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By Jonathan Vankin  
and  
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# *The Jonestown Massacre*

On November 18, 1978, in a cleared-out patch of Guyanese jungle, the Reverend Jim Jones ordered the 911 members of his flock to kill themselves by drinking a cyanide potion, and they did. The cultists were brainwashed by the megalomaniac Jones, who had named their jungle village after himself and held them as virtual slaves, if not living zombies. Jones himself was found dead. He'd shot himself in the head, or someone else had shot him. Square-jaw, jet black hair and sunglasses, looking like a secret service agent on antipsychotic drugs, Jones takes his place alongside Charles Manson in America's iconography of evil.

But was Jones really a lone madman as Americans are so often advised about their villains? Is it plausible that more than nine hundred people took their own lives willingly, simply because he told them to? Or is there another explanation?

Not long after the slaughter in Jonestown, whispers began - strange hints of human experiments in mind control,

even genocide, and the lurking presence of the CIA. At the very least, these stories maintained, the U.S. government could have prevented the Jonestown massacre, but instead it did nothing. At worst, Jonestown was a CIA-run concentration camp set up as a dry run for the secret government's attempt to reprogram the American psyche. There are suggestions of parallel "Jonestowns" and that the conspiracy did not end with the deaths in Guyana.

Jim Jones was born May 13, 1931, son of a Ku Klux Klansman in Lynn, Indiana. His mother, he claimed, was a Cherokee Indian. That has never been verified.

An unsupervised child, Jones became fascinated by church work at an early age. By 1963 he had his own congregation in Indianapolis: The People's Temple Full Gospel Church. It was an interracial congregation, something then unheard of in Indiana. Young Jim Jones crusaded tirelessly on behalf of blacks. He also suffered from mysterious fainting spells, heeded advice from extraterrestrials, practiced faith healing, and experienced visions of nuclear holocaust.

Certain that Armageddon was imminent, that Indianapolis itself was to be the target of attack, Jones sought guidance. He found it in the January 1962 issue of Esquire magazine. An article in the occasionally ironic men's mag named the nine safest places in the world to get away from the stresses and anxieties of nuclear confrontation. One of those retreats was Brazil. Intimations of Jones's link to the CIA begin all the way back there.

According to an article in the San Jose Mercury News, Jones's neighbors in Belo Horizonte, Brazil (where he lived before moving to Rio De Janeiro), remembered his claim to be a retired navy man who "received a monthly payment from the U.S. government." They also remembered that Jones - who later claimed that he was forced to sell his services as a gigolo to support his family - "lived like a rich man."

“Some people here believed he was an agent for the American CIA,” one neighbor reported.

Neighbors’ recollections notwithstanding, Jones’s biographer Tim Reiterman says that the Jones family “lived simply” in Brazil, subsisting on rice and beans. When he returned to the United States, shortly after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, Jones told his followers that he had spent his time in Brazil helping orphans. Eventually, he moved his church to Ukiah, California, then to San Francisco, where it became a fundraising force courted by local politicians.

Before Jones arrived in Brazil, he’d stopped in Georgetown, Guyana. Though his stop there was a quick one, he managed to garner some ink in the local media by publicly charging churches with spreading communism. According to Reiterman, it appeared a calculated attempt to “put himself on the record as an anticommunist.”

Fifteen years later, he would tantalize his Jonestown flock with promises to move the People’s Temple from Guyana to the Soviet Union. In a 1979 book, one former Jones devotee, Phil Kerns (whose mother and sister died at Jonestown), raises the possibility of a Soviet conspiracy behind Jonestown.

“Jones was a Marxist,” Kerns wrote, “who had numerous contacts with officials of both the Cuban and Soviet governments.” Among other suspicious facts, Kerns notes that shortly before the massacre two People’s Temple members spirited \$500,000 out of the cult’s colony to the Soviet embassy.

Jones’s deputies did meet frequently with Soviet officials - so frequently, in fact, that they became a running joke in Guyana’s diplomatic circles. Jones told his followers that the CIA had “infiltrated” Jonestown.

Later, as we’ll see, others raised the possibility that Jonestown *was* the CIA.

The temple’s dalliance with the Soviets, however, is a wholly plausible point of contact between the cult and the

Agency. Reiterman, a skeptic of the conspiracy theory, points out that “the CIA’s presence in socialist Guyana...could be assumed.” They certainly would have taken an interest in the temple’s Soviet contacts.

Why exactly was Jones interested in the Soviets? He must have known that his professed dream of moving the temple to the U.S.S.R. was only that, a dream. He dropped it quickly in favor of mass suicide (a follower asked Jones, shortly before the suicides, if it weren’t possible to forget the whole thing and escape to Russia; Jones said it wasn’t). If the CIA had infiltrated the temple, or if the temple was, even in part, a CIA operation, then members’ sojourns to the Soviet embassy would have had a more pragmatic purpose.

The CIA was first with news out of Jonestown, reporting the mass suicides. The suicides followed an attack, ordered by Jones, on a party led by Congressman Leo Ryan, in Guyana to investigate alleged human rights abuses at Jonestown. The gunmen struck at Port Kaituma airfield, as the Ryan party was preparing to depart. Ryan was assassinated in the attack. Four others died as well. Several more were shot, including Reiterman, then a reporter for the San Francisco Examiner. Among the wounded was U.S. embassy official Richard Dwyer.

Wounded, but ambulatory.

Did Dwyer stroll back to Jonestown after the airstrip assault? Was he there during the massacre? Reportedly, at one point on a tape recorded as the killings began, Jones’s own voice commands, “Get Dwyer out of here!” Reiterman assumes that this was a “mistake” on Jones’s part, that Dwyer was not actually there. If he was, however, the implications are chilling.

Dwyer was an agent of the CIA.

For his part, Dwyer neither confirms nor denies that he was a CIA agent, but he was identified in the 1968 edition of *Who’s Who in the CIA*. A month after the massacre the San

Mateo Times, a Bay Area newspaper (hometown paper of Leo Ryan), reported that “State Department officials acknowledge that a CIA agent was dispatched to Jonestown within minutes of the airstrip assault.” Dwyer denied to the Times that he was there at the time. According to one report, Dwyer’s next stop after Guyana was Grenada.

Nor was Dwyer necessarily the only intelligence-connected character in Guyana. The U.S. ambassador himself, John Burke, later went to work for the “intelligence community staff” of the CIA. Richard McCoy, another embassy official, has acknowledged his counterintelligence work for the U.S. Air Force. The socialist government of Guyana had piqued the interest of U.S. intelligence for years. If there were covert operations going on there, no one should be surprised.

Leo Ryan’s aide Joseph Holsinger feared that the CIA might have been running a covert operation there so sinister it would shock even hardened CIA-watchdogs. In 1980 Holsinger, who’d already discovered Dwyer’s presence at Jonestown, received a paper from a professor at U.C. Berkeley. Called “The Penal Colony,” the paper detailed how the CIA’s mind-control program, code-named MK-ULTRA, was not stopped in 1973, as the CIA had told Congress. Instead, the paper reported, it had merely been transferred out of public hospitals and prisons into the more secure confines of religious cults.

Jonestown, Holsinger believed, was one of those cults.

There were large amounts of psychoactive, i.e., mind-control, drugs found on the site of the suicides. Larry Layton, the Jones lieutenant who became the only person charged in any of the killings (he was in the airstrip hit team, and somehow survived the Jonestown massacre), was described as sinking into a “posthypnotic trance” as he sunk ever deeper under Jones’s spell. Layton’s own father called him “a robot.”

Layton’s brother-in-law, the man who arranged the lease on Jonestown with the Guyanese government for Jones, was

reportedly a mercenary for the CIA-backed UNITA rebels in Angola. Layton’s father, according to Holsinger, was the biochemist in charge of chemical warfare for the U.S. Army at its Dugway Proving Ground in Utah.

Jones himself, the supposed Soviet sympathizer, was once a fundraiser for Richard Nixon, around the same time Jones declared himself the reincarnation of both Jesus and Lenin.

Then there was the problem of the bodies. The Jonestown

body count jumped by about four hundred within two days after the suicides, leading to speculation that escapees may have been hunted down and killed. In any case, Guyanese coroner Leslie Mootoo testified that as many as seven hundred of the dead appeared to have been forcibly killed, not “suicides” at all.

“I believe that it is possible that Jonestown may have been a mind-control experiment,” Holsinger said in a 1980 lecture, “that Leo Ryan’s congressional visit pierced that veil and would have resulted in its exposure, and that our government, or its agent the CIA, deemed it necessary to wipe out over nine hundred American citizens to protect the secrecy of the operation.”

The “operation,” if there was one, may have continued after the suicides. There have been attempts to repopulate Jonestown with Dominican and Indochinese refugees, backed by the Billy Graham organization. There was a Jonestown doppelganger in Guyana even while Jones was still in business. Self-styled “Rabbi” David Hill, with his eight thousand-member Nation of Israel cult, was powerful enough to earn the nickname “vice prime minister” in his travels through the country.

One final, weird note: A memo that allegedly passed between Jones and People’s Temple lawyer Mark Lane (who escaped the massacre) showed the two pondering the relocation of Grace Walden to Jonestown. Walden was a key witness to the

assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Lane represented King's accused assassin, James Earl Ray. When the memo turned up, Lane denied that he had discussed moving Walden. (He claims that the memo was part of an "army intelligence coverup" of the King assassination, ostensibly an attempt to discredit him and, through him, Walden.) Most of the People's Temple rank-and-file were black. Most of the leadership was white. Joyce Shaw, a former member, once mused that the mass suicide story was a coverup for "some kind of horrible government experiments, or some sort of sick, racist thing. . . a plan like the Germans' to exterminate blacks."

In 1980, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence announced that there was "no evidence" of CIA involvement at Jonestown.

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*This chapter owes a debt to research assembled by John Judge.*

## *Those Christ Kids*

The mysterious French organization known as the Priory of Zion may be a nine-hundred-year-old secret society possessing proof that Jesus Christ survived the crucifixion. What's more, it may also be the repository of Europe's secret history, and indeed the underground annals of all Christendom. Then again, maybe it's just an extremely elaborate hoax. Whichever, it launched a best-selling book, 1982's *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, by BBC documentary filmmaker Henry Lincoln and historians Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh.

Lincoln and company set out to write about one of France's most enduring riddles, the legend of Rennes-le-Chateau, an antique village ensconced in the Pyrenees mountains. Legend has it that somewhere beneath its cobblestone streets, Rennes-le-Chateau harbors a fabulous treasure. Locals are partial to the theory that the stash belonged to the Cathars, Christian heretics stamped out by the Catholic church in the thirteenth century. New Age pilgrims and occultists trek there to partake of the town's supposed spiritual energy; treasure hunters prowl its windswept perimeters in search of more worldly goods. Others tie the source of the town's mystical fascination to UFOs. Whatever the theory, Rennes-le-Chateau owes its

renaissance as a mystical landmark to a nineteenth-century cleric named Berenger Sauniere, and that is where Lincoln, Baigent, and Leigh began their quest.

The story opens in 1885, when the Catholic church assigned Sauniere, thirty-three years old, handsome, well-educated--if provincial--to the parish at Rennes-le-Chateau. Sauniere set about restoring the town's tiny church, which sat atop a sacred site dating back to the sixth-century Visigoths. Under the altar stone, inside a hollow Visigothic pillar, the young cure discovered a series of parchments. There were two genealogies dating from 1244 A.D. and 1644 A.D., as well as more recent documents created by a former parish priest during the 1780s. According to Lincoln and his co-authors, these more recent papers contained a series of ciphers and codes, some of them "fantastically complex, defying even a computer" to unlock their secrets.

Sauniere took his discovery to the bishop in nearby Carcassonne, who dispatched the priest to Paris, where clerical scholars studied the parchments. One of the simpler ciphers, when translated, read: TO DAGOBERT II KING AND TO SION BELONGS THIS TREASURE AND HE IS THERE DEAD.

Whatever it all meant, apparently it became Sauniere's entree into a new world, with the accent on worldly. For during his short stay in Paris, Sauniere began to mix with the city's cultural elite, many of whom dabbled in the occult arts. Contemporary gossip had it that the country priest had an affair with Emma Calve, the famous opera diva who was also a high priestess of the Parisian esoteric underground. She would later visit him frequently in Rennes-le-Chateau.

When Sauniere returned to his parish, he resumed restoration of the church and discovered an underground crypt, supposedly containing skeletons. At this point, his taste in interior design seems to have taken a turn for the, well, peculiar;

among the eccentric fixtures he installed were a holy water basin surmounted by a statue of a sneering red demon and an equally garish wall relief depicting Jesus atop a hill at the base of which is an object resembling a sack of money. The stations of the cross had their oddities too: One, set at night, depicted Jesus being carried into the tomb--or smuggled out of it? Sauniere also installed a series of cipher messages in the fixtures of the church. He spent a fortune refurbishing the town and developed extravagant tastes for rare china, antiques, and other pricey artifacts. Yet how Sauniere acquired this apparent windfall remained a mystery--he stubbornly refused to explain the secret of his success to the church authorities. When he died in 1917, he was supposedly penniless, yet his former housekeeper later spoke of a "secret" that would make its owner not only rich but also "powerful." Unfortunately, she never spilled the beans.

Lincoln and his co-authors found no treasure, though they speculated that Sauniere might have exhumed somebody's loot: Maybe it was the legendary Cathar hoard, or the nest egg of the Visigoths, or perhaps the treasure of the Merovingian kings who ruled the region between the fifth and eighth centuries--the Dagobert II mentioned in the coded parchment was one of them. Maybe it was a combination of all three treasures. Or, if not treasure in the conventional sense, then perhaps Sauniere had discovered some form of forbidden knowledge and had used it to blackmail someone, say, for instance, the church.

At any rate, during their investigation into the legend of Sauniere, what Lincoln and company did discover was less cashable, yet just as mysterious: an unseen hand "discreetly, tantalizingly" directing a low-key publicity effort on behalf of the legend.

At the center of the underground PR campaign they found an enigmatic and very real figure named Pierre Plantard de Saint-Clair, apparently the source behind much of the recent literature devoted to the hilltown and its enigmatic priest.

Shepherded to Paris's Bibliotheque Nationale, our trio of historical investigators discovered there a provocative genealogy purporting to link Pierre Plantard to King Dagobert II and the Merovingian dynasty. Hardly your run-of-the-mill blue blood, that Monsieur Plantard, for the Merovingians were considered in their day to be quasi-mystical warrior-kings vested with supernatural powers. Ah, but that was only one item on Plantard's impressive family resume. More on that in a moment.

Throughout these dossiers secrets at Paris's national library were tantalizing historical references to a mysterious and ancient secret society called Priore de Sion, or Priory of Zion. The word Zion, of course, appeared in various ciphers connected with Rennes-le-Chateau. It also seemed to refer to Mount Zion in Jerusalem, site of the ancient Temple of Solomon.

According to the secret dossiers, the spectral Priory was linked to the famous Knights Templar, an order of warrior monks who defended the European occupation of the Holy Land during the twelfth century. The Templars took their name from the source of their authority and the site of their quarters, built on the ruins of the Temple of Solomon. Of course, this wasn't the first conspiracy theory to cast the Templars as cabalistic bugaboos, yet their supposed connection to the (possibly fictional) Priory of Zion was a new one. Taking a cue from the dossiers, Lincoln and company speculated that the clandestine Priory had hidden behind the Knights Templar, which served as the Priory's armed entourage and public face.

And if these secret dossiers were to be believed, the Priory of Zion was a covert force to be reckoned with. References to well-known historical events suggested that the Priory had been a secret power in Europe ever since the Crusades, a gray eminence manipulating kings and popes in the furtherance of some obscure mission.

According to the musty pamphlets and microfiche in France's national library, through the ages the Priory's leaders

had included such luminaries as Leonardo da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton, Charles Radclyffe, Victor Hugo, and the most recent entry on the list, Jean Cocteau, the twentieth-century artist and author. In all, the list named twenty-six such "grand masters" spanning some seven hundred years!

Could the group have survived into the late twentieth century? Lincoln and company checked with the French authorities and discovered that there was indeed a contemporary organization calling itself Priory of Zion. And who do you think was registered as the group's secretary-general but Pierre Plantard.

When Lincoln finally tracked him down, Plantard turned out to be a wily old aristocrat who had played a small part in the French Resistance. But his deliberate obfuscation seemed intended as much to conceal something as to lure the authors further into the mystery.

Just what was Plantard trying to hide—or reveal in his consciously elliptical way? What was the possibly sinister purpose behind the Priory of Zion?

The authors of Holy Blood, Holy Grail proposed a theory, as tangled and complicated as the dossier secrets, yet entertainingly mounted and surprisingly well argued. Was there a connection, they wondered, between the heretical Cathars of thirteenth-century France, Saunier's Rennes-le-Chateau, the Templars, and the omnipresent Priory of Zion?

But of course, they ventured. Lincoln and company hypothesized that the fabled Cathar treasure at Rennes-le-Chateau was one in the same with the Merovingian cache and the Templars' treasure of King Solomon. At some point, according to Lincoln et al., the treasure had passed from the Merovingians to the Priory of Zion, whose Templar operatives later hustled the precious hoard from the Holy Land to the French Cathars, who, on the eve of their destruction by the church, squirreled the lucre away in the Pyrenees.

But what if the "treasure" was something other than

gold? After all, legend had it that the Cathar heretics possessed a valuable, even sacred relic, “which according to a number of legends, was the Holy Grail,” itself. During World War II, the Nazis supposedly excavated various sites in the vicinity of Rennes-le-Chateau in their futile search for the Grail (which was dramatized in the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*).

Was the lost Cathar/Templar/Merovingian/Sauniere treasure, then, the fabled Holy Grail, itself? By suggesting that it was, our trailblazing authors were not suggesting that the ominous Priory revolved around a mere religious relic and a rusty old goblet at that. Lincoln and company had something more ambitious in mind. Boldly reinterpreting centuries of folklore, they proposed that the Grail of medieval romance might have been a coded reference to something much more controversial: the literal bloodline of Christ.

Here’s where Lincoln and company shifted into conspiratorial overdrive. Borrowing the thesis of Hugh J. Schonfield’s book, *The Passover Plot*, and grafting it onto the enigmatic Plantard clues, Lincoln and his co-authors fashioned a, well, daring theory. Stripped of syllogistic elegance, it goes something like this: Christ survived the crucifixion by “faking” his death or otherwise being “fruitful” before Good Friday, either way leaving behind the wife and kids. The “Christ” subsequently legged it to the south of France where they intermarried with the royal Franks to found what eventually became the mystical Merovingian Dynasty. Ergo, the real mission of the Templars and Priory of Zion: to safeguard not just the treasure of the Crusades, but to preserve the Grail, which appeared in medieval texts as “Sangraal” or “Sangreal,” and which Lincoln et al. translated to mean sang real, or “royal blood.” In other words: the dynastic legacy of Christ, literally.

This, then, might be the stunning secret--and the secret society that evolved through the ages to protect it--that Abbe Sauniere stumbled upon in Rennes-le-Chateau: TO DAGOBERT

II KING AND TO SION BELONGS THIS TREASURE AND HE IS THERE DEAD. Who He? J.C.

Suddenly, the meandering history of Europe develops a dramatic, cohesive plot line: The persecution of the Cathars by the church, the collusion of Rome in the assassination of King Dagobert, the successful conspiracy of the Pope Clement V and Phillippe IV of France to suppress the powerful Templars--all were efforts to “eradicate it, Jesus’ bloodline.” For “it” constituted nothing less than a rival church with a more direct link to J.C.’s legacy than the Vatican could ever claim.

Whew. Fast forward to the twentieth century, and Plantard’s Merovingian pedigree has obvious implications.

Of course, Plantard’s response to all this virtuoso theorizing was that enigmatic Mona Lisa smile of his. He wasn’t about to walk on water, at least not at the behest of three future best-selling authors.

Curiously, in their follow-up book, *The Messianic Legacy*, Lincoln, Baigent, and Leigh sounded at times almost as if they were proselytizing. Advocating the concept of the lost “priest-king,” they argued that a dose of spiritual leadership might not necessarily be a bad thing for rudderless Europe, especially since the historically bickering nations were attempting to unify as an Economic Community anyway. A “theocratic United States of Europe” might be just what the doctor ordered, Lincoln and his associates suggested.

Yet their sequel ended on a decidedly down note, for their subsequent research raised doubts about the true nature of the Priory.

In piercing the confounding veil surrounding Plantard and his mysterious organization, Lincoln and company opened a sordid vault of modern conspiracies. Key Priory documents purporting to trace the royal lineage back to J.C., Himself, were said to have been smuggled out of France by British intelligence agents, possibly at the behest of American spooks. Why were



these venal forces sully the uplifting vision of the Lost King? There were other troubling elements lurking in the background, including Italy's crypto-fascist P2 Masonic lodge, which during the 1980s seemed to have reserved seating at every major conspiracy event.

Could Lincoln, Baigent, and Leigh have stumbled upon an elaborate, tangled ruse set up for some abstruse objective of spycraft, or perhaps in the service of right-wing European politics? Was Plantard just a clever self-promoter with too much ancien regime leisure time on his hands? Or, if it wasn't a hoax from the get-go, did the Priory of Zion's ancient charter devolve at some point into a club for tweedy intelligence operatives? Was the Grail just a dirty cup filled with slippery spy dust?

During the 1980s, the books struck a ringing chord just about everywhere. The American clergy went ballistic at the suggestion that centuries of Christian dogma amounted to centuries of false dogma. Despite the fact that *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* restored the underappreciated French to the center of the cosmos (after all, the Messiah doesn't have an English or American accent, does He?), modern Gallic folk tend to be unimpressed with the trio's revisionist scholarship. And some even resent having their cherished national mysteries paraded on the international marketplace, by profiteering foreigners, no less. Of course, American and British book buyers have been much more generous.

By the 1990s, though, even Lincoln had soured on speculating about the Priory of Zion and its maddeningly hermetic chief executive, Pierre Plantard. "In my old age, I've decided to stick to that which can be verified," Lincoln grouched when asked for an update on the secret society.

Though disillusioned, he hadn't finished with the mysterious hill town that launched his modern quest for the Holy Grail--not to mention his book-writing career. In his solo 1991 coffee-table book, *The Holy Place*, Lincoln announced that

whatever else it may or may not be, the town called Rennes-le-Chateau is most certainly the "Eighth Wonder of the Ancient World," an "immense geometric temple, stretching for miles across the landscape." But sounding like the reformed heretic stung once too often by the critical flail, Lincoln offered a rather modest closing caveat. "This book does not claim to have solved the riddle."

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## ***JFK: Conspiracy of Confusion***

Michael Scott's father, Winston, had been chief of the CIA's Mexico City station from 1956 until his retirement in 1969, so in 1985 when Scott dropped in at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, he was greeted more cordially than one might expect from the not-entirely-inviting spy agency.

Scott's father, a career secret agent, died in 1971 apparently from complications of a household accident. At the time of his passing he had just put the finishing touches on a memoir of his career in cloak and dagger. He planned a trip to Washington to voluntarily (even enthusiastically) vet the text by his former boss, Director of Central Intelligence Richard "Man Who Kept the Secrets" Helms. But due his demise, the elder Scott's travel plans were cancelled. Within hours after Mrs. Scott wife found her husband's body drooping over the breakfast table, the CIA's legendary and consummately creepy counterintelligence chief James Angleton showed up on the Scott family doorstep in Mexico City, searching for the manuscript.

A curious Michael Scott, by 1985 making a living as a Hollywood producer, wanted to see his father's book. He hoped it would help him better understand his father's mysterious life. An inquiry to the CIA prompted the invitation to Langley. As he told the story to reporter Dick Russell, Scott was introduced to a "high-ranking officer who had obviously read the manuscript" who told him that "they had been forced to delete portions of the manuscript for national security."

What portions? the surviving Scott inquired.

"Well, there was some mention of Lee Harvey Oswald in some area," the CIA officer said, "and we don't want to make that public."

The CIA treated the son of one of its veteran officers no differently than it treated congress and the American public. It held back or destroyed who-knows-how-many documents that could have illuminated the background of the JFK assassination many relating to its formerly supersecret alliance with the mob to clip Castro.

Helms lied to the Warren Commission when he testified that the CIA never "contemplated" using Oswald as a contact. In fact in 1960 according to internal CIA memos that were preserved the agency "showed intelligence interest" in the then-obscure Oswald. During his condolence call at the Scott residence, Angleton scooped up a tape recording purportedly of Oswald. The CIA tape came from Oswald's now-famous visit to Mexico City in the summer of 1963, just a few months before the Kennedy assassination.

Oswald or someone pretending to be Oswald or someone identified as Oswald went to the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Mexico City petulantly and obstreperously demanding a visa to Castro's Cuba. He also reportedly met with Soviet intelligence agents and tried to a visa back to the Soviet Union where he had once defected (and returned to the United States strangely unmolested). Why? There are a number of theories. Perhaps

Oswald was a disaffected nut smitten by delusions of Marxist grandeur (who later took out his private frustrations on JFK). Or he was working for an intelligence agency in an anti-Cuban operation. There were many underway at the time.

Or perhaps someone was trying to make Oswald look like a Communist so that, the theory goes, the Soviets could take the blame for the subsequent assassination. After the assassination, there was an attempt by CIA operatives and powerful right-wingers (led by oilman H.L. Hunt) to finger Castro and/or Krushchev as the kingpin.

In any case, Oswald's voice was recorded in Mexico City and Winston Scott saved one of the recordings in his home. He kept it even after he retired. The CIA did not admit that such a recording existed until 1976. Then it lied that the recordings were all destroyed before the assassination. The FBI later said that the voice on the tapes was not Oswald's at all. Someone impersonating Oswald prior to the assassination? The Mexico City episode is crucial to any portrayal of Oswald as an emotionally volatile crank, but in a 1978 debate with attorney and pioneering conspiracy researcher Mark Lane the CIA's former western hemisphere chief David Atlee Philips announced that "there is no evidence to show that Lee Harvey Oswald visited the Soviet embassy." If he didn't, who did? Lane called Philips startling statement a "confession."

Philips was the CIA spokesman before congress re: the Oswald tapes. This is the David Philips suspected by the House Select Committee on Assassinations of doubling as the shadowy "Maurice Bishop" CIA overseer of the Cuban Alpha 66 anti-Castro brigade. The same David Philips in charge of spinning the Oswald-Mexico City incident in the CIA's favor may have engineered the "Mexico City scenario" in the first place. Lane, who has made a legal and literary career out of blaming the CIA for JFK's death, says he did.

Alpha 66's Cuban leader Antonio Veciana claimed that at

one of his hundred or so meetings with Bishop, Oswald was there not saying anything, just acting odd.

"I always thought Bishop was working with Oswald during the assassination," Veciana told Russell.

Veciana's cousin worked for Castro's intelligence service and after the assassination Bishop wanted Veciana to bribe his cousin into saying that he met with Oswald, in order to fabricate an Oswald-Castro connection.

Investigators never established for sure that Bishop and Philips were one and the same, but descriptions of Bishop's appearance and mannerisms mirrored Philips'. Veciana drew a sketch of his old controller and Senator Richard Schweiker, a member of the assassination committee, recognized it as Philips. When the select committee's star investigator Gaeton Fonzi finally brought Veciana and Philips together, the two started acting weird around each other. After a short conversation in Spanish, Philips bolted. Witnesses to the encounter swear that a look of recognition swept Veciana's visage, but Veciana denied that Philips was his case officer of more than a decade earlier.

"But," the anti-Castro crusader added cryptically, "he knows."

Veciana's reluctance to make the ID, Fonzi theorized, was related to two unfortunate events that had befallen him of late: one, he was convicted of running drugs and suspected that Bishop set him up to silence him; two, he was shot in the head. Veciana's desire to clear his drug rap and avoid absorbing another bullet, Fonzi believes, may have had something to do with the fact that he would not rat on his old benefactor. In Fonzi's opinion, it was the only lie Veciana ever told him.

Later Fonzi put the question to Veciana in a more comfortably roundabout way.

"Would you have told me if I had found Maurice Bishop?" he asked.

"Well, you know," said Veciana with a smile, "I would

like to talk with him first.’

Russell interviewed a retired Army Colonel named, coincidentally, Bill Bishop who claimed to be a CIA-employed hit man (in his talk with Russell, Bill Bishop took credit for pulling the trigger on Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo). Bill Bishop said that he worked for the CIA’s Mexico station with Philips and that he and Philips ran Veciana together. He later produced a tape recording of a phone call between Veciana and himself in the mid 1980s. The two clearly know each other.

There was definitely something the CIA did not want publicized about Lee Harvey Oswald. What, we don’t know it was never publicized. The Veciana saga might contain at least a clue. However, because no conspiracy theory has been more widely written about than the JFK assassination, no conspiracy theory has come in for more strident attacks. The credibility of the attacks rests on the lack of credibility of one Lee Harvey Oswald, a personage painted as so twisted and pathetic that he is precluded from even unwitting participation in any act more complex than a temper tantrum. This profile finds its most recent description in Gerald Posner’s pompous book *Case Closed*. To make sure that readers get his point, Posner gives his Oswald chapters such subtle titles as “He Looks Like a Maniac,” “Our Papa is Out of His Mind” and “His Mood Was Bad.”

When his treatise came out in 1993, marketed to coincide with the 30th anniversary of President Kennedy’s death, the annoyingly smug Posner supplanted the Warren Commission as the final arbiter of JFK truth as far as major media were concerned. Two years earlier the same weekly magazines and daily newspapers displayed at least equal vigor or was it panic? in skewering the Oliver Stone-directed JFK. Stone’s fascinating film spun almost 30 years of evidence, anecdote and hearsay into a Citizen Kane tableau so jarring that afterward, the Warren Commission’s credibility was left in tatters. Even the most

ardent lone-nut buffs had to admit that much. Thanks to the movie, Congress passed a law rescinding the ban on releasing piles upon piles of secret assassination-related documents.

Jonathan Kwitny, himself a journalist of notable repute, explained the media’s attraction to *Case Closed*.

“All the good young reporters and public officials who mistakenly swallowed the official FBI-CIA line on the assassination 30 years ago have been waiting all this time for someone to relieve them of the self-doubt they are too smart not to have suffered under,” Kwitny wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*; a rare negative review.

Posner’s method of evading evidence that punctures his thesis is to obfuscate with unsupported assertions stated in a tone of unshakeable authority then buried in a footnote. Nowhere vis his technique more apparent than in his treatment of the incendiary Vecenia-Bishop/Philips-Oswald story.

Posner states that “there are doubts” about whether Maurice Bishop ever existed. He does not state the source or substance of these “doubts,” nor does he note that former CIA Director John McCone did say that a “Maurice Bishop” worked for the agency. A number of other CIA employees interviewed by Fonzi said the same, including one who spontaneously named Philips as “Bishop.”

“The CIA denied that any case officer had ever been assigned to Vecenia,” says Posner. So what? The House Select Committee in its report “found it probable that some agency of the United States assigned a case officer to Vecenia.” Given the CIA’s deep involvement in anti-Castro plots at the time, the CIA is a likely candidate to be that agency.

It is true, as Posner (foot)notes, that the committee in its report said it “could not...credit Vecenia’s story.” It also said, as Posner does not report, that “no evidence was found to discredit Vecenia’s story” and “there was some evidence to support it.” In a footnote of its own, the committee acknowledged that it “sus-

pected Vecenia was lying when he denied that (Philips) was Bishop.” At the same time, said the report, Philips “aroused the committee’s suspicions” by claiming that he didn’t recognize Vecenia, especially because Philips “had once been deeply involved in Agency anti-Castro operations.”

The committee mainly through its penchant for vacillation and unwillingness to offend the CIA created more confusion than it cleared up. Confusion has indeed been the one consistent quality of the now three-decade-plus JFK case. Posner’s aggravating work simply spewed up further fog.

So who killed JFK? The CIA? Anti-Castro fanatics? The Mafia? The military? A cabal of wealthy right wing extremists? Or were they all somehow in league? There is evidence for any of the above. And all. Perhaps there were multiple plots against Kennedy that coalesced into one gigantic cover-up with each party protecting its own interests but not necessarily cognizant of its counterparts’ involvement.

Dick Russell writes that there were three plots against JFK in 1963. His primary source is a man named Richard Case Nagell who tells of working for an array of intelligence agencies, domestic and otherwise. The first plot was to bomb JFK’s speech at the Orange Bowl in Miami. The alleged CIA hit man Bill Bishop corroborated that story without any prompting from Russell.

Plot number two also corroborated independently by Bill Bishop was scheduled for L.A. Nagell’s involvement was to shadow a Los Angeles leftist named Vaughn Marlowe who was “considered for recruitment to hit JFK,” Nagell told Russell. The recruiters were L.A. members of Alpha 66. Marlowe didn’t know he had been, potentially, the original Oswald until years later when Russell informed him. But he did know that Nagell was shadowing him. During New Orleans’ District Attorney Jim Garrison’s highly publicized investigation of the JFK case, Marlowe wrote Garrison to tell him about Nagell.

Nagell was also aware of the third plot so aware that Russell believes he was hired by the KGB to terminate the plot by terminating Oswald. Instead, Nagell deliberately got himself arrested by firing a gun inside a bank in El Paso on September 20, 1963.

According to the recollections of Nagell’s arresting officer, Nagell said, upon being taken into custody, “I’m glad you caught me. I really don’t want to be in Dallas.”

“What do you mean by that?” the policeman asked.

“You’ll see soon enough,” Nagell replied. Two months and two days later, in Dallas, President Kennedy was shot and killed.

Russell, unlike Posner, makes no claims to unimpeachable veracity. Far from it. But starting with Nagell, Russell winds through a menagerie of grim characters who fit in all of the categories mentioned above. Among the scariest and most powerful was Retired Gen. Charles Willoughby, formerly intelligence chief for Gen. Douglas MacArthur but whose political leanings made MacArthur look like, well, JFK. MacArthur once described his underling as a “little fascist.”

The alleged CIA assassin Bill Bishop also worked as an “intelligence aide” to MacArthur, according to a document turned up by Russell. “If true,” Russell emphasizes, “that would mean Bishop had served under MacArthur’s intelligence chief, Charles Willoughby.”

Willoughby formed an ultra-rightist network whose most visible spokesman was fire-and-brimstone fundamentalist preacher Billy James Hargis. His Anti-Communist Liason membership included Texas oil baron H.L. Hunt and CIA-agent turned journalist Edward Hunter (credited with inventing the word “brainwashing”) and extended into West Germany. The organization maintained a paramilitary arm in southern California. At the same time, Willoughby stayed in close touch with Allen Dulles, director of the CIA later fired by Kennedy

and subsequently appointed to the Warren Commission to investigate the slaying of the president who fired him.

In 1975 after Russell wrote an article about the assassination for the Village Voice, he received an anonymous letter identifying “a famous American general who was born in Heidelberg, Germany in 1892” as “having masterminded the assassination.” The odd letter named this “famous general,” cryptically, as “Tschepe-Weidenbach.”

Years later, while Russell was reading the book *The Origins of the Korean War* by Bruce Cumings, he came across “an obscure mention that Adolf Tschepe-Weidenbach of Heidelberg, Germany, had changed his name, upon arrival in the United States shortly before World War I, to Charles Willoughby.”

Finally there is the story, recorded by Fonzi, of Dave Morales, a self-proclaimed CIA assassin who one night, with only close friends present, went into a boozy diatribe against Kennedy for sacrificing his CIA-trained comrades at the Bay of Pigs.

“Suddenly he stopped,” Fonzi writes, “and remained silent for a moment. Then as if saying it only to himself he added:

“Well, we took care of that son of a bitch, didn’t we?””

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Any writing about the JFK assassination owes a debt to the work of hundreds of researchers. Some, but by no means all, of the most important are: Peter Dale Scott, Jim Garrison, Jim Marrs, Sylvia Meagher and Carl Oglesby.

## *The Sorcerers*

Some conspiracy theorists question not “the facts” so much as reason itself. James Shelby Downard is one of those mad geniuses with a talent for making the most improbable, impossible, ludicrous and laughable speculations appear almost plausible. A self-described student of the “science of symbolism,” Downard peels away the rational veneer of history and exposes an abyss of logic-defying synchronicities.

Downard dwells upon a confluence of the familiar and the esoteric that, to him, forms a portrait of political conspiracy the purpose of which is not power or money, but alchemy, the mystical science of transformation. By breaking apart and rejoining elements, it was long ago supposed, alchemy could effect most any miracle (for example, changing base metal into gold). From ancient times through the Enlightenment, science and magic were one and the same. As far as Downard’s concerned, the era when science was indistinguishable from sorcery never ended. The Age of Reason and its industrial, post-modern

antecedents are facades obscuring the seething dream world of primeval urges that surfaces only in sleep.

Per Downard, the plotters are Freemasonic alchemists scheming for sovereignty over the realm of uncontrollable impulse. The relatively tame domains of politics, economics and ideology are mere means to that end.

“Do not be lulled into believing,” warns Downard, “that just because the deadening American city of dreadful night is so utterly devoid of mystery, so thoroughly flat-footed, sterile and infantile, so burdened with the illusory gloss of baseball-hot dogs-apple-pie-and-Chevrolet, that it exists outside the psycho-sexual domain. The eternal pagan psychodrama is escalated under these modern conditions precisely because sorcery is not what ‘20th Century man’ can accept as real.”

Drawing up a brief primer of Downardism seems an impossible task, though not quite as daunting as reading Downard’s own essays which have been set forth for public consumption largely through the good offices of publisher Adam Parfrey whose small, outre firm, Feral House, has anthologized Downard’s essays in a few anthologies of conspiratorial material. We can do no more than scratch the surface in this forum.

“The United States which has long been called a melting pot, should more descriptively be called a witches’ cauldron wherein the ‘Hierarchy of the Grand Architect of the Universe’ arranges for ritualistic crimes and psychopolitical psychodramas to be performed in accordance with a Master plan,” Downard explains.

That Master plan necessitates execution of three alchemical rites: the creation and destruction of primordial matter; the Killing of the King; and the “making manifest of all that is hidden.” Shakespeare’s *MacBeth* is a “Killing of the King” drama. *MacBeth*, who killed his king in accordance with a witches’ (alchemists’) plot and was himself later killed as part of the same schemata.

The latter day reenactment of the MacBeth ritual, says Downard, was the assassination of JFK in Dealey Plaza, site of the first Masonic temple in Dallas and a spot loaded with “trinity” symbolism.” Three” is, for those not versed in such matters, the most magic of all magic numbers. Downard’s observations include:

- Dallas is located just south of the 33 degree of latitude. The 33rd degree is Freemasonry’s highest rank
- Kennedy’s motorcade was rolling toward the “Triple Underpass” when he was slain by, according to some analysts, three gunmen. Three tramps were arrested right after the murder. Hiram Abiff, architect of Solomon’s Temple and mythic progenitor of Freemasonry was murdered according to Masonic legend by three “unworthy craftsmen.”
- The MacBeth clan of Scotland had many variations of the family name. One was “MacBaine” or “Baines.” Kennedy’s successor was Lyndon Baines Johnson, a Freemason.
- “Dea” in Latin means goddess.” Ley” in Spanish can refer to law or rule.” Dealey Plaza” was “goddess-rule” plaza.
- Blamed for the assassination was a man named “Oz,” explained by Downard as “a Hebrew term denoting strength.” Divine strength is integral to the King-killing rite.
- “Oz” was killed by “Ruby,” just as the ruby slippers freed Dorothy from the land of Oz in The Wizard of Oz, “which one may deride as a fairy tale but which nevertheless symbolizes the immense power of ‘ruby light’ otherwise known as the laser.”
- Dealey Plaza is near the Trinity River, which before the introduction of flood control measures submerged the place regularly. Dealey Plaza therefore symbolizes both the trident and its bearer, the water-god Neptune.
- “To this trident-Neptune site,” writes Downard, “came the ‘Queen of Love and Beauty’ and her spouse, the scapegoat, in the Killing of the King rite, the ‘Ceannaideach’ (Gaelic word

for Ugly Head or Wounded Head). In Scotland, the Kennedy coat of arms and iconography is full of folklore. Their Plant Badge is an oak and their Crest has a dolphin on it. Now what could be more coincidental than for JFK to get shot in the head near the oak tree at Dealey Plaza. Do you call that a coincidence? “

- For those in our audience still too puzzled by the whole “Wizard of Oz” thing to get that last bit: the “Queen” is Jackie and “Ceannaideach” is the Gaelic form of Kennedy.
- An earlier “Trinity Site,” in New Mexico, was the location of the first atomic bomb explosion. Chaos and synergy, breaking apart and joining together are the first principles of alchemy. The atomic bomb broke apart the positive and negative (male and female) elements that compose primordial matter. Physicists refer to this fiendish trickery as “nuclear fission.”
- The New Mexico “Trinity” sits on the 33rd degree latitude line.
- The Kennedy assassination’s true significance was concealed by the Warren Commission headed by Freemason Earl Warren with Freemason Gerald Ford as its public spokesman. The Commission drew its information from the FBI headed by Freemason J. Edgar Hoover and the CIA, which transmitted information through former director Freemason Allen Dulles who sat on the commission.
- A decade later Ford, when president himself, was the target of an attempted assassination in front of the St. Francis Hotel, located opposite Mason Street in the City of St. Francis, San Francisco. Members of the Freemasonic “Hell Fire Club,” site of many a sex orgy involving such luminaries as Freemason Benjamin Franklin, called themselves “Friars of St. Francis.”
- The St. Francis Hotel was also the site of sex orgies. On its premises occurred the rape- murder of Virginia Rappe by silent film comic Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle. Virginia Rappe’s name is a variation on “virgin rape.” The rape of a virgin is an



important alchemical sex-magic rite.

- The serpent is a Masonic symbol of King-Killing. The Symbionese Liberation Army, who kidnapped San Francisco newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst, pictured a serpent on their emblem.

- The word “Symbionese” means “joined together.”

- Patricia Hearst’s grandfather, newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, built a vast estate called San Simeon (St. Simon) on La Cuest Encandata, The Enchanted Hill. On the estate is a “pool of Neptune” with a statue of Venus, the “Queen of Love and Beauty.” The Hearst family joined together the San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner.

As mentioned previously, we are able only to touch the most superficial aspects of the alchemical conspiracy made manifest in the message of James Shelby Downard. We have ignored his hint that Marilyn Monroe’s death was Freemasonically inspired, a conclusion Downard reaches in part because “when she was mortal she was subjected to sexual debauchery, as the innocent are in sorcery rites.”

Nor have we covered Downard’s argument that the advertising war “between Avis and Hertz Rent-a-Car corporations involves fertility symbolism.”

For God’s sake, let us hope he’s misguided.

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## *Classified Secrets of the Sky*

What crashed in Roswell, New Mexico?

Something large and silvery wobbled through the air and plowed into the desert dirt with a tremendous ka-boom. That much, generally speaking, goes without dispute. The date was July 2, 1947.

It is also a fact-on-record that the government took an immediate interest in ...well, whatever it was. The air force dispatched a team to scoop up the wreckage one metallic chunk was about four feet long and flew some back to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio for scrutiny. General Roger Ramey, the officer in charge, ordered his men not to talk to the press. But before Ramey could clamp a lid on the affair, the base's public information officer issued a press release announcing government acquisition of a "flying disc." An Albuquerque radio station picked up a leak of the story. As it broadcast a report, a wire came through from the FBI.

"Attention Albuquerque: cease transmission. Repeat.

Cease transmission. National security item. Do not transmit.

"Stand by. . ."

A day later, the Air Force held a press conference and announced that what crashed at Roswell was a balloon.

The UFO saga, actually, began a few days earlier when businessman and avocational aviator Kenneth Arnold chased a squadron of nine "bobbing and weaving" objects as he flew in his private plane. He described the objects as "saucer shaped." Some pithy wag at an AP bureau dropped the phrase "flying saucers" into a wire dispatch and, forever, into the English language. The air force said that Arnold had pursued "a mirage."

There have been innumerable UFO reports since 1947. Some have been captured on film, still and moving (the UFOs and the film). They pop up all over the world, even in outer space. NASA astronauts have reported seeing weird objects and UFO scribe (The Millenium Factor) Sean Morton says that NASA photos of the so-called "dark side" of the moon remain, for some reason, classified.

The myth that UFOs only reveal themselves to corn huskers and residents of trailer parks is easily defeated. A quick scan of UFO history books shows the air corps of one nation or another pursuing unidentifiable "blips" on a monotonously regular basis.

On Nov. 23, 1953 an F-89 interceptor was chasing a UFO over Lake Superior when, according to radar operators, the two blips on the screen seemed to merge into one which then blinked off the screen. The jet and its pilot, Lt. Felix Moncla, were gone without a trace. The Air Force file on the vanishing, for some reason, contains just two pages. One of them is a page from a book debunking UFO theories.

Nevertheless, Roswell (which among the UFO-intrigued has achieved one-word status) remains the most important landmark in the UFO cover-up because, apparently, it has actually been covered up. There is no mention of the crash in the Air

Force's "Project Blue Book" files. Blue Book recorded all UFO reports that crossed an Air Force desk along with their various "scientific" explanations. Generally considered the Warren Report of the UFO phenomenon a cover-up posing as an investigation Blue Book gives Roswell increased prominence by its omission.

Some might write the whole incident off as unlikely, noting that a spacecraft capable of navigating the firmament and engineered to endure the rigors of interstellar travel is unlikely to crash like so many Cessnas. But then there is Majestic 12.

In the search for the single central conspiracy in charge of absolutely everything, MJ-12 (for short) crops up often as a likely candidate. A committee of 12 eminent military, intelligence and academic personages, the group was allegedly chartered to manage and conceal the most important event in world history contact with aliens. Albeit dead ones.

According to the MJ-12 "eyes only" briefing paper prepared for Dwight Eisenhower when he was still president-elect, four "Extra terrestrial Biological Entities" or "EBEs" turned up two miles from the crash site. According to some accounts, two of the aliens were still alive at the time and one put up a struggle. The EBE carcasses are now allegedly kept on ice in Los Alamos, New Mexico.

The problem with the Majestic 12 document the only hard evidence that MJ-12 ever took a meeting is that it may well be a hoax. No one in a position to do so has ever authenticated it.

There is only one mention of MJ-12 in any other official paper a Nov. 1980 Air Force analysis of a UFO film outlining in minute detail how the government is "still interested" in UFO sightings which it investigates through "covert cover."

That document, like the original MJ-12 paper it somehow seems too good to be true the smoking gun that every good conspiracy theory needs and lacks. It would be as if some

researcher combing through CIA JFK files suddenly produced a memo reading, "Assassination of president scheduled for 11/22/63, Dallas. After consultation with FBI, director recommends triangulation of crossfire be utilized." It would kind of make you wonder.

Real or not, MJ-12 has spawned no shortage of legends and speculation, primarily that it still exists and is still administering the UFO cover up, coping with each alien abduction and saucer crash as it comes up. "Suicided" journalist Danny Casolaro included MJ-12 as a tentacle in his postulated secret government "Octopus." In some versions of the tale, MJ-12 is in charge of cooperation and negotiation with the alien race among us.

Or should that be "races?" John Lear, self-described former intelligence agent who is now one of the leading voices on the UFO circuit, charges that the government is aware of a veritable Rainbow Coalition of EBEs .

These range from three types of insecto-humanoid "Grays," tall, skinny and eggheaded enemies of all mankind, to the friendly "Blonds" who look more like humans but who despite their general good nature refuse to break the Star Trekkish "universal law of non-interference" to save us from the evil Grays. Also on the roster are the "Hairy Dwarves" (self explanatory), the "Very Tall Race" (also self explanatory) and the mysterious "Men in Black."

The existence of the Robertson Panel, unlike that of MJ-12, is not dubious. Convened in January, 1953 by the Central Intelligence Agency, this board of scientists issued a report that was not fully declassified until 1975.

Merely denying the existence of unexplainable or extraterrestrial UFOs, as the Roberston panel did, hardly constitutes a cover-up , except under the most circular logic. The panel, however, moved considerably beyond debunking. It recommended that the government take pains to squelch UFO

reports, to the point of promulgating an anti-UFO “education” campaign.

“This education could be accomplished by mass media such as television, motion pictures, popular articles,” the CIA panel's report said. It went on to suggest using “psychologists familiar with mass psychology” to help assemble the program and even wondered if Walt Disney Studios might be interested in producing anti-UFO cartoons.

The report went on to recommend that UFO enthusiast groups should be placed under surveillance due to “the possible use of such groups for subversive purposes.”

None of the Robertson Panel’s rather conspiratorial musings prove that the government really has something to hide; deep-frozen aliens, for example. On the other hand, they do give a depressing clue as to how institutions respond to ideas that they deem, in the words of the panel report, “a threat to the orderly functioning of the protective organs of the body politic.”

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## *Big Lies*

“Every government is run by liars, and nothing they say should be believed,” remarked journalist-gadfly I.F. Stone during the deep freeze of the Cold War. While some might quibble with the sweep of the statement, during the last half century national security obsessions indeed often put the truth into cryonic suspension.

When the Reagan administration got caught scaremongering lies about Libya, Secretary of State George Schultz felt obliged to quote Winston Churchill: “In time of war,” he said, “the truth is so precious it must be attended by a bodyguard of lies.” Of course, the United States wasn’t actually at war with Libya, but it was, Schultz helpfully offered, “pretty darn close.” In fact, Schultz had his sequence of events a bit confused. It was the bodyguard of lies that actually helped get us “pretty darn close” to war in the first place--not exactly what Churchill had in mind.

It’s no secret that all governments sow scurrilous disin

formation about their foes. Soviet Commissars convinced their subjects that all of America was a war zone of rampaging, psychopathic criminals. During the 1980s Soviet propagandists latched on to the theory that AIDS was a biological weapon perfected in U.S. military labs (see chapter 40) and persuaded much of the third world that such was the case.

Soviet disinformationists also spread the rumor in Latin America that minions of the United States were abducting children in an evil scheme to steal human organs. This black pearl of calumny is still reverberating: In the past several years, several unfortunate (and innocent) American tourists visiting Guatamala have been killed or seriously injured by lynch mobs of angry locals convinced that they were meting out justice to evil child abductors.

West European intelligence officers were convinced that the Soviets were also adept at transforming the worldwide popularity of UFO speculation into their own crafty intelligence tool. The UMMO UFO cult of Spain--its adherents are convinced that they are in contact with extraterrestrial aliens from a cosmic government called UMMO--may have begun as a mischievous hoax. But, according to UFO researcher Jacques Vallee, the French government came to suspect that the Soviet Union had infiltrated the cult for obscure purposes that might have involved manipulation of religious belief systems. Vallee points out that many of the pseudo-scientific "revelations" channeled to earthlings from the UMMO entities contained "very advanced" theories about cosmology. "Very advanced cosmology about twin universes," Vallee explains, "involving some data that had to have come straight out of the unpublished notes of Andre Sakarav." Only the KGB would have had access to those notes, French intelligence officials decided.

But why would the Soviets go to the trouble to manipulate an obscure New Age cult? Per Vallee, there are at least a couple of reasons: Cults are an ideal way to incubate ideas--and

irrational belief systems--that might later prove destabilizing to enemy governments. Also, a cult might provide cover for foreign spies doing technical assessment; after all, the UMMO "channelings" were distributed to noted Western scientists, who were encouraged to correspond with UMMO's representatives on earth.

When it comes to the black art of espionage, we've come to expect the most devious means and the worst intentions. But there's something especially rankling when the U.S. government purposely deceives the American public.

Not surprisingly, the CIA, ever on the socio-technological cutting edge, pioneered propaganda as a form of "mind control" to help mold public opinion during the heyday of the Cold War. Once-secret CIA documents from the early 1950s describe "broad" mind control operations both overseas and domestically (in violation of the Agency's charter) and high-level meetings convened to discuss "the broader aspects of psychology as it pertains to the control of groups or masses. . . ." Drawing on the lingo of Madison Avenue, Agency officials pondered "means for combating communism and 'selling' democracy."

Consumers of this psychological bill of goods were often American citizens. Ironically, part of the propaganda operation was an effort to convince the public that it was the Soviets (and certainly not the CIA) who had unilaterally launched a "sinister. . . battle for men's minds" involving "brain perversion techniques. . . so subtle and so abhorrent to our way of life that we have recoiled from facing up to them," as Agency director Allen Dulles intoned in a foreboding speech. Edward Hunter, a CIA propagandist-turned-"journalist," coined the lurid term, "brain-washing," and the official government line charged the Chinese and Soviets with bleaching the patriotic brain cells of American soldiers, transforming them into robotic "Manchurian Candidates."

In reality, though, then-secret CIA memos maintained

that there was “no indication of Red use of chemicals” and that the Soviets had no interest in controlling minds via “narcotics, hypnosis, or special mechanical devices.” The CIA, on the other hand, did take great interest in brainwashing foreigners and Americans through its notorious MK-ULTRA program (covered at length in 60 Greatest Conspiracies of All Time), launched three days after Dulles’s scarifying speech. As authors Martin Lee and Norman Solomon wrote in their book, *Unreliable Sources*, “It appears that the communist brainwashing scare was a propaganda ploy, a kind of ‘brainwashing’ or mind control in its own right designed to dupe the American people.”

An oft-used CIA technique for “disinforming” Americans without breaking the letter of the law involved planting unattributed or “black” propaganda in the foreign press, in hopes that the American media would pick up the bogus story. According a 1977 New York Times report, former CIA officers “spoke of unmistakable attempts to propagandize the American public indirectly through ‘replay’ from the foreign press,” particularly during the Vietnam War. A 1970 CIA assessment spoke of “continued replay of Chile theme materials” in the American press, including the New York Times and Washington Post. “Propaganda activities,” the report went on, “continue to generate good coverage of Chile developments along our theme guidance.”

John Stockwell, head of the CIA’s Angola Task Force during the 1970s, has described planting a phony story in the African press about Cuban soldiers raping Angolan women. Days later, the story made headlines in the American press, as expected.

In wartime (or pretty darn close to it) that celebrated bodyguard of lies has often been mustered, usually to stir up popular support for military adventures. President Johnson used the infamous Gulf of Tonkin incident, in which American destroyers were supposedly attacked off the coast of North

Vietnam, but really weren’t, as a pretext to escalate the war. In the months leading up to Operation Desert Storm, the Bush administration endorsed, but didn’t concoct, the lie that Iraqi soldiers ripped babies from incubators in a Kuwaiti hospital. Later, the Pentagon’s claims about the celebrated Patriot missile were exposed as being, shall we say, somewhat phantasmal: In fact, according to several independent analysts, the defense missile missed most of its targets--incoming Iraqi Scud missiles--and exacted a not inconsiderable amount of damage on the cities they were supposed to be defending.

But when it comes to disinformation in a wide-screen, Cinemascope format, the former thespian Ronald Reagan deserves top billing. Assisted by a gullible press corps, the Reagan administration fobbed off sundry falsehoods on an unsuspecting public.

Early in the Reagan epoch, the State Department reawakened Cold War angst when it released a White Paper purporting to have exposed a global communist conspiracy to arm El Salvador’s leftist rebels. The commie brouhaha was later debunked as a hoax.

Soon after the El Salvador scare, Secretary of State Al Haig warned the world that the Soviets were spraying innocents in Laos, Cambodia, and Afghanistan with a deadly chemical weapon. The poison, dubbed “Yellow Rain,” supposedly fell from the sky with devastating results. The hideous weapon turned out to be the natural drizzle of bee feces. State Department documents eventually emerged indicating that U.S. cold warriors pushed the false story despite warnings by various government analysts that there was no evidence to back it up.

Then there was the aforementioned disinformation campaign against Libyan leader Moammar Qaddafi, who was fingered as the hub of an international terrorist network, the mastermind behind a plot to assassinate Reagan. The goofiest result this campaign of canards was a New York Post headline that

read, "MADMAN MOAMARR NOW A DRUGGIE DRAG QUEEN"! Alas, it was too good to be true. A memo from Iran-contra fall-guy John Poindexter to Reagan later surfaced, describing a disinformation program to destabilize the Libyan government.

The Reagan administration took its propaganda efforts seriously enough to establish a de facto bureau of domestic disinformation, dubbed euphemistically, the Office of Public Diplomacy (OPD). Described by a high-ranking U.S. official as a "vast psychological warfare operation" aimed at the American public, the OPD was run by a CIA propagandist whom Agency Director William Casey had transferred to the National Security Council in an effort to sidestep the ban on CIA meddling in domestic affairs. OPD enlisted Army psy war experts in the campaign to win American hearts and minds over to Reagan's foreign policy.

OPD focused on Reagan's Nicaragua obsession, especially "gluing black hats" on the leftist Sandinista government and "white hats" on the contras, as a 1986 memo put it. In addition to producing slick fliers and lobbying congress, OPD slipped "scoops" to credulous reporters, including the canard that the Soviets planned to ship MIG fighter planes to Nicaragua.

In 1987, a General Accounting Office probe of OPD concluded that the Reaganites had operated "prohibited, covert propaganda activities" at the expense of the American public. Jack Brooks, the congressman from Texas, called OPD's work an "illegal operation" intended "to manipulate public opinion and congressional action." OPD officially shut down soon after the Iran-contra scandal began to make headlines.

And last, but hardly least, are more recent revelations that during the Reagan era the Pentagon doctored the results of "Star Wars" weapons testing. When criticized for concealing the less-than-stellar performance of the high-tech, multi-billion-dollar boondoggle, military brass invoked that old Cold War ratio

nale: We couldn't afford to let the Russkies know we had a space-age lemon on our hands. Of course, fooling the Soviets necessarily meant pulling the wool over congress and the American public, too. Which certainly didn't hurt when it came time to ask for more astronomical funding.

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## *The Internet: Tool of Satan*

The Internet is a great place to shop for shoes, gather celebrity gossip, start up a business and net a quick zillion or two. At least, that's what you're supposed to think. What if the ruse of a dot-com wonderland merely cloaks the Web's true agenda, and agenda far more sinister than, say, turning Matt Drudge into a household name?

We all know how the idea of the Net was spawned by the U.S. Defense Department back in 1969: In the aftermath of a nuclear war, even as the red rain fell on the barren wasteland that was once North America, the military needed to be sure that its top brass could send e-mail to one another. Of course, no one in 1969 had the slightest idea what e-mail was. Thus, they had to invent it. But what would transmit this "e-mail" from place to place? The Internet, naturally. So they invented that first.

Because speaking to people with slightly funny ideas is one of the things we are known to do, we spoke to some conspiracy theorists about the Internet and found, not really to any

one's surprise, that in their view the Internet's military origins are not so innocent -- and the conspiracy extends well beyond a paltry plot to invade your privacy by tracking your credit card spending and the porn sites you surf on your lunch break.

The conspiracy theorists believe a powerful group that includes businessmen, politicians and intellectuals has long been manipulating world events from behind the scenes, working toward the goal of a quasi-fascistic, one-world government. This cabal has a name: The Illuminati.

As with many other great developments, the Illuminati are (is?) behind the Internet, these conspiracy theorists say. But why?

Here are a few of the reasons that we were told about:

### •TO SPY ON YOU

"Their purpose," says Anthony Hilder, who has produced hundreds of video and audiocassette programs outlining the Illuminati plot, "is not simply a source of control but a recovery of information from all people, knowing that people would become involved around the world and voluntarily supply information which could be used against them."

### •TO CLOUD YOUR MIND WITH NAUGHTY THOUGHTS

The belief that the Illuminati uses sexual symbolism as a means mind control is another key element of the conspiracy theory. Even "WWW" is a sexual symbol.

"W is the 23rd letter in the alphabet," notes Robert Sterling, whose Konformist.com site is one of the Web's best-known repositories of conspiracy-theory research. "And 23 times three, of course, equals 69. So you've got the whole psycho-sexual thing going on."

### •TO HAIL SATAN

Are the Illuminati agents of the Anti-Christ, the "Beast" prophesied in the Bible who will cause the end of the world? Some researchers believe the "number of the beast," 666, is used



as a signal by the Illuminati to indicate their true purpose. Aaron Johnson, a Southern California conspiracy researcher and self-described "Patriot," believes that the letters "WWW" reveal the link.

"The letter W is the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet," Johnson says. "The three Ws -- World Wide Web. That's not by accident. To me it means 666. It's another part of the infrastructure of control of society and the world."

(It should be noted that in the Hebrew alphabet letters are assigned numerical values, and "Vav," a close equivalent of the letter "W," is indeed the number 6. But in Hebrew numerology "Vav-Vav-Vav" translates not as "666" but as "18," the numerical value of the word "Chai" which means "life." In fact, 18 is one of the most important "lucky numbers" in the Jewish religion.)

#### •TO DRUG YOU INTO SUBMISSION

Robert Sterling wrote an article entitled "The Web and the Pentagon," in which he compares the creation of the Internet to the military's well-documented use of LSD in mind-control experiments.

"Could the Web be merely the twin companion of LSD?" asks Sterling in the article (which appeared in the anthology *Cyberculture Counterconspiracy Vol. 2*), "the final key in an occultic project created to destroy the existing order and establish a new one?"

Sterling, however, has less in common with "Patriot" conspiracy theorists like Hilder and Johnson than he does with the late psychedelic guru Timothy Leary, who believed that the Internet, like LSD before it, can be a liberating force, rather than an oppressive one, in spite of its possibly conspiratorial genesis.

"Of course the Internet is a conspiracy," says Sterling. "It was created by the Defense Department. But then again the Defense Department also created LSD. That doesn't mean you don't take it."

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