

the heart of the matter:
Why President Kennedy Was Assassinated

by David T. Ratcliffe



Jamie Wyeth: *Portrait of John F. Kennedy* (1967)

55 years ago today the world had just made it through its closest brush to date of nuclear annihilation and extinction of all Life on Earth with the peaceful resolution to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

With all the bread and circuses being dished up concerning the current release dump of withheld government files on the assassination of the 35th President of the United States, it is exceedingly relevant to highlight a nonpareil exposition of this seminal event of our post-World War II world for those who want to understand what happened on November 22, 1963.

JFK and the Unspeakable—Why He Died and Why It Matters, written by Jim Douglass, was first published 9 years ago. I began reading about John Kennedy's life and death in 1977. When I read Jim's book in the summer of 2012 I thought, *This is the book I've waiting for for 35 years.*

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s endorsement is presented on the cover of the 2013 50th Anniversary edition:

In *JFK and the Unspeakable* Jim Douglass has distilled all the best available research into a very well-documented and convincing portrait of President Kennedy's transforming turn to peace, at the cost of his life. Personally, it has made a very big impact on me. After reading it in Dallas, I was moved for the first time to visit Dealey Plaza. I urge all American to read this book and come to their own conclusions about why he died and why—after fifty years—it still matters.

Since the fall of 2012 I've been working with Jim to present a [collection of his writings](#) inside the [Topics on the National Security State of America](#) section.

Regarding this extra-constitutional firing of the 35th President, the following is proffered as an antidote to the specific set of illusions and—beginning with the [Warren Commission's Report](#)—conspiracy theories presented by state actors, universities, and the media which promote a fabricated representation of reality through omission, distortion, falsehood, lack of contextual analysis, and disinforming opinion stated as obvious, incontestable fact.



Presidents Kennedy and Sukarno, 24 Apr 1961

First is an annotated transcript with 81 endnotes of Jim's 2009 Keynote Address at the [Coalition on Political Assassinations](#) Conference, held on 20 November 2009 in Dallas, Texas. This is a rich summary, in the author's own words, of *JFK and the Unspeakable* for those not up for reading the whole book:

[Jim Douglass on The Hope in Confronting the Unspeakable in the Assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy](#)

The second is a highly incisive review of the book by Edward Curtin, Professor of Sociology at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts:

[JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters](#)

Review of James Douglass' Book by Prof. Edward Curtin

The WHY of the assassination is the key to the crime and its cover-up. As Ed writes,

This "unspeakable," this hypnotic "collective denial of the obvious," is sustained by a mass-media whose repeated message is that the truth about such significant events is beyond our grasp, that we will have to drink [the waters of uncertainty](#) forever. As for those who don't, they are relegated to the status of conspiracy nuts.

Fear and uncertainty block a true appraisal of the assassination—that plus the thought that it no longer matters.

It matters. For we know that no president since JFK has dared to buck the military-intelligence-industrial complex. We know a Pax Americana has spread its tentacles across the globe with U.S. military in over 130 countries on 750 plus bases. We know that the amount of blood and money spent on wars and war preparations has risen astronomically.

There is a great deal we know and even more that we don't want to know, or at the very least, investigate.



Allen Dulles, Richard Bissell, President Kennedy, and John McCone, April 1962

Jim distills the *why* near the conclusion of his 2009 Keynote:

Because John Kennedy chose peace on earth at the height of the Cold War, he was executed. But because he turned toward peace, in spite of the consequences to himself, humanity is still alive and struggling. That is hopeful. Especially if we understand what he went through and what he has given to us as his vision.

At a certain point in his presidency, John Kennedy turned a corner and he didn't look back. I believe that decisive turn toward his final purpose in life, resulting in his death, happened in the darkness of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Although Kennedy was already in conflict with his national security managers, the missile crisis was the breaking point.

At that most critical moment for us all, he turned from any remaining control that his security managers had over him toward a deeper ethic, a deeper vision in which the fate of the earth became his priority. Without losing sight of our own best hopes in this country, he began to home in, with his new partner, Nikita Khrushchev, on the hope of peace for everyone on this earth—Russians, Americans, Cubans, Vietnamese, Indonesians, everyone on this earth—no exceptions. He made that commitment to life at the cost of his own. What a transforming story that is.

And what a propaganda campaign has been waged to keep us Americans from understanding that story, from telling it, and from re-telling it to our children and grandchildren. Because that's a story whose telling can transform a nation.

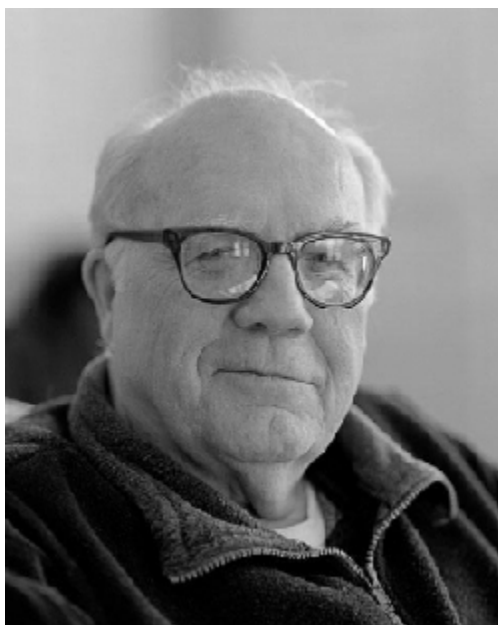
But when a nation is under the continuing domination of an idol, namely war, it is a story that will be covered up. When the story can liberate us from our idolatry of war, [then the worshippers of the idol are going to do everything they can to keep the story from being told.](#)

From the standpoint of a belief that war is the ultimate power, that's too dangerous a story. It's a subversive story. It shows a different kind of security than always being ready to go to war.

It's unbelievable—or we're supposed to think it is—that a president was murdered by our own government agencies because he was seeking a more stable peace than relying on nuclear weapons.

It's unspeakable. For the sake of a nation that must always be preparing for war, that story must not be told. If it were, we might learn that peace is possible without making war. We might even learn there is a force more powerful than war. How unthinkable! But how necessary if life on earth is to continue.

That is why it is so hopeful for us to confront the unspeakable and to tell the transforming story of a man of courage, President John F. Kennedy. It is a story ultimately not of death but of life—all our lives. In the end, it is not so much a story of one man as it is a story of peacemaking when the chips are down. That story is our story, a story of hope.



[James W. Douglass](#)

"It's that everything [in the Cold War in 1962-1963] was totally out of control and then, through a kind of incredible process where these two men were communicating secretly with each other over the year previous [Sep 1962-63], and smuggling letters back and forth to each other, in the midst of this conflict, they were beginning to trust each other.... It's a remarkable process. And it's all beneath the surface. But so are all the things that count as Merton understood.... And that's why I have some hopes that if we are willing to go deeply enough into the darkness – and Kennedy was, and Khrushchev was – anything can happen for the good. But if we don't go into the darkness it doesn't happen."

—[Jim Douglass at Elliot Bay Books](#),
Seattle, 6 May 2008

Jim concludes his remarkable talk by evoking the liberation truth gifts us with:

I believe it is a providential fact that the anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination always falls around Thanksgiving, and periodically on that very day. This year the anniversary of his death, two days from now, will begin Thanksgiving week.

Thanksgiving is a beautiful time of year, with autumn leaves falling to create new life. Creation is alive, as the season turns. The earth is alive. It is not a radioactive wasteland. We can give special thanks for that. The fact that we are still living—that the human family is still alive with a fighting chance for survival, and for much more than that—is reason for gratitude for a peacemaking president, and to the unlikely alliance he forged with his enemy.

So let us give thanks this Thanksgiving for John F. Kennedy, and for his partner in peacemaking, Nikita Khrushchev.

Their story is our story, a story of the courage to turn toward the truth. Remember what Gandhi said that turned theology on its head. He said truth is God. That is the truth: Truth is God. We can discover the truth and live it out. There is nothing, nothing more powerful than the truth. The truth will set us free.



JFK learns of Patrice Lumumba's assassination, 13 Feb 1961

We can know *why* President Kennedy was assassinated. With this understanding we can navigate the turbulent waters surrounding us today with a profoundly informed and deeply rooted sense of the meaning and purpose of our own lives in this, irreducible present moment—the only moment we ever have. As my brother Bruce is fond of reminding me:

Yesterday is history.
Tomorrow is a mystery.
Today is a gift.
That's why they call it the present.
—Eleanor Roosevelt

As articulated both in his [\[2009 Keynote\] talk](#) and with much more detail in *JFK and The Unspeakable*, there were many more than just three “Bay of Pigs” – comprising the escalating list of conflicts between President Kennedy and his national security state – before he was assassinated. A list of these conflicts includes the following:

1. 1961: [negotiated peace with the Communists for a neutralist government in Laos](#);
2. April 1961: [Bay of Pigs](#) and JFK’s response: “[I want] to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds.”
3. 1961-63: Kennedy-Hammarskjöld-UN vision [kept the Congo together and independent](#);
4. April 1962: [conflict with big steel industrialists](#);
5. October 1962: [Cuban Missile Crisis](#);
6. 1961-63: [Diplomatic opening to Third World leadership of President Sukarno](#);
7. May 6, 1963: [Presidential order NSAM #239 to pursue both a nuclear test ban and a policy of general and complete disarmament](#);
8. **June 10, 1963: American University Address** – the Real JFK Jubilee – not Nov 22;
9. Summer 1963: [Nuclear Test Ban Treaty](#);
10. Fall 1963: beginning of [back-channel dialogue with Fidel Castro](#);
11. Fall 1963: JFK’s [decision to sell wheat to the Russians](#);
12. October 11, 1963: [Presidential order NSAM #263 to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam by 1965](#);
13. November 1963: [Khrushchev decides to accept JFK’s invitation for a joint expedition to the moon](#).

In his American University Address President John Kennedy proposed nothing less than an end to the Cold War. As Douglass writes in *JFK and The Unspeakable*, “It had become clear to America’s power brokers that the president of their national security state was struggling with his Communist opponent not so much over who would win the Cold War as on how to end it.” (p. 175)

from [Transformational Journey: John F. Kennedy’s Turning Toward Peace](#), 2 Sep 2013

So we have to ask ourselves, “Who can murder the President, frame a CIA agent, and command this kind of cover?” I am not going to reiterate [what Vince Salandria has presented to you](#). As we knew at the time, Kennedy had begun a process of rapprochement with the USSR and had been making clear moves away from the Cold War. The very simple and obvious question is, Who had the means and motive to organize a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy, frame in advance a CIA agent for the murder, use immediately all media channels to spill the frame-up of Oswald to the world, have the White House radioing Air Force One on the way back from Dallas that Oswald was it before the Dallas police had anything on him? Who can do all this and command a complete cover-up by all our society’s institutions? Only one institution had the means and motive to accomplish all this, an element of the United States government that is so necessary to the “defense” of the nation that to expose it would be unthinkable—the answer is obvious—high US military intelligence.

—E. Martin Schotz, “[The Waters of Knowledge versus the Waters of Uncertainty: Mass Denial in the Assassination of President Kennedy](#),”

Coalition on Political Assassinations Conference, Dallas, 20 Nov 1998

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