

Current Significance of Making Robert Kennedy A Fall Guy In JFK Assassination

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A review of *In Love With Night; The American Romance with Robert Kennedy*, by Ronald Steel (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

The Pearson-Steel thesis

This is a stupid idea with no basis in fact whatsoever--blaming Robert Kennedy for the assassination of President Kennedy--but it has been espoused by a raft of not only insignificant commentators over the years, beginning with Drew Pearson in 1967, and most recently by Ronald Steel, an award-winning historian, in his recent book.

It is important to understand not only that this thesis is patently false, but also to understand how it serves the ongoing general propaganda mission of covering up the true nature of both assassinations. This mission, tragically, considering the loss of integrity involved, has been embraced and performed assiduously by virtually the whole of the mass media and academia, including the latter's so-called "progressive" elements, for almost four decades.

The truth is that Robert was a victim of the same powers that killed his brother, as polls have always told us most Americans agree, in stark contrast to their so-called "opinion leaders." In fact he was doubly victimized, by also being drawn, however reluctantly, into cooperating with the cover-up of the truth about JFK's assassination in the hope of attaining the presidency himself, until this vain hope precipitated his own assassination in 1968, on the very night he won the California primary and was virtually assured of becoming the Democratic presidential candidate in that mid-Vietnam-war year.

The "RFK did it" idea was first offered up by Drew Pearson in his regular column in the Washington Post on March 3, 1967. Castro, Pearson speculated, had become aware of the plot to kill him and decided to retaliate by having President Kennedy killed. Add this to the assumption (also false) that RFK was personally behind the CIA's attempts to assassinate Fidel, and presto, we have Pearson's conclusion that not only was

Did Robert Kennedy Kill His Brother?

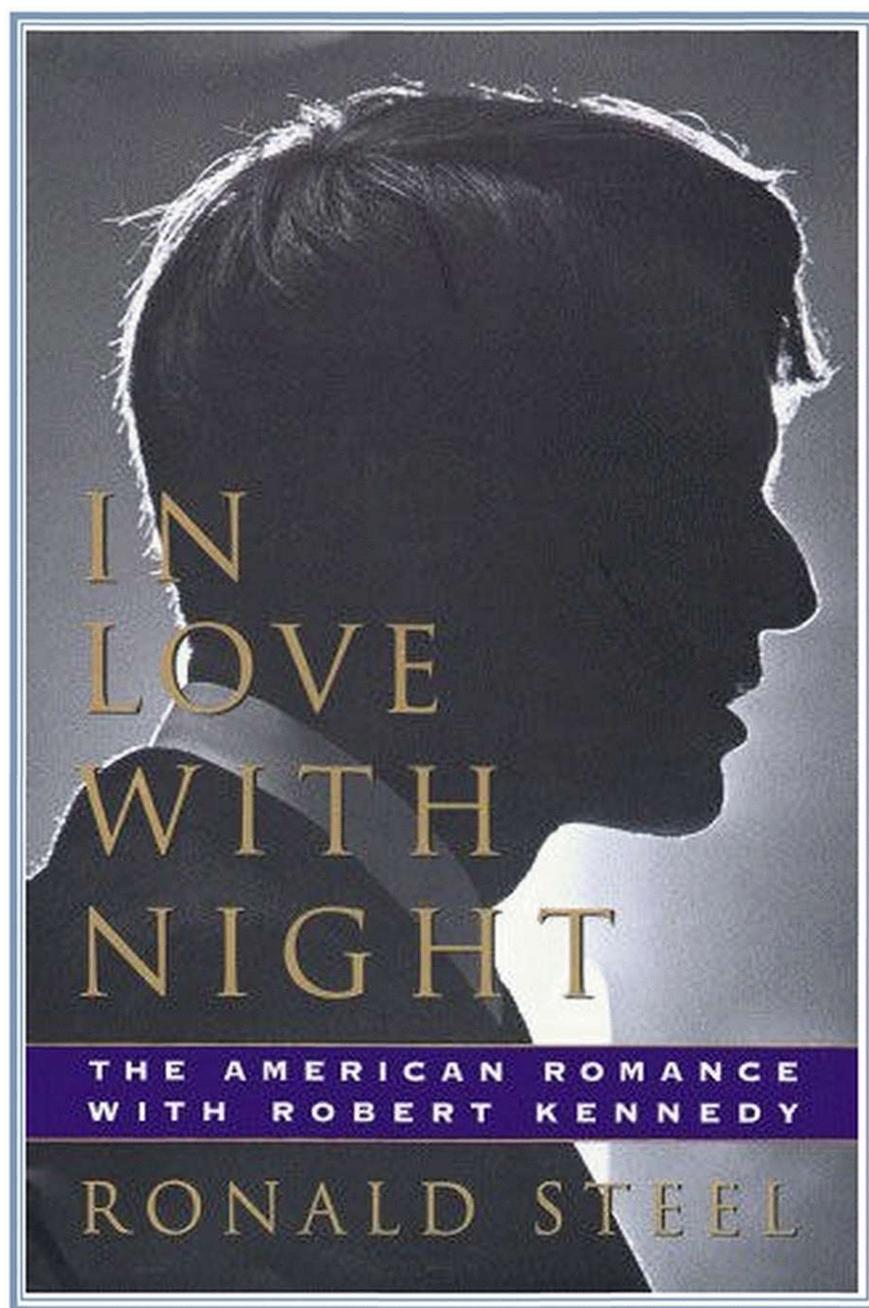
RFK ultimately responsible for his brother's murder (by Castro), but was also "plagued by the terrible thought that he had helped put into motion terrible forces that indirectly may have brought about his brother's martyrdom."

All of this was based on hearsay "evidence" provided by an FBI spy named Edward Morgan, whose sources admittedly were not directly involved in the assassination and whom he refused to identify--in other words, pure gossip.

Ronald Steel continues this fantasy, speaking of "powerful" and even "overwhelming circumstantial evidence" that RFK, "through Operation Mongoose, had made the removal of Castro his personal responsibility and highest priority" and made "incessant demands of the CIA and the Mongoose planners to 'get Castro.'" This evidence consists exclusively of prattle directly attributable to CIA and Pentagon sources, which can hardly be considered reliable sources in this matter.

For example, Steel cites a statement in 1975 by then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to President Gerald Ford that Richard Helms of the CIA had informed him that "Robert Kennedy personally managed the operations on the assassination of Castro." This triple hearsay, originating from the mouth of a convicted liar (Helms lied under oath to a Senate committee to cover up CIA improprieties) is what Steel calls "overwhelming circumstantial evidence."

As a further example of Steel's scholarship, he swallows whole the Warren Report's contention that



Oswald was a pro-Castro agent, failing even to mention the work of Philip H. Melanson, who did in fact present overwhelming evidence eleven years ago to prove that Oswald was not an agent of Castro but of the CIA. Nor should we be surprised that Steel ignores the statement of Castro himself, made the day after the assassination, in which he said that Oswald "was never Secretary or Chairman of any Fair Play for Cuba Committee in any city of the United States" and that President Kennedy's assassination was the work of some elements who disagreed with his international policy, that is to say, with his nuclear treaty, with his policy

with respect to Cuba... And what happened yesterday can only benefit those ultra-rightist and ultra-reactionary sectors, among which President Kennedy... cannot be included." (cf. E. M. Schotz, *History Will Not Absolve Us*, Appendix II, pp. 51-86).

But not unexpectedly, Steel, like the various post-Warren Commission government committees that "investigated" the assassination, hedges his bets. If it wasn't Castro, it was the Mafia.

The problem with the Mafia theory is logic. If the Mafia were powerful enough to kill the president and maintain the cover-up ever since, including controlling or dehousing the Warren Commission, the Dallas police, the FBI, the CIA, and the entirety of the American press and academia, to this day, then there is no discernible distinction between the Mafia and the United States Government. It is just a question of terminology. I will follow the traditional practice, however, and call the government the government.

A second hedge, abundant in the assassination literature, is that if it wasn't Oswald, Castro, or the Mafia, it was "rogue" CIA agents. Steel is eager to embrace this foolish idea as well. "Perhaps," says Steel, "individuals linked to the CIA who feared after the missile crisis of 1962 that the Kennedys

were not pushing hard enough against Castro" were behind the assassination.

This "rogue" agent theory has been popularized most successfully by John Newman, who arose full-blown from the depths of a career in Army intelligence and the National Security Agency in 1992 to become the media darling of assassination research. First Newman contended that JFK had intended to pull out of Vietnam—a quite credible thesis—and, three years later, that Oswald was in fact a CIA agent (as Melanson had already proved three years earlier), but did not act on behalf of the CIA. In other words, even though Os-

wald was an agent, the CIA as an institution remains blameless. I strongly disagree with Newman.

What was the real relationship between the Kennedys and Castro?

The historical record could not be clearer. At the very time that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, he was actively exploring the normalization of relations with Castro. In fact, Castro was a willing and most interested initiator of and participant in a peace-feeler project. Common sense dictates that we recognize that a president intent on normalizing relations with a foreign country would not be simultaneously trying to assassinate its head of state.

The U.S. Department of State's *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XII, Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath* tells us about the Kennedy-Khrushchev-Castro relationships which evolved as a consequence of the 1962 Missile Crisis. These documents make it clear that at the time of President Kennedy's assassination, Fidel Castro had much to lose and nothing to gain by JFK's death, and also that Robert Kennedy had no reason to goad the CIA into killing Castro. The details of meetings between William Attwood, the U.S. emissary acting on the direct orders of President Kennedy, and Castro's representatives are detailed here, and are also re-confirmed by Attwood in his July 10, 1975, testimony to the Church Committee (Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities).

After the assassination, things were different.

The rapprochement with Castro had become a "more doubtful issue," and Attwood's efforts had lost much of their meaning since "Lee Oswald has been heralded as a pro-Castro type." Five days after the assassination, Johnson asked CIA director John McCone about the effectiveness of the "economic denial" program with Cuba and "how we planned to dispose of Castro." McCone's answer was that Cuba was exporting arms to Venezuela and that the U.S. should get the

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OAS to agree to "economic denial through blockade and even to possible invasion" of Cuba.

New courses of action were proposed to make life difficult for Castro, including precipitating a break in economic relations between Cuba and the rest of Latin America, "unleashing the exiles," and generally intensifying covert operations. On December 13, 1963, the Standing Group of the National Security Council authorized the CIA to develop the capacity to conduct air attacks against selective Cuban targets by autonomous exile groups, and endorse the intensification of these raids.

It is clear, then, that immediately following the assassination of President Kennedy, normalization efforts were snuffed out and replaced by a strategy involving an embargo (which continues to this day), blockade, and possibly invasion.

There are thus no grounds whatever, either in common sense or in the historical record, for the Pearson-Steel thesis. On the contrary, when Attwood was asked by the Church Committee in 1975 whether he had "heard any conversation by any Cuban about any possible past retaliation or future retaliation" for the attempts on Castro's life, he replied that he had "never heard anything like that down there."

Why didn't Robert Kennedy challenge the Warren Report?

Steel's answer to this question is that to challenge the Warren Report would have made public 'the CIA's efforts to kill Castro and use the Mafia as hired killers,' revelations that 'would have strongly implicated both the Kennedys in these illegal activities' and would also have revealed that the president had 'shared a mistress with a Mafia capo.'

First of all, this explanation falls on its face because Robert Kennedy did challenge the Warren Report, privately. In *One Hell of a Gamble*, Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Nafti inform us that Jacqueline and Robert Kennedy sent William Walton, a close friend of President Kennedy, to Moscow on November 29, 1963, to deliver their analysis of the assassination. Walton told the Soviets that the Kennedys believed the killing of President Kennedy was "the result of a conspiracy." Four days earlier, in fact, the Soviets had come to their own conclusion that Kennedy had been killed by "extremely right-wing elements that did not like his policies, especially his policy toward Cuba."

"By the end of December [1963] KGB analysts had concluded that an anti-Soviet Coup d'etat had oc-

curred.”

Publicly, Robert remained silent about the true nature of the killing of his brother because he deferred to the need to maintain domestic tranquility in the face of a high-level conspiracy far more powerful than the Kennedy family. Only the highest levels of the national security apparatus could have accomplished the following:

- Using Oswald, a CIA operative, as a patsy.
- Killing Oswald while he was in custody.
- Spreading a broad pattern of false clues pointing to the Soviets and Cuba as suspects, yet opting for a lone assassin theory.
- Ignoring the overwhelming and immediately available eyewitness and other solid forensic evidence in Dealey Plaza.
- Ignoring the fact that persons were impersonating Secret Service Agents in Dealey Plaza where no Secret Service Agent had been assigned.
- Ignoring the position of the holes in President Kennedy’s coat and shirt, which precluded an exit wound in the neck.
- Ignoring the Parkland Hospital doctors’ opinion that the neck wound was an entry wound and that the wound in the back of the head was a massive exit wound.
- Allowing the military officers present at the autopsy to prevent the doctors from tracing the neck and back wounds of the President so as to determine their trajectory.
- Allowing one of the autopsy doctors, Commander James Humes, to burn his initial notes.
- Allowing Allen Dulles, the Director of the CIA who had been fired by President Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs debacle, to be appointed to the Warren Commission.
- Accepting as unchallenged evidence (Warren Commission Exhibit 399) an essentially pristine bullet that after flying in several directions through two bodies (Kennedy’s and Connally’s) and shattering several bones, left more metal in Connally’s body than is missing from the bullet.
- Not allowing the Warren Commissioners to examine the x-rays and photographs of the President’s autopsy.
- Cleaning out the presidential limousine immediately after the execution, and then unlawfully shipping it out of Dallas, the jurisdiction of the crime, to be stripped and refitted, thereby destroying the evidence of the bullet impacts upon the vehicle.
- Allowing *Life Magazine* to withhold the eight millimeter film of Abraham Zapruder which showed, inter alia, that following the impact of a bullet on Kennedy’s head his body was propelled leftward and backward onto the rear seat of the limousine, contradicting the Warren Report’s contention that the bullet was fired by Oswald from the rear.
- Allowing *Life Magazine* to then lie about the content of the film, and claim that Kennedy had turned completely around to receive a frontal hit from the rear.
- Allowing *Life Magazine* to change a single issue of October 2, 1964, twice in order to conceal the visual documentation of a head shot from the right front.
- Deleting from the Warren Commission Exhibits the testimony of Jacqueline Kennedy regarding the wounds of the President.
- Allowing Deputy Attorney General Nicholas de Katzenbach to send memoranda dating from November 25, 1963, to December 9, 1963, to Chief Justice Earl Warren and others stating that “The public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large; and the evidence was such that he would have been convicted at trial.”

The writing is on the wall—but it is obviously not on the walls of newspaper or university offices. This is the only truth to be gleaned from Steel’s book.

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