

February 10, 1998

Professor Ernest R. May
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79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Professor May:

I was glad to have the opportunity of speaking with you again by phone a few weeks ago about Cuba-related records. I still remember with fondness the two stints that I had as your teaching fellow in the Rise of American Power.

I am writing to invite you, on behalf of the Assassination Records Review Board, to participate in a meeting in Washington, D.C., on April 14, 1998. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss criteria, standards, and methods for declassification and release of Federal government records. Attendees will include officials from government, academe, and the private sector.

As you are aware, the Assassination Records Review Board is an independent Federal agency that was created by the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, 44 U.S.C. § 2107 (JFK Act). The five board members—the Hon. John R. Tunheim, Prof. Henry F. Graff, Dean Kermit L. Hall, Dr. William R. Joyce, and Prof. Anna Kasten Nelson—were appointed by President Clinton and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. During the past three and one-half years, the Review Board has overseen the declassification of tens of thousands of intelligence and other records related to the assassination of President Kennedy. The Review Board has interpreted its mandate broadly to include, for example, some previously classified military records relating to U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba and Vietnam in the early 1960s.

In its work, the Review Board and its staff have acquired a sophisticated expertise on declassification issues and have applied the unique standards of the JFK Act to the records of numerous agencies,

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including the CIA, FBI, NSA, Secret Service, and the Departments of Justice, State, and Treasury. The standards for release of records under the JFK Act are much broader than those of either the Freedom of Information Act or Executive Order 12958. As it prepares its Final Report, the Review Board is considering whether it should make recommendations to Congress and the President based upon its experience in dealing with declassification issues.

The Review Board believes that you would be able to make a valuable contribution to a discussion of several inter-related issues, including standards for declassification, procedures for improving and expediting government-wide declassification efforts, and proposals for clarifying and improving records-management procedures. There will be no need for you to prepare a paper or materials for this discussion, although we would be pleased to receive copies of papers on the topic that you would like to share with the Review Board or to have distributed to other participants.

The discussion will be held in Washington, D.C., on April 14, 1998, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Review Board will be pleased to cover the cost of your travel to and from Washington, D.C., and will make arrangements for a hotel to the extent necessary.

We very much look forward to hearing your response to our invitation at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Dr. T. Jeremy Gunn
Executive Director