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House will investigate the October Surprise

Last week the House finally voted to conduct a full-scale hearing into the "October Surprise"—the allegation that the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign committee made an agreement with the Iranian government to prevent 52 American hostages being held in Teheran from being released before that year's presidential election. The benefit for the Reagan campaign was the defeat of Jimmy Carter's bid for re-election. The quid pro quo for the Iranians was badly-needed arms for their war with Iraq. In fact, of course, Carter was defeated and the Iranians received massive arms shipments from Israel, authorized by the Reagan administration.

In 1987, *In These Times* was the first national news outlet to publish an in-depth story outlining the basic elements of this alleged conspiracy by the Reagan-Bush committee. Over the next four years we published several follow-up pieces as new evidence came to the surface. But our efforts, along with those of others, were ignored by the commercial media and by members of Congress until last year, when former national security council member Gary Sick published an op-ed article in the *New York Times*.

After Sick's piece appeared, Republicans and administration retainers in the media launched a campaign of damage control. Articles in *Newsweek* and *The New Republic* pronounced the idea of such dirty work to be outside the bounds of legitimate discourse and pressure mounted to sweep the whole thing back under a rug. For a while it looked as if the issue would not be seriously examined.

In the deliberations of the House bill that established a 13-member panel to investigate the issue, Minority Leader Robert Michel (R-IL) introduced an amendment to limit the investigation to six months, expenditures to \$300,000 and to include investigations of the Carter administration's efforts to free the hostages. Michel's amendment went down on a straight party vote and the bill was then passed by 217-192.

The House panel will now begin an open-ended investigation of the activities of the Reagan-Bush campaign committee. There is no time limit and no limit on expenses, which the Congressional Budget Office estimates will range from \$1.2 million to \$2.5 million.

There is, of course, no guarantee that even now there will be a full and honest investigation. Remember the Iran-contra hearings, which ended up being a simple whitewash? But several House members appear determined to discover the truth, and a lot of new information is likely to come out during the course of the hearings. In any case, the House action alone is a rare victory for democracy.

Who shot the pope? New evidence surfaces

Writing in the February 7 issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*, Peter Hebblethwaite offers new evidence on the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul in 1981. Among other things, Hebblethwaite's piece confirms testimony by CIA analyst Melvin Goodman at last year's confirmation hearings for Robert Gates as director of the CIA. Goodman said that in order to conform with then-CIA Director William Casey's hawkish notions, Gates "doctored assessments of the assassination attempt on the pope in May 1981 in order to suggest KGB involvement."

At the time, the theory that the assassination was a Soviet plot was publicized by administration flacks such as Claire Sterling, who claimed in her 1983 book *The Time of the Assassins* that Mehmet Ali Agca, the man who shot the pope, had been trained by the Bulgarian secret service. She alleged that Agca had acted on behalf of Yuri Andropov, then head of the KGB and later first secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

Hebblethwaite writes that the new evidence surfaced in November, after the Senate had confirmed Gates. In a speech by Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti to help launch Luca di Sciana's new book, *Karol Wojtyla*, Andreotti pointed out that there had been a "gross error" in the Agca trial. Agca had testified that the final arrangements

for the assassination had been made with the Rome head of Bulgaria's airline, Sergei Antonov, at Antonov's apartment. But when Agca gave the court a sketch of the apartment, the judge ignored the fact that he had not drawn Antonov's flat but that of the floor below. There, according to Hebblethwaite, "lived a foreigner whose papers can be found in the archives of the secret service of a non-Eastern country."

Andreotti has not yet disclosed the name of this mysterious stranger, but Hebblethwaite reports that his name is Father Felix Morlion, a Belgian Dominican well-known as a CIA agent. Morlion is a man with a record. In 1962, he had played a role in resolving the Cuban missile crisis. And in 1969, Monsignor Carlos De Angelis gave a suitcase full of documents to Mino Pecorelli, an investigative journalist murdered in 1979. They showed that Morlion's Pro Deo Institute was a school for anti-Soviet spies.

There are other reasons for mistrusting Agca's account of his meeting with Antonov. Agca claimed Antonov's wife was present and that his 10-year-old daughter, Ani, served them tea. But Ani had left Rome to go to school in Sofia three months before, and Antonov's wife had left Rome two days earlier than the meeting date.

Hebblethwaite points out that Andreotti is on excellent terms with the Vatican, with which, one may be sure, Andreotti shared this information. Hebblethwaite concludes that there was no Bulgarian connection. "Antonov was 'framed,'" he writes, and Agca "was 'coached' by some other intelligence agency."

In 1983, in an article about Claire Sterling and her book, our own Diana Johnstone drew the same conclusion, though without the confirming evidence provided by Hebblethwaite.



Lie piled on lie

JOEL BLEIFUSS IS ENTITLED TO OFFER HIS BIZARRE viewpoint on the *JFK* film (*ITT*, Jan. 15). He does not, however, have the moral right to do so by the publication of lies. I will point to a few such lies published by Bleifuss.

He seeks to discredit Fletcher Prouty, "Mr. X" in Oliver Stone's film *JFK*, who was there portrayed by Donald Sutherland, and to demean Victor Marchetti, a former CIA officer. Of them, Bleifuss, quoting "a researcher" (unnamed, since he "requested anonymity"), writes that they "represent a dissident, far-right branch of the CIA." Prouty and Marchetti had both offered evidence of CIA involvement in the assassination and thus had apparently won the enmity of the secret informant and Bleifuss. The facts are relevant. Prouty has never been in the CIA. Marchetti resigned from the CIA and, together with John Marks, a fellow of Harvard's Institute of Politics and a leader of the left-of-center Center for National Security Studies, published a book, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, which was an important attack, from the left, upon the "totalitarian" nature of the CIA.

Bleifuss' shrouded "source" then was quoted as calling Prouty "a Nazi crackpot" and asserted that the film *JFK* was "a propaganda platform for Nazis," ostensibly because it presented Prouty's views. Those who saw the film may remember the Sutherland monologue in which he spoke out eloquently, as Prouty, against the continuation of the war in Vietnam, against the exploitation of the people of Central America, against the overthrow by the CIA and the military-industrial complex of Arbenz in Guatemala and Mossadegh in Iran, the rigging of elections in Europe after World War II by the CIA, and the use by U.S. intelligence forces of "the Nazi intelligence apparatus." Prouty, through Sutherland, called for the end of attacks upon Castro's Cuba. Prouty, through Sutherland, observed that Kennedy had been assassinated because he "set out to withdraw from Vietnam," citing a National Security Advisory memorandum he had authorized. Indeed, it was Col. Prouty, in real life, who helped to draft the memorandum and the Trip Report upon which it was largely based.

For the fictionalized version of the event, see *JFK*. For lies about it, read *In These Times*. For the facts, read *Plausible Denial*, which I wrote and to which Prouty contributed the introduction.

I do not believe that a single statement authored by Prouty in the film differs from an analysis of the same historic event published over the years by *In These Times*.

A question occurs. How can Bleifuss, the "In Person" editor of *In These Times*, write that the film is a propaganda platform for Nazis for presenting Prouty's views when those views are similar to, or identical with, those previously espoused by *In These Times*? A more serious question is also apparent. How dare Bleifuss, writing for an audience of critical, thinking people, rely for his false witness upon a "source," a "researcher," who must remain "anonymous" at his own request? Was Sen. Joe McCarthy ever more blatant? I think not, and I, fresh out of law school in 1951, crossed swords with him on more than one occasion as I represented some of his victims.

McCarthy also published falsehoods and

also relied upon secret informants, but he, at least, was decked out in full wolf regalia and never claimed to be a sheep.

In discussing my book, *Plausible Denial*, during an interview with a Pacifica radio station, KPFA, I had defended Prouty and former New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison from several false attacks that had been made upon them in an article published by *Esquire*. For having done so, Bleifuss turned his practiced eye and poisoned pen upon me.

First, he asserts that Mark Lane has written a book about the assassination that "puts the blame squarely on the CIA." News flash: *Time* magazine and CNN have published a poll revealing that three-quarters of American people believe there was a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy, and half of them believe that the CIA was involved. Actually, *Plausible Denial* is in large measure the story of a trial in the U.S. District Court in which I represented Liberty Lobby, Inc., the publishers of *Spotlight*, a newspaper that had printed an article written by Marchetti indicating CIA complicity in the assassination. We won the case, and the forewoman of the jury stated that the evidence adduced at the trial constrained the conclusion that the CIA had indeed killed President Kennedy. These facts have appeared in newspaper reviews of *Plausible Denial* published throughout the country. Word has apparently not yet reached Bleifuss. It was the jury and the evidence upon which they relied that "puts the blame squarely on the CIA."

Bleifuss asserts, regarding the broadcast, that "Lane, however, failed to identify himself as a Liberty Lobby lawyer" and that I failed to identify myself "as the lawyer for the Institute for Historical Review, the California-based organization that posits the Holocaust as a Jewish hoax." All serious charges; all blatant lies.

Of course, I was the lawyer in the trial of *Hunt vs. Liberty Lobby*. I said so repeatedly throughout *Plausible Denial*. I said so in the KPFA interview on several occasions and I have said so on hundreds of national and local radio and TV programs. Bleifuss, I fear, is a liar. He could not have been unaware that he was deliberately making a false statement when he said I had failed to identify myself as the attorney for the defendant in a case that I had tried, won and which I had discussed so often, so publicly.

The assertion that I am the lawyer for the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) is also a false assertion. Various lawyers have over the years represented that organization in various lawsuits. They have been lawyers admitted to practice in California. I have never served as counsel for the IHR.

To have done so is not a dishonorable thing. The ACLU represents David Duke, and honorable and distinguished members of the bar have often represented individuals and organizations that hold to unpopular views and views not shared by their counsel. It is just a fact, however, that I have never represented the IHR.

Likewise, the statement that the IHR "posits the Holocaust as a Jewish hoax" is false. Is there not presently sufficient anti-Semitism in the U.S.? Must Bleifuss invent anti-Semitism even where it does not exist? During September 1991, the allegation as to whether or not the IHR has ever stated that the Holocaust did not exist was subject to litigation. The case was tried in the County of Los Angeles, Superior Court of California, before Judge Stephen M. Lachs, who is Jewish, as am I. Judge Lachs stated that he had read the voluminous record, comprised in part of all the relevant publications of the IHR, and that the IHR had never stated that the Holocaust had not occurred. He ordered counsel for the plaintiff in that case never to state to the jury that the IHR had ever contended that the Holocaust had not occurred. He ordered counsel for the plaintiff not to make such a false statement to the jury. On Oct. 30, 1991, Judge Lachs entered an order dismissing the case against the IHR.

Mark Lane
Washington, D.C.

Joel Bleifuss replies: Will the real Mark Lane please stand up? One of the few honest statements that Lane makes in the above letter is that he is Jewish. In fact, Lane hauls out his religious heritage anytime anyone brings up his ongoing association with the leading lights of America's anti-Semitic far right.

Lane is not so quick to bring up the fact that he was a co-editor of *Zionist Watch*, a publication founded in September 1987 by Liberty Lobby, the largest and most influential anti-Semitic organization in the country. *Zionist Watch* (now called *New American View*) was originally edited by Mark Lane and Victor Marchetti. Lois Patterson, the Liberty Lobby's Board of Policy secretary, once described *Zionist Watch* as a newsletter designed to focus "exclusively on the massive power of Zionism in America and the world ... [and] examine the extent of control by this alien foreign international political force and how it works to undermine our Constitution and its traditions of liberty and national sovereignty."

Lane faults me for quoting an anonymous researcher who described Fletcher Prouty as a "Nazi crackpot." That source, whom I

greatly respect, requested anonymity for good reasons. I would ask readers to take my word on that. And I would ask Lane: Do you really think Prouty is "a straight-laced, patriotic, middle-of-the-road American," as you stated Dec. 20, 1991, during an interview on Pacifica station KPFA?

Prouty sits on the Liberty Lobby's Populist Action Committee. He is now marketing his book, *Secret Team*, through Noontide Press, the publishing arm of Liberty Lobby that also sells the seminal anti-Semitic work, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Finally, the Liberty Lobby paper *Spotlight* (circulation 200,000) reports that Prouty was prepared to go to court, in the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) case Lane mentions above, and testify as a character witness for Willis A. Carto, the founder of Liberty Lobby and IHR.

It was Carto who once wrote: "Hitler's defeat was the defeat of Europe. And of America. How could we have been so blind? The blame, it seems, must be laid at the door of the international Jews. It was their propaganda, lies and demands which blinded the West to what Germany was doing. ... If Satan himself, with all of his superhuman genius and diabolical ingenuity at his command, had tried to create a permanent disintegration and force for the destruction of the nations, he could have done no better than to invent the Jews."

In his new book *Plausible Denial*—No. 5 on the *New York Times* best-seller list (the non-fiction one)—Lane describes his bourbon-sipping buddy Carto as a man who "challenges the power structure, the right of financial institutions, unelected by the people, to rule the nation, whatever their religions or political affiliation may be."

With such praise, Lane might have also made a good character witness for Carto during the above-mentioned court case—if he hadn't been working as the Liberty Lobby's attorney. As Lane points out, he cannot practice in California, and therefore he was not the attorney of record in that state for Carto, the Liberty Lobby or the IHR. But in a deposition for the case taken in New York, "Mark Lane, Esq." is listed as "attorney for the defendant—Liberty Lobby, Inc."

The case in question—California Superior Court Case No. C62 92 24—involved a suit by a survivor of Auschwitz, Mel Mermelstein, against Carto and two organizations Carto founded—Liberty Lobby and IHR. Mermelstein had previously gone to court and successfully forced IHR to pay him the \$50,000 reward it had offered to anyone who could prove that the Holocaust happened. In the course of that trial, Carto said in a deposition: "Certainly there were no Jews gassed at Auschwitz, because there were no gas chambers. There were no Jews gassed at any of the camps in Germany."

Lane maintains in his letter that "the IHR has never stated that the Holocaust had not occurred." Mark Weber, the associate editor of IHR's *Journal of Historical Review*, explained the IHR position on the Holocaust to Paul Rauber of the *East Bay Express*: "If by the 'Holocaust' you mean the political persecution of Jews, some scattered killings, if you mean a cruel thing that happened, no one denies that. But if one says that the 'Holocaust' means the systematic extermination of 6 million to 8 million Jews in concentration camps, that's what we think there is not evidence for."