



Harvey Karten Member: NY Film Critics Online
New York Cool
The Reflecting Pool, July 2008

Just when Americans are at peace over the JFK assassination; i.e., no-one is taking up arms against the [Chief Justice] Warren Commission report that states that the former President was killed by a lone assassin—along comes a few individuals who believe that our own U.S. government was partly responsible for the attacks on New York's Twin Towers and on the Pentagon. Writer-director Jarek Kupac, in the role of Russian-born American journalist Alex Prokop, and producer Joseph Culp playing the part of Paul Cooper, a man who lost his daughter on the American Airlines plane that crashed into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2002, form their own little conspiracy. Their aim is to suggest (without marshalling enough evidence to convince a jury or even necessarily their film audience) that the CIA, the FBI, NORAD, and high-level figures in the administration, were largely at fault for not preventing the attacks that killed 3,000 people. In a sense, their beliefs are akin to those who still believe that President Franklin D. Roosevelt knew—and even provoked—the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in order to get the U.S. out of a long economic Depression. Presumably, high-level administrators were looking for an excuse in 2002 to get to war against particular nations in the Middle East, taking aim against Al Queda, the Taliban, Saddam Hussein, and (though the performers do not come right out with it) to ensure the unobstructed flow of oil into our country.

While the acting is heavy-handed at times, particularly seen when Jack Mahoney (Alex Hyde-White), a conservative TV commentator perhaps modeled after Rush Limbaugh, trashes Alex Prokop for his left-wing report, Paul Cooper, for heading a class action lawsuit against specific members of the administration, and Lisa Georgia McGuire (Lisa Black) for publishing an article purportedly exposing the government for a massive cover-up.

Discussing the “perfect” symmetrical collapse of the Twin Towers and Building 7, they take aim on that last edifice. A firefighter relates his eyewitness memories of that building's collapse even though there was “no fireball” from on high but rather some explosions on the floor below. Whether by coincidence or design, the Port Authority had shut off the power in the buildings for several days before the attack, thereby knocking out security camrers, while the scrap metal, which could potentially be used as evidence, was allegedly sold to China for use in—who knows? Coca-Cola cans? Larry Silverstein, owner of the buildings, received a fortune in insurance money as it was determined that the two towers' destruction was the product of two separate terrorist attacks. In addition, no one except a handful of government officials saw the Pentagon tapes, the man who piloted a plane expertly into just the right corner of the Pentagon building was reportedly a poor pilot who “would not be trusted flying a kite.”

As a Russian-born American, journalist Prokop cites the Katyn forest massacre in which Soviet troops at the start of World War 2 murdered scores of Polish officers, blaming the assassinations on the Germans: the truth came out only fifty years later with the downfall of Communism. He's not surprised, therefore, that the U.S. will continue to withhold evidence that the government agencies were aware of an imminent attack and did nothing to stop it. Notably, Air Force planes in a field near the Pentagon could have taken off immediately on hearing about the Twin Towers' demise with the aim of stopping the terrorists from plowing into the Pentagon.

I for one am not convinced by this evidence, perhaps because the acting is so heavy-handed or because we do not actually see copies of testimony from eyewitnesses. The way government officials like a major at the Pentagon walk away in a huff is overly melodramatic. Then again this is a docu-drama, not a straight documentary—a genre that does usually do a better job at creating excitement than a talking-heads film. Whether you believe or not, clearly, “The Reflecting Pool” is worth reflection.

Not Rated. 105 minutes. © 2008 by Harvey Karten Member: NY Film Critics Online