

Reviews in AMERICAN HISTORY

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September 29, 1991

Professor David R. Wrone
Department of History
University of Wisconsin
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Dear Professor Wrone:

Several years ago, you wrote a very good historiographical piece on the Kennedy assassination. Frankly, I was a longtime skeptic of the critics, but like most skeptics, I simply was not paying close attention to what they had to say.

I now think there is a substantial story that deserves more airing and attention in the "scholarly and professional" literature. As such, can I interest you in writing something for us on the subject? First, I hope you will agree. Then we can settle on the nature and scope of the piece. I thought an up-dating of your earlier article would be a beginning. But I also thought you might want to challenge how the prevailing orthodoxy is in the "mainstream" text and scholarly works, with barely an acknowledgement that there could be another story. Another line would be to challenge the archival sealing of significant material. Of course, I am anxious to have your own suggestions.

I hope you will agree to do something. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Most cordially,


Stanley I. Kutler
Fox Professor of American Institutions

October 2, 1991
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Professor Stanley I. Kutler
Reviews in American History
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Dear Professor Kutler:

In recent weeks I have been concerned with the Kennedy assassination in a number of ways, including the development of a manuscript dwelling on the investigation of assassination as well as some individual book reviews, interviews, etc. Your letter struck a deep responsive chord in me, for nothing has disturbed me more than the failure of the federal government to address the assassination than the abandonment of professional critical standards by most in the academic realm.

I agree.

I await further correspondence, but note your second suggestion on challenging the prevailing orthodoxy is particularly intriguing. Recently M. Beschloss's volume on JFK's foreign policy carefully distorted the record in foreign affairs, on background elements to the assassination, etc., giving credence to the irresponsible ones who trot out the (false) argument of JFK authorizing plots against Castro, Diem, et al. One must have a detailed subject matter knowledge of the sub-area in order to detect the perversions, but I have read no review that showed this.

Thomas Reeves wretched book on JFK's character is one of the worst of the lot, a complete abandonment of normal standards. I note David Frost used material from Beschloss and Reeves in last week's PBS-TV interview with the retiring Ben Bradlee of the Washington Post when questioning him about the assassination of his friend President Kennedy. Bradlee accepted the falsehoods as history! So, what historians write have an impact on the public mind.

Recently I went through the most recent batch of text books on U. S. History where they mention the assassination and found almost a universal acceptance of the official findings of the Warren Commission. Similarly, learned volumes on figures associated with the official investigation--e.g. Professor Fite's new biography on Senator Russell of the Warren Commission--simply ignore the reality and mask what occurred.

A score of books have come out in the last three years on the murder, five this year, none of them even closely related to reality. Three movies are in the offing, including Oliver Stone's terrible historical distorting movie on the Garrison Investigation. The fact of the matter is Garrison through incompetence and self-love failed--incompetence of the most unbelievable type which wrecked the only good opportunity we have had to reopen the case properly. Yet, Garrison is now a hero! (Shaw was not involved.) On Stone, from a copy of the script and interviews with participants in the film, etc., it can clearly be shown how it is a perversion of history by the entertainment industry.

In fine, I look forward to discussing the subject with you and will in the meantime give serious thought to suggestions.

Sincerely,

David R. Wrone