

An offer we can refuse

The Hidden History of the JFK Assassination

Lamar Waldron

Berkeley, California: Counterpoint, 2013, h/b, £20 (approx.)

Waldron has some form. This is his third book on JFK and is largely a rehashing and enlargement of the previous two.¹ He has earlier argued for a secret Kennedy venture known as C-Day that planned for a coup in Cuba to be carried out by the Pentagon and the CIA which would be synced with the assassination of Castro by an undercover operator on the island. The Soviets would be blamed, the populace would rise up, and an armada of Cuban exiles would invade (with the US military on standby in the wings awaiting a call). The only trouble with this is that there is no evidence that C-Day existed; but this hasn't prevented Waldron for continuing to argue the case and stating that JFK's failure to realise the plan resulted in his assassination.

The present book is a wet dream for the-Mafia-did-it crowd. According to Waldron the hit was organised and carried out by those two poster boys of organised crime, Santo Trafficante and Carlos Marcello. Yes, we've heard this before, and the theory has been knocked down before, but it keeps coming back like a bad penny.²

Let's start where our author started, with an individual

¹ *Ultimate Sacrifice: John and Robert Kennedy, the Plan for a Coup in Cuba, and the Murder of JFK* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2005), *Legacy of Secrecy: The Long Shadow of the JFK Assassination* (Berkeley, California: Counterpoint, 2008). Jim DiEugenio slices-and-dices the first title at <http://www.ctka.net/ultimate_final.htm>.

² The Mafia-did-it started with Robert Blakey and the House Select Committee on Assassinations and the publication of its *Report* in 1978. The thesis has been followed up by John H. Davis, *Mafia Kingfish: Carlos Marcello and the Assassination of John F. Kennedy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), and David E. Scheim, *Contract on America: The Mafia Murder of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Shapolsky, 1988) to name but two.

named Jack Van Laningham upon whom Waldron predicates virtually his whole argument. Van Laningham was an FBI informant/snitch who was in prison with Marcello and he, Marcello, is alleged to have said to him, 'Yeah, I had the son of a bitch killed. I'm glad I did. I'm sorry I couldn't have done it myself.'

Did Marcello actually say this? We only have Van Laningham's word for it (he had been promised early release for co-operating on the Marcello investigation). And if he did say it does it really mean anything? Could it not have been simple *braggadocio* (success has many fathers)? Marcello was then an old man on the foothills of dementia, and his mind was wandering. We'll probably never know one way or the other, not that this is that important.

Working from this starting point Waldron then cherry-picks his evidence to build up his case. He is a diligent researcher but does tend to skew the evidence in the theory's favour.

If Marcello goes in for some self-aggrandising so does Waldron. In his Preface he notes that his previous two books were each more than nine hundred pages with 'a combined total of almost four thousand endnotes documenting sources' (wow!). He continues, 'my work has received more mainstream press coverage that most books documenting a conspiracy in JFK's murder'.³ And so on, and so on. Now comes something quite remarkable. 'Though *The Hidden History of the JFK Assassination* has the same high level of documentation as my earlier works, we [*sic*] have dispensed with endnotes for this book.' Oh, what a pity. And here is the clincher: 'Now, it's easy to simply Google most quotations to find more information about their source!' What an innovative time-saving suggestion this is for the author; but time-intensive for the reader. It's bad enough some writers putting their notes on their website rather than in a book, but here we haven't even got that.

There's much of interest buried away in the book, but

³ Possibly because he takes the spotlight off government agencies and those associated with them.

the work's prolixity and without sourcing to hand sadly diminishes whatever value it has.

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