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The Missing Times: News Media Complicity in the UFO Cover-up by Terry Hansen. Philadelphia: Xlibris Corp, 2001. 376 pp. \$25 (c). ISBN 0-7388-3611-7. www.xlibris.com/themissingtimes.html

A couple of months ago there were some new findings in science that repealed a physical law that I had been taught was universal in engineering school. It was the way reality always worked. That event was a reminder that all of the things that we take for granted in science are only temporary assumptions about how physical reality works-always subject to new discoveries and theories that will surely come in the future. That is, unless we think that in some area we have struck immutable truth and there is nothing more possible to learn about a particular subject. (Some scientists act that way, but I don't think humanity has yet "arrived.")

Our understanding of reality may be conditional in science, but we bet on it in the short run, assuming that what we believe is true. It's great to believe we know what we think we know. It provides stability, sanity, authority, employment and even uninterrupted sleep at night. If everything (or even a significant portion) of what we are told by others is suspect, well, then it starts to be like the *Matrix*, or the Soviet Union in the early 80s, where nobody believed the media, rumors carried the day, and everyone had so lost faith in the government that they became expert at reading between the lines, three levels deep, to try to figure out what really was happening at any distance greater than one's personal line-of-sight. Very socially corrosive.

Fortunately, that isn't the case in the U.S. Here, an independent press balances the government's penchant for secrecy and, on balance, Americans have a pretty good idea of what is going on. Right?

Well, if you believe Terry Hansen, the answer is: it depends. It depends on whether the government really wants you to know about something or not. If not, there is a longstanding sweetheart relationship with the media in this country that conspires to only report the government story.

Farfetched? Another crazy conspiracy theory? You should read this book. Hansen, a freelance journalist who has studied both the UFO subject and the press /government relationship for a couple of decades has produced perhaps one of the most important books about the UFO subject in decades.

This is an important book because of the substantial, big-picture perspective it provides and because of the fundamental questions that it precipitates. Most treatises on this subject expound upon a particular aspect of the overall topic, sightings, abductions,

propulsion, etc.; loaded with "cases" of what reportedly happened, and then try to convince you that there's a "there" there. Many are convincing . . . after which one usually says to oneself: "So now what?" It may be interesting, even disconcerting, but how does it all fit together? There is no integrated picture, no clear, new understanding of the overall phenomenon that provides a broad-based framework for making sense of the whole thing.

The Missing Times takes a giant step outside of the UFO box, and then looks back at the whole thing. Like standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon, the view is very powerful.

What would it take to convince you that the press and the government are in cahoots in feeding the populace the government line on things deemed to involve "national security"? How about a systematic construction of how, since WWI, the British and then American governments have increasingly put into place the perception management mechanisms to do just that. Designed at the same time to feed propaganda and disinformation to the enemy during war times and a contrived picture of conflict for domestic consumption, the intelligence services always reached out to the pros in communications – journalists - to head up the operations.

After the war, the news executives went back to running the networks and newspapers, supposedly, now, committed to objectively questioning government and providing an independent oversight function.

It's one thing to make these assertions, but Hansen, brick upon brick, builds the foundation for the argument that once back in the news business, these executives, particularly at places like CBS and *The New York Times* continued to be responsive to, if not take directions from, the intelligence and military leadership on sensitive subjects. Hansen shows how this relationship worked during the war years and then provides tangible proof of how the manipulation process has worked in the UFO area.

The big picture is not drawn directly from one or two events, but is a finely constructed mosaic that develops a distinct pattern from many, many "independent" events. The pieces include a careful outline of the objectives, the approaches to achieving the objectives, the institutional functions that were put in place, examples of how it worked in wartime, and concrete examples of how it has worked around the UFO subject. Hansen briefly but substantively touches on most, if not all, of the major aspects of the UFO issue, making a broad-based case that this is a very real phenomenon.

After watching this powerful, convincing picture being carefully put together, a big question starts naggingly small in the back of your mind and then builds to drown out

everything you are reading: What is going on that is so big that it has merited this level of sustained, half-century long formal obfuscation of the facts? What is this that parts of the military and the intelligence services don't want the American people to know so badly?

Hansen shows that all of the UFO activity of the early fifties was thought to be potentially socially destabilizing - hence the need to manipulate the perceptions of the populace. Maybe it still is. Some insiders suggest that more recently it has just been the remnants of the Cold War gotten out of hand. We started out trying to convince the Soviets that we had some "extraterrestrial capabilities," or at least an ongoing relationship with "other sources" that provided us with advanced means to defend ourselves. Some folks in the system just "didn't get the word" and continue to pump out sometimes absurd explanations of events observed by hundreds or thousands. "It's hard to disengage gracefully, and after all, how does the government tell the American people that it has been lying to them for so long?"

One can't help coming to the conclusion that whatever is happening here is a big deal.

The Missing Times is not a tract-it is a study. It is a carefully researched revisionist view of history that never steps over the line. Every time that one thinks that Hansen has dealt a little unjustified speculation into the mix, he pulls out a study, interview, example or document that substantiates what he has said. In the end, he too wonders if the big secret just might really be too threatening to broadcast.

This book makes it clear that history, like science, is a moving target and that what we think we know about the past (or the present, for that matter) is subject to what we have been told ... and the humans who do the telling always have an agenda. Sometimes they also have the tools, the processes, the funding and the relationships to very effectively mask the truth.

So what's real?

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