

notice or care about the HSCA's incredibly timid intimations. But this modest Congressional admission did give independent researchers the hope that the truth could be found and that maybe there was a way to the bottom of this dark crime.

In the early '80s English film-maker Nigel Turner produced a stomach turning five-hour documentary on the assassination. Turner's hypothesis proposed that Kennedy was shot by a trio of Corsican hitmen hired by forces within the government of the United States. It was aired on the BBC and included the public's first real glimpse of Abraham Zapruder's home movie showing the gruesome fatal shot in nauseating clarity. (It would be ten years before the documentary would be aired in the U.S., though only on secondary television networks.)

In 1989 Jim Marrs published his book *Crossfire*, possibly the most exhaustive look to date at the facts of the case. In many ways this book, along with several others, could be considered the true fruit of the Select Committee's work. It said what the HSCA had discovered but didn't have the power or courage to say. In 1991 Oliver Stone produced the movie *JFK*, based to a large extent on Marr's book. For the first time the general conspiratorial story involving the CIA, FBI and Mafia compliance reached more than just the fringe of our society. In the wake of this Congress for the third time was called upon to review the records. In 1992, the same year Mailer was commissioned to do his book, George Bush signed into law the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act, known as the JFK Act. The act calls for a five-member board of reviewers to go through the entire federal archive of the assassination and to open to the public as many of the presently closed files as they can. This includes the archives of the FBI, CIA and HSCA. Though mostly unpublicized this work is progressing as part of Congressional record.

At first glance it seems that a sincere effort is being made to come to terms with the claims of conspiracy and to answer the needs of a doubtful public. A closer look suggests that the government is more likely doing its best to minimize the damage done to its image by Marr's book and Stone's movies (*Nixon* suggests the government set up the apparatus that eventually killed JFK in its attempts to destroy Castro in the late '50s, which has generated considerable controversy), watering down the incrimination, pretending to open the archives. A layer deeper we realize that the coverup is still going on, though in a subtler more discretionary manner. That in a highly sophisticated and possibly premeditated way the truth has been doled out to the public by Congress in ten year bites, like a watchful parent revealing the facts of life to a child as his/her maturation allows. But we are not children. And in this light the work of the Assassination Record Review Board defouls its own water. An inspection of its guidelines provides the necessary insight.

In section 6 of the JFK Act, five grounds for postponement of public disclosure are cited. (That is, the five reasons a file can be kept closed to the public by the review board.) First is that it might offer a threat to national security by identifying an agent or an intelligence source that is still active in the field. Second, that it would reveal the name of a person who provided confidential information to the government. Third, that the matter would "constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy" that would outweigh the public's need to know. Fourth, that it would "compromise the existence of an understanding between a government agent and a cooperating individual or a foreign government" in such a way that it would outweigh the public's need to know. Fifth, that it would "reveal a security or protective procedure currently used" by the Secret Service or some other government intelligence agency. Again, all of this makes a certain amount of sense, superficially. So let's skin off another layer or two.

Since its inception, the Assassination Records Review Board, a five member panel selected by President Clinton and sworn in April 11, 1994, has steadily reviewed documents from the CIA, FBI and the House Select Committee on Assassination. For the most part the documents have been opened entirely. For the most part. But certain documents or parts of documents have been withheld and will remain closed until the year 2017. One must wonder, within the above stated guidelines of disclosure, exactly what could be buried in the JFK archives that must still be kept secret after all these years? One must labor to find solid grounds for any secret that is more valuable to national security than the presently failing trust of the people. There is no present imminence of war. The Soviet Union is dissolved. China is not a threat. The world has changed. Terrorism and civil unrest are the new problems (born of this thing we now address - distrust), not strategic war. It is time for whatever long buried skeletons that remain in the closets of the intelligence community to come out.

Lack of trust weighs more heavily on our people than any supposed specter of enemy infiltration, any confidentiality, any single agent in the field, and fear of double or triple agents gaining access to our war chest of secrets - especially any that existed in the 1960s. (Max Holland, who is writing a history of the Warren Commission due to be published this year and believes Oswald was the single assassin, asked in an *American Heritage* article last November, "Was...holding back some of the truth one of the great misjudgments in American history?" His answer is that "Enduring, perhaps ineradicable controversy over the assassination has helped foster deep alienation, cynicism and a loss of respect among the American people for their government and the citizens who serve in it. That is perhaps



the most lasting and grievous wound inflicted by Lee Harvey Oswald." *The trust of the people outweighs all other factors.*

So again, what could they be hiding that is so sensitive? That the CIA is run by a bunch of bunglers? The strength of J. Edgar Hoover's hand in American politics? The real horror of the Cointelpro blitz? The shenanigans that surround the Bay of Pigs? That CIA super-agent Robert Maheu arranged an assassination attempt on Castro with Mafia hitmen? No. All of this is historical record already. (Could there really be anything at all to hide if Oswald was a lone assassin?)

Excepting hyperspace aliens, this writer can only imagine two conceivable reasons that would prevent every document from being opened to the public right now. First would be the true extent to which organized crime played a part in the assassination. Yes, national security would indeed be in jeopardy if we were told that organized crime engineered a political coup in 1963 because that same organization would surely still be in place today, if only more legitimized by the power it gained by that coup. Second would be that our own intelligence community backed by corporate feudal lords and/or the Military Industrial Complex was responsible for Kennedy's death. And again national security wavers here - due to fear of a populist revolt - because that intelligence community still presides in the shadows with unknown quantities of influence. (What was it those militia men were telling Senator Arlen "Magic Bullet" Specter during those hearings last year?) Both of these ugly possibilities are strongly suggested by the information gathered in the three decades since the act. And in some ways these two intrigues are one, because if we look closely at the nature of the beast there is but the subtlest difference between the intelligence community fringe and organized crime. The Iran/Contra scandal was not an aberration but simply business as usual. Drugs for guns is the *modus operandi* of the real terrorism that grips and controls not just this country but the entire globe.

So now we near the sorts of things that cannot be revealed to the American public - probably for fear of revolution or civil war! Yes, just as Lyndon Johnson informed Earl Warren that a Third World War could very likely result if Oswald was not found to be a lone assassin - and quickly! the Assassination Record Review Board today finds the specter of secession weighing in their scales as they contemplate the names of certain agents, certain types of information gathering, special protection methods, and the confidentiality of certain witness because many of these agents are underworld associates, much

of this information gathering is through Mafia drug networks and many of these confidants are mob linked. Fraternalizing with and hiring hoods and drug dealers and gun runners are part of the dark game our intelligence community plays. In fact, the intelligence community is so riddled with criminal contact on its outer edges it is frightening to imagine, much less know, what goes on at the center. The Iran/Contra scandal was just a tiny glimpse. It would kill us to know the extent to which fascist and underworld interests of half a century ago thread through the corporate/intelligence world of today. We live in an age of deceit.

So why would anyone want to jump back into the morass of lies and suspicions surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Because it is as good a place as any to start the retelling of American history since the Second World War. Because in this so-called "information age" information means absolutely nothing if it is based upon a boldface lie - or more accurately a nest full of boldface lies. How can democracy work if the public is informed through half-truths and disinformation? There is an important lesson to be learned here. There is a necessary level of innocence to be advanced through for the sake of a maturing democracy. Because, yes, the sad, sad truth is that the coverup worked. The act has been successfully removed to the realm of history. It has become an abstract thing filled with names of individuals who are either dead or long gone from the scene. Unfortunately, however, the organizations and the ugly network of intelligence that moved those pawns into place most certainly do remain in some form or other.

So, once again, why would a large media syndicate publish a book about Lee Harvey Oswald, a book written by one of America's most visible and respected writers, containing its suspect message? And what does its mere presence tell us about ourselves and our world?

Look at this book as an artifact of our times. It represents a terrible knot, an unknown, a boiling unsolved crime perpetrated three decades ago that resides at the center of our collective being and spirit of our country; possibly the entire world. Unresolved like a spoiled relationship unclosed, tattering in time, we proceed into the 21st century with an unhealing wound at the heart of our group psyche. A wound still bleeding and eating at the core of what we once called the American Dream. Every moment that this wound is left undressed, every moment the federal archives are left partially closed, we deny, even dismantle, the ideal of democracy in America.

Dan Armstrong is an Astoria writer who has contributed a series of remarkable articles to the NCTE, the most recent appearing in the December '95 issue (*The Third World War*). "Regarding Oswald's Tale," he writes, "I am never quite sure what to think of the things that spill from my brain and through my fingers and out my printer. There is little doubt that some kind of alien virus took over many years ago and still persists within the body that circumambulates the town of Astoria and is called Dan Armstrong."



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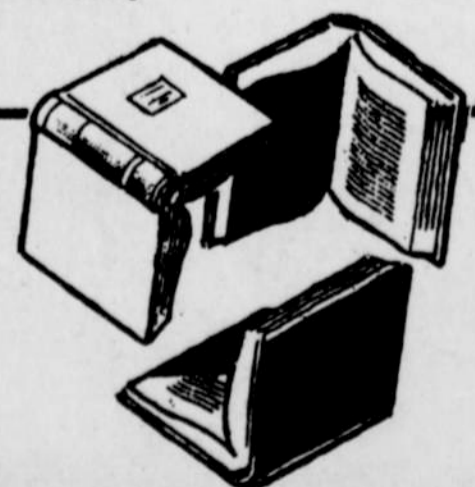
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