. government's immediate inclination was to work with the Soviet and/or Cuban governments were somehow involved. The National Security Agency, which monitors communications, went into overdrive to decipher intercepted conversations, cable traffic, radio and telephone communications at the highest levels of the Soviet and Cuban governments. Together with information from human sources, intercepts showed beyond any reasonable doubt that the Soviet and Cuban leaders were as shocked as anyone by the news from Dallas. "They were frightened," says a knowledgeable source; "we knew that." The intelligence community's ability to penetrate Castro's government was particularly impressive. Within days, it knew that Castro's reaction (he was being interviewed by a French journal

* In a sudden flip-flop weeks before its release, the House report was then amended to allege that a fourth shot was fired, thus indicating a conspiracy. Acoustic evidence for this allegation was subsequently discredited by the FBI, thus all the new scientific and forensic tests commissioned by the Select Committee corroborated the Warren Report.

† The 2 percent also includes the autopsy records, Secret Service memo on Oswald's tax records and some slanderous but irrelevant statements.

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

MOVING?

Send both your old mailing label and your new address to:

THE NATION
P.O. Box 10763
Des Moines IA 50340-0763

Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

PROBLEMS?

If you have any problems or questions regarding your subscription, please write to us at the address to the left, or call:

1 (800) 333-8536
Monday to Friday
7:00 am to 11:00 pm CST
Saturday & Sunday
8:00 am to 6:00 pm CST