

The JFK Assassination and the Lost Prospects for Peace

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Report From Iron Mountain: On The Possibility and Desirability of Peace is a uniquely important document worthy of careful reconsideration a half-century after JFK's passing. It points to not only the rationales behind the military industrial complex and its overarching influence, but perhaps more importantly how a very real discussion concerning the nation's priorities proceeded under Kennedy's watch—a window of possibility that was violently shut on November 22, 1963.[1]

Those who are old enough may likely offer their recollections of where they were at the time they received the news of President John F. Kennedy's death. Then a bachelor, my father heard about the assassination while traveling home from a business trip to visit family. As he approached the front door his father was waiting at the threshold and, much like the rest of the nation, they proceeded to cry in each others' arms.

Such recollections suggest the degree of potential Americans recognized in themselves that was confirmed in their young leader's intelligence and charm. This sense of possibility extended to the political system more broadly, and it has since been effectively shattered and replaced by a perpetual effort to becloud and sideline attempts at a more concrete public understanding of past and present issues and events. Among these were the very crucial concerns at stake in the early 1960s that remain underlying motivations for US domestic and foreign policies to this day.

During the Kennedy Administration there was an unmistakable reconsideration of the relationship between the permanent wartime economy with the broader national and international political economy. This was evident not only in JFK's move to scale back US involvement in Vietnam, evident in [National Security Action Memorandum 263](#), but also in his attempt to dismantle the Central Intelligence Agency, and challenge the power of the Federal Reserve Bank by issuing genuine silver-backed currency. In very short order such actions were overturned by Lyndon Johnson and the US was plunged into a murderous and costly war. With Kennedy's passing the world's inhabitants may have lost any serious prospect of world peace.

"This Book is Not to Be Misunderstood."

Released in 1967, *Report From Iron Mountain: On The Possibility and Desirability of Peace* (hereafter *Iron Mountain*) was presented by its publisher Dial Press as the product of a secret government-sponsored Special Study Group. The initial account of the paper's origins asserted that it was leaked by one of the study's participants to New York-based freelance writer Leonard Lewin. According to this story, the group was commissioned with the task of examining whether and how a preeminently modern nation state such as the US might

successfully transition to a peacetime economy.

Upon Dial's assurance of the report's authenticity *Esquire* magazine prepared a 28,000-word condensation of the book, which went on to become a *New York Times* bestseller eventually translated into fifteen languages. Yet controversy inevitably followed the work given its prescient observations and uncertain origins.

"One informed source confirmed that the 'Special Study Group', as the book called it, was set up by a top official in the Kennedy Administration," *US News and World Report* observed shortly after the book's release. "The source added that the report was drafted and eventually submitted to President Johnson, who was said to have 'hit the roof'—and then ordered that the report be bottled up for all time." [2]

Iron Mountain's contents were unsettling from the outset not because it was a joke, but rather because from an elite policy standpoint many of its observations were entirely logical, thus fostering the military industrial complex's potentially unrestrained nature warned of in President Eisenhower's 1961 farewell address.

Rumored to be a possible author or participant in the study, Kennedy's ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith wrote in the *Washington Post* under his pseudonym Herschel McLandress, "As I would put my personal reputé behind the authenticity of this document, so I would testify to the validity of its conclusions. My reservations relate only to the wisdom of releasing it to an obviously unconditioned public." [3]

For several years *Iron Mountain's* specific origin remained a mystery until Lewin claimed authorship in 1972, stating that the report was indeed a colossal hoax conceived by himself and *New York Times* journalist (eventually publisher of *The Nation*) Victor Navasky to cultivate discussion of war and peace in an incendiary way. [4]

Yet it was not until the early 1990s when the book became an underground phenomenon among US patriot and constitutionalist groups— who deemed it as an authentic government document and thus in the public domain—that it raised the ire of a liberal intelligentsia that sought to further downplay its significance through sensationalistic innuendo and even legal action.

"The nutties out there are told by their leaders—who claim to have special knowledge—that this is a real government document because it fits how they view the Government: wicked," Lewin told the *New York Times* in 1996 as Simon and Schuster threatened to prosecute political activists distributing digital copies of the book. [5] "It's like trying to get rid of mildew on your shower stall," career conspiraphobe Chip Berlet exclaimed. [6] "Paranoid conspiracy theorists now believe that the quashing of the Iron Mountain report is itself a real government conspiracy because they are paranoid and conspiracy theorists [*sic*]" Navasky declared. [7]

The truth lies somewhere in between, and the controversy over whether Lewin wrote *Iron Mountain* is far less important than how the manuscript's observations were especially characteristic of the ideas and possibilities being entertained by policy elites in the early 1960s. In fact, the essence and significance of *Iron Mountain* transcends political persuasions because most all of it rings true and is all but confirmed in contemporary issues and events.

“This book is not to be misunderstood,” Colonel L. Fletcher Prouty asserts.

It is a novel; but it’s content is so close to the reality of those years that many readers insist that the “report” must be true. I have discussed this fully with the author. He assures me that the book is a novel and that he intended it to read that way in order to emphasize its serious content.[8]

Beginning in 1961 Kennedy’s Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara tapped academe and the business sector to bring in a new crop of strategists and policy makers to the Pentagon, many of whom were not versed in Grand Strategy and thus open to examination of the perpetual warfare state and its political justifications. “We would take part in luncheon discussions that sounded much like Lewin’s writing,” Prouty recalls. “That is what was said in the halls of the Pentagon. What Lewin wrote is true to life, and we would all do well to heed his words.” With this in mind it seems safe to conclude that *Iron Mountain* was in all probability one or more government-sponsored think tank reports skillfully distilled by Lewin into a more accessible form.[9]

Engineering Past, Present and Future

Report from Iron Mountain is in many ways a design for the world as it exists today, with endless war—once against communism and now “terrorism”—as the defining basis for human existence under state guidance and control. As author G. Edward Griffin puts it, the book “is an accurate summary of the plan that has already created our present. It is now shaping our future.”[10]

Like the militarized police state depicted in Orwell’s *1984*, the overarching theme of *Iron Mountain* is that in an era when nuclear weapons threaten to eliminate all life on earth, military ventures must take the form of protracted and uncertain conflicts that expend resources, justify the constant state of military readiness and, most importantly, make the nation state’s system of governance appear necessary and legitimate to its subjects.

“The war system makes the stable government of society possible,” Lewin writes. “It does this essentially by providing an external necessity for a society to accept political rule. In so doing it establishes the basis for nationhood and the authority of government to control its constituents.”[11]

Iron Mountain concludes that in addition to sustaining the political realm, war and militarization comprise a bulwark for virtually every facet of society—economic, sociological, ecological, cultural and scientific.[12] Not surprisingly, today the “[u]ncritical support of all things martial,” one observer notes, “is quickly becoming the new normal for our youth.”[13]

Indeed, war is so essential to the overall order of things that new “enemies” must be conceived to provide continued justification for the warfare state. As the “War on Poverty” and the especially disastrous “War on Drugs” helped to destroy and criminalize African American families and their communities, *Iron Mountain* suggests how another broader plan was being conceived to manufacture all encompassing nonmilitary crises from which the state could be presented as savior and proponent of peace, thereby positioning itself to reshape the societal and geopolitical designs and ways of life. “[A]n effective political substitute would require “alternate enemies,” some of which might seem equally farfetched in the context of the current war system,” the document observes, anticipating the

development of the present era's pseudo-environmentalism that demarcates a new enemy with which to wage war—humanity itself.

It may be, for instance, that gross pollution of the environment can eventually replace the possibility of mass destruction by nuclear weapons as the principal apparent threat to the survival of the species. Poisoning of the air, and of the principal sources of food and water supply, is already well advanced, and at first glance would seem promising in this respect; it constitutes a threat that can be dealt with only through social organization and political power.[14]

Close to half a century later the intentional pollution of the food and water supplies by genetically modified organisms and fluoridation, widescale programs of geoengineering and weather modification that poison the air, poorly designed and ramshackle nuclear power plants, and the especially ubiquitous and stealth pollution of electromagnetic devices constitute a tremendous impact on the environment and all living things.

And as they take their toll lavishly funded private organizations carry out elaborate and coordinated public relations campaigns to convince the population that carbon—of which all living things are constituted—is the chief cause of environmental degradation and catastrophe. In a thoroughly Orwellian turn the new enemy is humankind, while scientific and bureaucratic elites largely responsible for actual environmental destruction escape serious scrutiny or punishment.

The Conspiratorial Style of the Global Elite

Iron Mountain is a “hoax” or “satire” for those who would lead us to believe that historical phenomena especially of a political nature are a product of happenstance. Sometimes they may be. But honest historical accounts suggest how often those with exclusive means and interests act to shape vital matters of the day. Reasoning to the contrary has as its corollary two sets of assumptions.

The first suggests that overwhelmingly powerful institutions such as the US State Department and Pentagon, the National Security Council, leading think tanks, central bankers, transnational corporations and the forces behind them act in transparent and almost wholly uncoordinated fashion with the same motivations as the neighborhood paperboy—the pursuit of profit.

Yet as C. Wright Mills revealed over a half century ago, and as David Rothkopf has more recently argued, the motivations of the already wealthy “superclass” in fact revolve around increasing access to relationships within the corridors of institutional power in an effort to minimize unpredictability and exert greater control over present and future events.[15] In fact, in the era of “too big to fail” and carbon emission taxes John D. Rockefeller’s assertion that “competition is a sin” takes on renewed significance.

A second assumption is that such entities are incapable of producing, overseeing, and carrying out long-range strategies to engineer the world’s social and physical relations and ecosystem. A look at policy proposals and plans in the years following *Iron Mountain* from entities such as The Club of Rome, the Project for a New American Century, or the multiple concerted funding efforts and campaigns supported by major philanthropic foundations also calls such a notion into serious question. While there may be disagreements within influential circles over, say, whether covert destabilization or outright aggression to prompt

regime change in Middle Eastern countries, or the techniques for keeping track of the world's inhabitants, *regime change* and *surveillance* comprise broader plans and are not open to debate.

The dismissal of such a perspective as “conspiracy theorizing” should be broadly understood as an exercise in drawing public and intellectual attention away from the tremendous multifaceted power wielded by today's ruling elite—those whose influence and interests transcend national borders and almost without exception defy the common good.

Iron Mountain provides an overview into the motives and rationales of those who pull the strings of our elected leaders, enlisting our faith in the illusion of popular sovereignty—a faith by which the public has been systematically misled and abused since November 22, 1963.

Notes

1. Mainstream news media and government still insist on the validity of the Warren Commission's Report. Yet between 75 and 90 % of Americans do not believe Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. Gregory Korte, “Conspiracy Theories over JFK's Assassination Thrive,” *USA Today*, September 26, 2010, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/washington/2010-09-26-jfk-assassination-conspiracy-theories_N.htm See also Adrian Salbuchi's excellent discussion of *Report from Iron Mountain*, “Final Conflict 2012? Toward the Engineering of World War III,” *GlobalResearch*, October 3, 2012, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/final-conflict-2012-towards-the-engineering-world-war-iii/5307020>
2. “Hoax or Horror? A Book That Shook the White House,” *US News and World Report*, November 20, 1967. In Leonard C. Lewin, *Report From Iron Mountain On The Possibility and Desirability of Peace*, New York: Free Press, 1996, 138.
3. Herschel McLandress, “News of War and Peace You're Not Ready For,” November 26, 1967. In Leonard C. Lewin, *Report From Iron Mountain On The Possibility and Desirability of Peace*, New York: Free Press, 1996, 132-133.
4. Doreen Carvajal, “Onetime Political Satire Becomes a Right-Wing Rage and a Hot Internet Item,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1996.
5. Carvajal, “Onetime Political Satire.”
6. Carvajal, “Onetime Political Satire.”
7. Victor Navasky, “Introduction,” in Leonard C. Lewin, *Report From Iron Mountain On The Possibility and Desirability of Peace*, New York: Free Press, 1996, xv.
8. L. Fletcher Prouty, *JFK: The CIA, Vietnam, and the Plot to Assassinate John F. Kennedy*, New York: Birch Lane Press/Carol Publishing, 1992, 356f. Prouty served in the top levels of the Pentagon during the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations, acting as a liaison between the military and intelligence communities, and his correspondence with New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison were the basis for the character “X” in Oliver Stone's

early 1990s blockbuster film *JFK*. For more information visit <http://prouty.org/>

9. Prouty, 219.

10. G. Edward Griffin, *The Creature from Jekyll Island: A Second Look at the Federal Reserve*, 5th Edition, Westlake Village CA: 2010, 576.

11. Lewin, 79.

12. Aaron R. O'Connell, "The Permanent Militarization of America," *New York Times*, November 12, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/05/opinion/the-permanent-militarization-of-america.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

13. Lewin, 94-95.

14. Lewin, 81.

15. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1956; David Rothkopf, *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making*, New York: Farrar, Strous and Giroux, 2009.

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James F. Tracy was a tenured Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Florida Atlantic University from 2002 to 2016. He was fired by FAU ostensibly for violating the university's policies imposed on the free speech rights of faculty. Tracy has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the university, with trial set to begin November 27, 2017. Tracy received his PhD from University of Iowa. His work on media history, politics and culture has appeared in a wide variety of academic journals, edited volumes, and alternative news and opinion outlets. Additional information is available at MemoryHoleBlog.com, TracyLegalDefense.org, and jamesftracy.wordpress.com.

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