

book review

Jun 18, 2008

A Mammoth of Disinformation

"[R]egrettably, it must be said that the most distinguishing characteristic of [*Reclaiming History*] is its demagogic pugnacity.... Bugliosi's endless self-congratulation and his arrogant condescension make his book... insufferable."

Gary L. Aguilar

"What [the JFK assassination] case does need is some old-fashioned, historical scholarship. It's a shame and a waste of great time and effort that Bugliosi decided to contribute to the problem and not to its solution."

Josiah Thompson

At 1.5 million words, Vincent Bugliosi's *Reclaiming History: The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy* (W.W. Norton, New York, 2007) is the most gigantic book ever written about America's crime of the 20th century. It is 1,612 pages long and comes with 1,228 pages of endnotes and source notes on an accompanying CD. Its twofold thesis is that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, assassinated JFK, and that the evidence supporting the Oswald-was-the-sole-assassin theory is practically conclusive. Therefore, the Warren Commission was apodictically correct in concluding that Oswald was the lone assassin and that there was no conspiracy, foreign or domestic, behind the assassination. Therefore, the Warren Report, which sets out the Commission's findings, is (except in a few minor respects) a trustworthy account of pertinent matters relating to JFK's murder.

But there is more. Bugliosi actually thinks that he has written a book which proves "beyond all doubt that Lee Harvey Oswald killed President Kennedy, and beyond all reasonable doubt that he acted alone."

"It's my view," Bugliosi pompously postulates, "that it's impossible for any reasonable rational person to read this book without being satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt that Oswald killed Kennedy and acted alone."

Thus, even though no mortal could possibly accomplish such a superhuman achievement, Bugliosi amazingly and preposterously claims to have definitively demonstrated that no conspiracy was behind JFK's murder! And he fancies that any reader of his book who rejects the lone-assassin theory is either unreasonable or irrational!

Views of the Critics

Pro-Warren Commission reviewers of *Reclaiming History* seem to agree that Bugliosi has the preternatural powers he claims to possess, and these reviewers shower the book with sycophantic flattery. *Reclaiming History*, says Jim Newton of the *LA Times*, "is conclusive. From this point no reasonable person can argue that Lee Harvey Oswald was innocent." Tim Shipman of the *London Telegraph* proclaims that Bugliosi's book "provid[es] the definitive proof that Lee Harvey Oswald killed the 35th president with no help from anyone else."

"What Bugliosi has done is a public service," writes Bryan Burrough for the *New York Times*, and doubters of the Warren Report "should be ridiculed, even shunned. It's time we marginalized Kennedy conspiracy theorists the way we've marginalized smokers." A reviewer for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* writes: "Bugliosi's book, which denies all conspiracy theories, has the ring of truth - scrupulous, irrefutable truth - and I predict it will be the line that historians 100 years from now will take on this story." (For additional fulsome panegyrics by friendly reviewers, visit the website set up by Bugliosi's publisher at www.reclaiminghistory.com.)

On the other hand, reviewers opposed to the sole-assassin theory have savaged the book. "[N]o author can equal the failure Vincent Bugliosi has achieved in his misnamed *Reclaiming History*," writes JFK assassination investigator David R. Wrone. "To spew this mind skewing mammoth of disinformation out into the public mind has no saving grace.... In short, this volume must be seen as part of the breakdown of American society in a time of crisis." Another JFK assassination investigator, Gaeton Fonzi, accuses Bugliosi's book of "tautologically strained contentions" and "a multitude of distortions and twisted conclusions." Assassination investigator Milcent Cranor says Bugliosi's book "is infested with fraud from cover to cover" and "a crime scene between two hard covers." Another investigator, Gary L. Aguilar, blasts *Reclaiming History* as "a distracting and tiresome screed more fit for settling scores than history." And blogger Patrick J. Speer, after scathingly demonstrating that Bugliosi "has no problem neglecting evidence that runs counter to his point," pronounces the book to be "Bugloney." (For a website entirely devoted to exposing the flaws in Bugliosi's book, visit www.reclaiminghistory.org.)

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The critics who castigate Bugliosi's book as one-sided, close-minded, and ultimately unpersuasive are wholly justified. *Reclaiming History* is sesquipedalian whim-wham. It is Bugliosian bosh and buncombe of Brobdingnagian proportions. It totally fails to rehabilitate the Warren Commission's inadequate investigation and its error-ridden Report. Instead of a history book, Bugliosi has penned an over-lengthy partisan harangue.

In short, Bugliosi has done a disservice to the Warren Commission critics, living and dead, who have labored, often successfully, to broaden our understanding of the JFK assassination, and to the dead president himself, whose fiendish murderers - in part because of the ineptness of the Warren Commission that Bugliosi praises - have escaped punishment.

Bugliosi writes as if all the basic facts surrounding the assassination are, due to his book and the Warren Report, well-established and indubitable. Incredibly, however, nearly a half-century after the murder that some say recalibrated modern America many material issues of fact remain unresolved.

Take the events of the assassination itself, which occurred in broad daylight in front of scores of people as the presidential motorcade traveled down Elm Street in Dealey Plaza in downtown Dallas, Texas at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 22, 1963. Who did the shooting? How many shots were fired? Where did the shots come from? When was the first shot fired? What were the intervals between the shots? How many shots missed the presidential limousine? If any shots missed, where did they go? How many shots hit JFK or Texas Gov. John Connally (who was seated in front of Kennedy)? Exactly when, and where in the body, was each man struck by bullets? Did any of the bullets strike both men? What weapons and ammunition were used? And which shot caused the facial injuries suffered by 27-year old car salesman James T. Tague, the only other person known to have been wounded as a result of the gunfire that day? (Tague, standing near the Triple Overpass about 260 feet beyond the left front of the presidential limousine and over 500 feet from the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository from which Oswald allegedly fired the shots, was struck in the cheek by a bullet fragment or by a piece of curbstone sent whizzing into the air when the curbstone was hit by a bullet or bullet fragment. There was a fresh bullet mark in a nearby curbstone, and scientific analysis of the mark on the curbstone precluded the possibility that the bullet could have been military ammunition such as the 6.5mm [.257 cal.] cartridges fired by the type of carbine that Bugliosi says Oswald used to fire all the shots. The Warren Commission was unable to decide which shot, presumably a missed one, struck Tague, and this mystery lingers today. Bugliosi asserts but hardly proves that it was the first shot. Tague himself thought it was the second or third shot.)

In *Reclaiming History* Bugliosi sets out his own answers to the lingering questions regarding the events in Dealey Plaza, but his proposed solutions, while doubtlessly arguable, are by no means to be regarded as final or authoritative, although he thinks they are.

In claiming, for example, that the first shot was fired at Zapruder film frame no. 160 (Z160), one-third of a second before the view of the moving limousine from the sixth floor window from which Bugliosi and the Warren Commission say the shots were fired became blocked by tree foliage, Bugliosi places the shot about two seconds earlier than almost every other investigator. (The Warren Commission thought the first shot occurred 2.7 seconds later than Bugliosi, at Z210, when the limousine first emerged into view from behind the foliage.) While not physically impossible, Bugliosi's claim is contrary to much eyewitness testimony and not compelled by the Zapruder film of the assassination. Bugliosi also claims that this first shot missed the limousine. Under Bugliosi's timing of the first shot, the sniper fired just as his view of the target car was about to be blocked by a tree even though the car would be emerging from behind the foliage in less than three seconds. But why would a presidential assassin do such an improbable thing? Bugliosi's theories of the first shot also mean, strangely, that this shot, fired when JFK was closest to the sixth floor window, missed, whereas the subsequent shots, fired as JFK moved further and further away, hit their target—which is unlikely. "Why," Josiah Thompson sensibly asks, "would a shooter miss the limousine entirely on his first shot when it was right below him and Kennedy was large in his sight, then hit Kennedy twice with his next two shots at greater ranges?" Bugliosi's claims regarding the first shot are, therefore, interesting but disputable and hardly conclusive. They amount to just another attempt, one of many, to reconstruct the facts which to this day remain uncertain.

That many material questions remain, including those concerning just what happened in Dealey Plaza, is a scandalous state of affairs showing the huge extent to which the Warren Commission, which Bugliosi cheers, failed abysmally. It has been over 44 years, and we still cannot, for example, even be sure about the central facts or the sequence of events of the ambush of JFK.

Scurrilous Diatribe

But *Reclaiming History* flops stupendously not just because its author repeatedly writes as if his version of hotly disputed issues is proven fact. The book is riddled with additional inherent defects destroying its credibility and reducing it to a scurrilous diatribe.

To begin with, the book inhabits an Essenic universe in which there are only children of light (Warren Report believers) and children of darkness (those who attack or doubt the Warren Report). All who question the sole-assassin-was-Oswald theory Bugliosi venomously derides as "conspiracy theorists" (or worse) who are either deranged fraudsters or pathetic dupes. Bugliosi evidently lacks the capacity to meaningfully distinguish between a critic and a theorist. He stubbornly refuses to acknowledge the truth that responsible, reasonable investigators (including college professors professionally trained in scholarly research) have, in thoroughly documented books and articles, pointed out serious inadequacies in the Warren Commission's investigation and major factual errors or omissions in the

Warren Report. These Warren Commission critics have amply demonstrated that the Warren Commission rushed to judgment, that promising leads were not followed up, that the scientific evidence was manipulated, and that the Warren Report itself often conflicts with the 26 volumes of testimony, exhibits, and documents published separately by the Commission. These critics have also spotlighted suspicious circumstances which the Warren Commission either ignored or treated as perfectly normal. Why, for example, did the Commission not find it quite odd that the carbine Oswald supposedly purchased and used to kill Kennedy had a non-unique serial number (making it scientifically impossible to prove that the weapon allegedly purchased by him was the same weapon seized by police after the assassination) and that the revolver Oswald allegedly purchased and used to murder Dallas police officer J.D. Tippett had (prior to its purchase) been rechambered but not rebarreled, with the result that the bullets it fired could not be identified as having been fired from that pistol (making it scientifically impossible to say that the bullets removed from Tippett's body had been fired from that weapon)? Think about it. Oswald supposedly just happens to buy a carbine with a nonexclusive serial number, then supposedly just happens to buy a pistol firing bullets that could not be scientifically demonstrated to have been fired from that weapon, and the Warren Commission thought there was nothing unusual about this.

Early examples of responsible, credible books exposing the shoddiness of the Warren Commission's investigation and the problems with the Warren Report include Harold Weisberg, *Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Commission* (1965); Edward Jay Epstein, *Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth* (1966); Mark Lane, *Rush to Judgment* (1966); Sylvia Meagher, *Accessories After the Fact: The Warren Commission, the Authorities, and the Report* (1967); Howard Roffman, *Presumed Guilty* (1975); Anthony Summers, *Conspiracy* (1980); G. Robert Blakey and Richard N. Billings, *The Plot to Kill the President* (1981); Michael L. Kurtz, *Crime of the Century: The Kennedy Assassination From a Historian's Perspective* (1982); Henry Hurt, *Reasonable Doubt: An Investigation into the Assassination of John F. Kennedy* (1985); and Jim Marrs, *Crossfire: The Plot That Killed Kennedy* (1989).

More recent such books include Philip H. Melanson, *Spy Saga: Lee Harvey Oswald and U.S. Intelligence* (1990); James DiEugenio, *Destiny Betrayed: JFK, Cuba, and the Garrison Case* (1992); Matthew Smith, *JFK: The Second Plot* (1992); John Newman, *Oswald and the CIA* (1995); Harold Weisberg, *Never Again! The Government Conspiracy in the JFK Assassination* (1995); Stewart Galanor, *Cover-Up* (1998); David R. Wrone, *The Zapruder Film: Reframing JFK's Assassination* (2003); Gerald McKnight, *Breach of Trust: How the Warren Commission Failed the Nation and Why* (2005); and Michael L. Kurtz, *The JFK Assassination Debates: Lone Gunman Versus Conspiracy* (2006).

These insightful books are maliciously trashed by Bugliosi. Dispassionate readers, however, assess these books very differently.

That some Warren Report critics have advanced - and often later discarded - assassination conspiracy theories that turn out to be faulty is perfectly understandable. Bugliosi fails to grasp that, as James DiEugenio has noted, "when one is dealing with a complex, labyrinthine crime that has been well-disguised, then blind alleys and faulty hypotheses will naturally be encountered." Furthermore, that some critics of the Warren Commission peddle crackpot theories of the assassination hardly proves that all the critics are demented. Besides, to subject, as Bugliosi does, critics of the Warren Report, including reliable ones, to incessant ridicule and invective is counterproductive and deflects from reasoned discourse.

Moreover, many of the doubters of the Warren Report have based their skepticism not on the writings of assassination buffs but on their personal connections to one of the official investigations of the JFK murder. The list of these persons who have expressed doubt about key aspects of the Warren Report, including the no-conspiracy theory, includes President Lyndon B. Johnson; Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy; Sen. Richard B. Russell, Sen. John Sherman Cooper, and Rep. Hale Boggs, all members of the Warren Commission; seven of the eight members of the U.S. House Select Assassinations Committee (HSAC), which reinvestigated the assassination in the late 1970s; and law professor G. Robert Blakey, chief counsel of the HSAC. The HSAC itself concluded that a conspiracy was probably behind the assassination.

Predictably, Bugliosi claims that "[c]onspiracy theorists can find little comfort in the conclusion of the HSCA that 'President Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy.'" However, as Jim Marrs accurately summarizes it, the HSCA determined these points:

- "A conspiracy involving at least two gunmen resulted in the death of President Kennedy."
- "The Secret Service was deficient in the performance of its duties in connection with the assassination."
- "The FBI [which did most of the investigative work of the Warren Commission] performed with varying degrees of competency and failed to investigate adequately the possibility of conspiracy."
- "The CIA was deficient in its collection and sharing of assassination information."
- "The Warren Commission failed to investigate the idea of conspiracy adequately, partly because of the failure of government agencies to provide the Commission with relevant information."
- "Investigation of conspiracy by the Secret Service was terminated prematurely by President

Johnson's order that the FBI assume investigative responsibility."

- "Since the military 201 file [i.e., the military intelligence file] on Oswald was destroyed before the [HSAC] could view it, it could not fully resolve if Oswald had been affiliated with military intelligence."

Weak Arguments

Another intrinsic weakness in *Reclaiming History* is that its author is guilty of the same types of errors he accuses conspiracy theorists of committing. "[C]onspiracy authors," the book claims, "do one of two things - twist, warp, and distort the evidence, or simply ignore it - both of which are designed to deceive their readers." Ironically, however, this is precisely what Bugliosi does over and over again in his book. Bugliosi, as assassination investigator Josiah Thompson rightly points out, repeatedly "highlights the evidence that furthers his case while ignoring or confusing contrary evidence." To those who have read extensively about the JFK murder, Bugliosi's hypocritical proclivity for cherry-picking evidence is, in the pungent words of assassination investigator Jerry McKnight, "as inconspicuous as a tarantula on an Angel food cake."

Here is a typical example of Bugliosi dissembling, this time in regard to his claim that Oswald did all the shooting:

Like the Warren Commission, Bugliosi claims that Oswald fired three shots at the presidential motorcade from a window on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. Bugliosi says this occurred within the space of 8.36 seconds (the Warren Report concluded the interval was 5.6 seconds). At the time the president's open limousine was moving at 11.2 miles per hour away from the Depository at an angle and in a slightly downward direction, and both JFK and Connally, seated in the limousine, were exposed only from the waist up. Bugliosi maintains that the first shot, fired at Z160 when the limousine was 138 feet from the sixth floor window, missed; that the second shot, fired between Z207 and Z222 from a distance of 175 to 187 feet, hit JFK in the back, perforated his body, and then struck Connally in the back and perforated his body; and that the third shot, fired at Z313 from 265 feet (88 yards) away, struck the back of Kennedy's head, inflicting a fatal wound. (The Warren Report, on the other hand, found that JFK and Connally were both struck by a bullet fired at Z210 from 177 feet away, and that it was uncertain which of the three shots missed, but that it was probably not the third one.) Is Bugliosi's version of the facts proven or even probable?

The weapon that both the Warren Commission and Bugliosi allege Oswald fired with such astonishing accuracy and swiftness was found hidden in the sixth floor room from which it supposedly had been fired. It is not even a rifle but a 6.5mm Mannlicher-Carcano carbine, manufactured in Italy in 1940. Oswald supposedly purchased it by mail, paying \$12.78 for the weapon, which could be purchased for \$3.00 in lots of 25. The carbine was part of another shipment of rifles alleged in a prior legal proceeding to be defective. The carbine was bolt-action with a clip-feed mechanism. The carbine's firing pin had been extensively used, as demonstrated by wear on its striking portion, and there was rust on the firing pin and its spring. The weapon's trigger was peculiar in that it required a two-step operation to pull it. The carbine allegedly was sold with a flimsy four-power scope for an additional \$7.00. The scope was frailly mounted and could be very easily knocked out of adjustment. There is no evidence that Oswald ever purchased any 6.5mm ammunition, and it is known that such ammunition had not been manufactured since 1944. The carbine was sold without a clip and there is no evidence when or where the clip, which was in the carbine when found, was obtained. Oswald was not a particularly good marksman, and (assuming that it was Oswald's weapon) there is no evidence that he ever practiced firing the carbine.

Warren Commission critics, unsurprisingly, have energetically challenged the claim that Oswald, using a cheap, old Italian carbine in poor condition that fired old ammunition, could have done the shooting attributed to him. As Bugliosi sneeringly writes: "[C]onspiracy theorists and critics of the Warren Commission allege, as we've all heard them do a hundred times, that no one, no even a professional shooter, has been able to duplicate what Oswald did on that day, that is, get off three rounds at three separate distances with the accuracy the Warren Commission says Oswald had (two out of three hits) in the limited amount of time he had..."

According to Bugliosi, these critics are making "a false assertion." How does Bugliosi purport to prove this? In tests arranged by the Warren Commission and conducted by the military, Bugliosi says, "one 'Specialist Miller' of the U.S. Army, using Oswald's own Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, not only duplicated what Oswald did, but improved on Oswald's time."

Bugliosi is prevaricating. Miller did not duplicate anything, and the firing tests actually prove that it is highly unlikely that Oswald did the shooting Bugliosi and the Warren Commission accuse him of.

Concerning these shooting tests, assassination investigator Sylvia Meagher pointed out 40 years ago: "It must be emphasized at once that these tests have not the slightest claim to being comparable with the performance credited to Oswald by the Warren Commission. The tests used three master riflemen whose skill was as superior to Oswald's as a chief surgeon's to an intern.... Each participant was told to take as much time as he wished with the first shot... [whereas] the alleged assassin did not enjoy such an advantage." In addition, shims had to be inserted to correct the defective mounting of the scope. "Thus," writes Edward Jay Epstein, "the Army experts fired with accurate sights, whereas, so far as is known, the [alleged] assassin fired with inaccurate sights." (Assuming that the Mannlicher-Carcano was fired in Dealey Plaza, it is unknown whether the person shooting it used the scope or the iron sights.) Furthermore, the test shooters fired at stationary, not moving targets, and from a 30 foot

tower only half the height of the sixth floor window. The test shooters did not have to deal with the winds gusting through Dealey Plaza on Nov. 22, 1963, or with the vision-impairing glare which on Nov. 22 resulted from brilliant noontime sunshine brightly reflecting from windows and vehicles in the Plaza.

Bugliosi is therefore dead wrong in claiming that Army shooting tests duplicated what Oswald is said to have done. The test firing took place under much more favorable conditions. (Incidentally, in the test three soldiers who were shooting experts each fired two series of three shots, using the so-called assassination carbine. In the first series of nine shots, the three experts missed a total of three shots, and in the total of 18 shots, they missed five times. Thus, the expert shooters, firing under less onerous conditions, struck their target with 72 percent of their shots, whereas Oswald, according to Bugliosi and the Warren Commission, hit the target with 67 percent of his shots.)

Taking into consideration all the circumstances of both the test shooting and the assassination itself, it appears most improbable that the accurate, rapid-fire, deadly shooting that undoubtedly occurred in Dealey Plaza could have been performed by non-expert-shot Oswald using a very low-priced, 23-year old, shoddy military surplus weapon that fired 19-year old cartridges at medium rather than high velocity.

The military shooting tests do more than reveal the unlikelihood that Oswald was proficient enough to fire the shots it is claimed he fired. They also provide just one more example of the deficient methods of investigation used by the Warren Commission. As Sylvia Meagher sagely observed: "[I]t should be pointed out that experiments genuinely comparable to the feat ascribed to the accused assassin could easily have been conducted. It would have been necessary only to rope off the Book Depository area... and to tow a car down Elm Street with dummies occupying the positions of the actual victims. Marksmen with the same level of skill as Oswald's... could have been positioned in the sixth floor window, and each one instructed to fire three shots at the dummies in the moving car.... Had that been done, the results of the tests would have been legitimate, and the scrupulousness which has been claimed by the Commission or on its behalf would have been demonstrated."

The Single-Bullet Theory and the Frame-Up

Another fundamental defect in *Reclaiming History*, evident from its discussion of the bursts of gunfire in Dealey Plaza, is that its author - unbelievably, nonsensically, and foolishly - has hitched his star to the discredited single-bullet theory according to which one bullet fired from behind the limousine inflicted all of Connally's wounds and all of Kennedy's except for the head shot. Try as he might, however, Bugliosi cannot revivify this discreditable theory originally concocted by the Warren Commission in a desperate effort to prop up its sole-assassin conclusion. Typically, in commending the single-bullet theory Bugliosi relies on evidence that seems to confirm his position, while ignoring contrary evidence. "[Y]ou will find nowhere in Bugliosi's book," Josiah Thompson observes, "the fact that no witness in Dealey Plaza could attest to both men being hit by the same shot or that the FBI's review of the Zapruder film led them to conclude that Connally and Kennedy were hit separately." As Jerry McKnight adroitly puts it: "Bugliosi's assertion that the single-bullet theory is based on substantial or irrefutably convincing evidence is so removed from reality as to defy parody or caricature."

Because he has the tunnel vision of a zealous former prosecutor, Bugliosi pays only lip service to the possibility that Oswald was framed and that evidence incriminating him did so falsely. (The Warren Commission suffered from the same myopia.) Bugliosi seems incapable of understanding that when someone has been framed there is bound to be what appears to be ample evidence confirming the innocent person's guilt. The law books are full of cases where innocent persons appeared indisputably guilty until their frame-up was exposed and the evidence turned out to be false or misleading. Although both the Warren Commission and Bugliosi wrongheadedly deny it, there are powerful indications that some of the evidence, including physical evidence, against Oswald was planted or manipulated or of suspicious origin and that other evidence, which might have tended to exonerate Oswald, was ignored, overlooked, or suppressed. It is unquestionable that prior to the assassination unknown persons impersonating Oswald drew attention to themselves by engaging in conduct designed to make it appear, once the assassination had been accomplished, that Oswald was the culpable party. Indications of an Oswald frame-up are examined in some of the books by Warren Report critics mentioned above, as well as in 25 Kennedy assassination articles by the present reviewer which may be accessed at www.law.uga.edu/academics/profiles/dwilkes_more/fk_toc.html.

Defending the Indefensible

Reclaiming History is so wrapped up in defending the indefensible that its author at times composes sentences or paragraphs defending the Warren Commission which are palpably absurd. Examples:

- "The Kennedy assassination, per se, is not a complicated case." (p. xxv)
- "Although the Warren Commission appears to have fudged on a few small points here and there - unfortunately, not uncommon for law enforcement - overall it did a very thorough and exemplary investigative job." (p. xxxiv)
- "It has to be noted that after the FBI became the chief investigative agency of the Warren Commission, no fair and sensible person could ever accuse the bureau of conducting a superficial investigation." (p. xxxii)
- "Never in history was a crime probed as intensely, and never in history was the inquiry itself subjected to such intense scrutiny." (p. xxxiii) (approvingly quoting Relman Morin)

- "Based on the Himalayan mountain of uncontroverted evidence against Oswald, anyone who could believe he was innocent would probably also believe someone claiming to have heard a cow speaking the Spanish language." (p. xviii)
- "Not the slightest speck of evidence has ever surfaced that any of the conspiracy community's favorite groups (CIA, mob, etc.) was involved, in any way, in the assassination." (p. xlii)
- "I believe it to be a verity that the various groups the conspiracy theorists have alleged were behind the assassination would never in a thousand years have risked murdering the president of the United States." (p. 846)
- "In the Kennedy case, I believe the absence of a conspiracy can be proved to a virtual certainty." (p. 973)
- "But in fact the [Mannlicher-] Carcano was not a piece of junk that lacked accuracy." (p. 493)
- "And let's not forget that at the time Oswald hit Kennedy with his two shots, Kennedy was relatively close, around fifty-nine yards for the shot that hit him in the back and around eighty-eight yards for the shot in the head... Kennedy was almost a stationary target." (p. 496)

Finally, Bugliosi errs in implying that books in support of the Warren Report have been few in number. Actually, there are a good many books vigorously defending the Report. They include Jim Moore, *Conspiracy of One: The Definitive Book on the Kennedy Assassination* (1970); Alfred H. Newman, *The Assassination of John F. Kennedy: The Reasons Why* (1970); David W. Belin, *November 22, 1963: You are the Jury* (1973); Jean Davison, *Oswald's Game* (1983); David W. Belin, *Final Disclosure: The Full Truth About the Assassination of President Kennedy* (1988); Gerald Posner, *Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK* (1993); Norman Mailer, *Oswald's Tale: An American Mystery* (1995); Max Holland, *The Kennedy Assassination Tapes* (2004); Larry M. Sturdivan, *The JFK Myths: A Scientific Investigation of the Kennedy Assassination* (2005).

Although these pro-Warren Commission books occasionally get in a few licks in favor of the Warren Report, in the last analysis they are doomed to failure because, like *Reclaiming History*, they endeavor to defend an official account which was problematic from its inception and has not withstood the test of time.

In Conclusion

To summarize: Because the Warren Commission bungled its investigation and because the Warren Report provides an insufficient account of the background and facts of the assassination, JFK's murder is the greatest unsolved crime in American history. Bugliosi's book does not end the mystery. It contributes to the debate over the assassination but does not end it. Bugliosi's proposed versions of what happened are, in the end, no more plausible than many other, differing versions suggested by defenders and critics of the Warren Commission. Contrary to what its author seems to think, *Reclaiming History* is not the Holy Writ of JFK assassination literature.

Future generations will not view *Reclaiming History* as a classic, unassailable historical work which not only irrefutably proved Lee Harvey Oswald to be the lone presidential assassin but also restored the reputation of the Warren Commission.

Rather, they will say, in the words of Charles Eden Fay:

Here lies a book, of which it may be said:

It hoaxed the living and defamed the dead.

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