



JUSTIFYING AN ERODED CONFIDENCE

By Jason Greene and Glenn J. Roberts

This November 22nd marks the 30th anniversary of the assassination of the youngest man ever elected to the presidency. John F. Kennedy, America's 35th president, possessed a certain charisma and flare that many politicians today strive to emulate. Famous for his speeches and wit, Kennedy was the royalty of the republic; the Shakespeare of North American politics. Superior as an international statesman, he was beyond his years as a leader. As the Cold War caused uncertainty to flourish, the American people trusted him with the future. What began with such promise ceased in a fashion that was as brusque as it was tragic. An American dream lost; an effulgent career senselessly slain. So much history was made with his political career. So much more was lost with his assassination.

The horrific day occurred in Dallas as the president was campaigning for re-election. While driving in an open motorcade through Dealey Plaza, the president was fatally shot. Immediately, the new president, Lyndon B. Johnson, ordered a commission formed (to be titled the Warren Commission) to investigate the assassination. The panel of 7 concluded that the president had been shot by a lone crazed assassin: Lee Harvey Oswald.

Within a couple of years, the report was seriously attacked by a broad range of independent researchers who questioned the evidence, findings, and procedures. For example, of the 121 witnesses interviewed, 51 said the shots came from "the grassy knoll" and not the school book depository where Oswald was situated. During the House Select Committee on Assassinations, 1976-1979, they concluded the FBI and the CIA had withheld relevant evidence from the Warren Commission, such as plans to eliminate foreign leaders (i.e., Fidel Castro of Cuba). Just as importantly, the mafia was a part of the CIA's efforts to get rid of Castro. The Israeli secret service (Mossad) attempted to duplicate the assassination. After studying every detail of the assassination, repeated attempts to duplicate the assassination resulted in repeated failures. The Mossad concluded the killing required a minimum of two gunmen.

Just two days prior to the assassination, Kennedy issued National Security Memorandum No. 273 designed to withdraw 1000 troops from Vietnam following the '64 election. 2 days after the assassination, Johnson reversed the decision and furthered involvement in Vietnam. This war killed 58,000 Americans and almost crippled the economy. Riots and demonstrations were a daily occurrence, destroying moral and national pride. Four students were shot and killed while protesting at Kent State.

One of the most outspoken critics of the American policy in Vietnam was Martin Luther King, junior. King, the leader of the black civil rights movement, organized numerous peaceful demonstrations against the war. The FBI made several attempts to discredit King to diminish his public support. King, like Kennedy, was fatally shot by a lone crazed assassin: James Earl Ray. Numerous facts surrounding the case created a haze of suspicion. Ironically, King opposed violent demonstrations and advocated peaceful integration. Within a couple of months, another public figure who opposed the Vietnam war was assassinated: Robert F. Kennedy. The former attorney general and senator of New York at the time was running for the Democratic nomination. An ardent critic of the administration's policies, Kennedy had just won the California Primary, virtually assuring him of the nomination (to run for the president in the 1968 election). Moments after his victory speech, he was gunned down in the hotel pantry by yet another lone crazed assassin: Sirhan Sirhan. This