

# Letter to Vincent J. Salandria

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Dear Vince,

Confronted with a crime so high and so great that all authority intuitively protects itself by turning away, we, citizens without authority, completely independent of the power structure, must see and utter the truth. This is the significance of our little committee. We can see who killed President Kennedy and why; and equally important, how and why the American people have failed to face the truth.

To those citizens who really want to know and for the generations to come who will need to, we have a responsibility. My idea is a book which would provide the essential documents and an analytical summary with notes and references. The analytical summary follows.

### PART ONE

By now there is no doubt that the President's murder was organized at the highest echelons of the CIA. Indeed it is clear to us that immediately following the assassination this was obvious to any sophisticated observer, as Castro revealed the night after the assassination in his address to the Cuban people.[\[1\]](#)

Noting the instantaneous response of the U.S. government, which was not to pursue the truth but to follow the transparently phony scenario of Oswald as a deranged pro-Castro leftist, a truly sophisticated observer would have seen immediately the evidence of U.S. governmental

involvement in the crime. The immediate release of critical information on Oswald's "possible motives" from CIA media assets and the immediate wedding of the government to Oswald as the lone assassin reveal its cooperation from the beginning with what was obviously a prearranged plan to shield the conspirators.[2]

Since we were not sophisticated observers at the time, we needed your early articles in *The Legal Intelligencer* (1964) and then *Liberation* (1965) to settle certain questions. You established, using the government's own evidence, that without a doubt there was a conspiracy, and that the Warren Commission was clearly and consciously cooperating with the cover-up. In other words, your articles proved much more than a conspiracy to kill Kennedy, for they demonstrated that across the entire spectrum of our governmental establishment there was a systematic involvement of the civilian authorities (either actively or through acquiescence) in covering for the murderers.

### *The Pseudo-Debate*

All of this brings us to the real cover-up over all these years, which was not "Oswald" *per se* but rather "the debate over Oswald." [3] In this process we see the CIA following the principles of intelligence agency assassination and cover-up as outlined by Isaac Don Levine, an associate of Allen Dulles, in his analysis of the assassination of Leon Trotsky by the Soviet Union's NKVD. As Levine revealed, the classic manner by which an intelligence agency attempts to cover itself is by the use of confusion and mystery. The public is allowed to think anything it wants, but is not allowed to know, because the case is shrouded in supposed uncertainty and confusion. This was and is the big lie, that virtually no one is sure who really killed President Kennedy or why.[4]

Of course over the years the terms of the "debate" have been shifted as the public has learned more and more about the case. Thus initially the phony debate was organized around the question of whether the [Warren Report](#) was accurate or not. In other words, the public was supposed to debate whether there was or wasn't a conspiracy. As this position was gradually eroded and it became evident that more and more of the public did not believe in the lone assassin theory, another aspect of the debate was developed.

The first fallback position of the government was to acknowledge that *perhaps* or *more than likely* there was a conspiracy, but if there was, the chief suspects were Fidel Castro, the KGB, or the Mafia. And while these theories were pushed, it was argued that the Warren Commission, acting in haste, had perhaps erred in missing an assassin here or there. But all this was framed as honest error.

In order to bolster the government's credibility, the government always needed some writers who would argue that the [Warren Report](#) in fact had been true, that Oswald was the lone assassin after all. Thus the "debate" was broadened and complicated, but the honor of the members of the Warren Commission was never conceded by the government. It is important to understand that for the purposes of the government it was not necessary that anyone actually be convinced that these defenders of the Warren Report were correct. It was only necessary that people believe that their writings were debatable, i.e., that there was some substance to their arguments that Oswald was the lone assassin. If that point could be debated, then the government was safe, because the criminal conspiracy of the government of the United States to shield the assassins after the fact was obscured.

With the emergence of Jim Garrison's efforts in New Orleans to pursue those parts of the assassination conspiracy over which he had jurisdiction as Orleans Parish District Attorney, and in the face of the fact that Garrison was unflinchingly pointing directly at the CIA as the source of the assassination conspiracy, a new phase of the pseudo-debate opened. Aside from obstructing and

undoing Garrison's prosecution efforts and presenting him as a self-seeking and irresponsible person,[5] the CIA and the government had to be prepared to deal with the fact that significant portions of the public might believe that the CIA had killed the President. So at this point the debate was broadened again to "consider the possibility" of CIA involvement. But of course, if it were admitted that the CIA had been involved, it would have to be presented as the act of so-called "rogue elephants" within the Agency.[6]

Eventually we had the investigation by the House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations, which appears to have begun with some seriousness but was quashed, a process which Fonzi documents so brilliantly [in his book](#).

The latest round of the "debate" is currently being organized around the question of whether President Kennedy would or would not have followed the course Johnson did in escalating the War in Vietnam. Two significant players in the process are John Newman and L. Fletcher Prouty. Both of these individuals claim to have broken their earlier allegiances with military intelligence and the CIA. Both claim to be revealing the truth of the case, and yet both narrowly focus all "debate" around Vietnam, lending weight to the "rogue elephant" theory and obscuring the true motive for the assassination and the nature of the cover-up. Very interestingly, on the other side of this "debate," arguing that there is nothing of significance in all the talk about conspiracy, is Noam Chomsky.[7] This odd position for someone who is thought of as such a left-wing radical is worthy of exploration.

Of course, as part of this "debate" around Vietnam and JFK there is the requisite Warren Commission "defense" that Oswald was the lone assassin after all. This role, currently played by Gerald Posner with his [Case Closed](#), is touted by the media as serious. And for those of a more literary bent, and to complete the circus atmosphere, we have Norman Mailer's foray into the archives of the KGB, [Oswald's Tale](#).

*The Role of the Establishment's  
Left/Liberal Wing in the Cover-up*

Which brings us to another very interesting, important, and revealing aspect of this case: the defense of the Warren Commission by the left/liberal establishment. I have in mind such individuals as Noam Chomsky, Alexander Cockburn,[8] the editors of *The Nation* magazine,[9] and, if everyone remembers, I.F. Stone[10] as well. I think the positions of these individuals are very important because in their surprising (to us) dishonesty and willingness to cooperate with the warfare state in covering up the crime, there is obviously something to be learned.

Here some principles and insights from my clinical work in child psychiatry are relevant. It is not uncommon for me to be told that a patient's actions are out of character. Excluding those instances of organic brain disease such as epilepsy, it is never the case that the patient's actions are truly out of character. Rather the patient's true character has not been previously adequately understood.

The positions of Chomsky, *The Nation*, I.F. Stone, et al., must be understood from this standpoint. They are disillusioning us and in the process indicating to us that we have not previously understood their true character.

Vince, the responses of I.F. Stone, Carey McWilliams, *The Nation*, and Chomsky et al., *form a pattern!* This is not merely the individual idiosyncrasy of an arrogant intellectual who cannot admit

that he is wrong. Rather I suggest that it is symptomatic of the natural response of a section of our left/liberal intelligentsia which we have not properly understood. This pattern is something to ponder over in order to understand the nature of the assassination and our society more correctly.

I know there has been a lot of feeling in the “committee,” amongst those of us on the left, about these left/liberal defenders of the government cover-up. Moral outrage, bewilderment, a feeling of alienation, and disgust are all appropriate and healthy responses. But necessary as these responses are, they are not sufficient to pursue a cure, i.e., if we wish to approach matters in a clinical fashion as healers. Here Galbraith’s suggestion is valuable: that we are witnesses to a strange religious/ideological rite which is alien to us, and that we must try to observe it and describe it dispassionately as would the anthropologist.[11]

What is it that we are witnessing in this assassination and in the response which the left/liberal establishment has manifested to it? That is the question we must address.

For years I, like the rest of the members of our little committee, was captivated by the notion that the CIA’s murder of the President was a grievous wound to our democracy in urgent need of being exposed so the society could heal. But if this is so, how could it be that people like Carey McWilliams and I.F. Stone, who were amongst the most ardent defenders of our democracy in some of its darkest days, how could it be that such people would oppose us — not only oppose us, but rail against us, manipulate so as to deflect before the public what we were saying?[12] There is something very big at stake here. And I think what we are confronted with is a profound flaw in our own thinking in regard to this case.

I suggest we consider that possibly the assassination of JFK was not a wound to American democracy. It was a wound against certain political forces in our democracy, but not to the democracy itself. In fact, I submit that the assassination was totally within the framework of how American democracy works, and that this was instantly the opinion of people who were knowledgeable, sophisticated, and leading participants in the so-called democratic politics of this society.

The notion that American democracy was not wounded by the assassination of its President is supported by the fact that virtually every segment of the establishment — right, left, and center — lined up to support the mystery cover-up and participate in the pseudo-debate. Not a single member of the Kennedy Administration resigned in protest over what had been done. Not a single member of Congress resigned in protest. Not a single judge in the entire country, not to mention a single justice of the Supreme Court, resigned in protest over the role of the Chief Justice of the United States in this case. The President’s brother did not resign in protest, and the entire Kennedy family publicly accepted the [Warren Report](#), albeit with their behind-the-scenes maneuvering and their delayed and lukewarm endorsements. Not a single editor of a major newspaper resigned over being forced to swallow this obviously phony story.

Jim Garrison, the only public official in the country who took his legal responsibility seriously as a district attorney, was systematically attacked in the press and legally persecuted.[13] Notwithstanding the homage to him which Oliver Stone’s *JFK* represented, toward the end of his life, Garrison expressed doubt about whether his efforts to reveal the truth of the assassination had been worth what it had cost him.[14] What a sad commentary on our society.

But how is it possible? How can you have a democracy in which there is a coup and literally no one, not a single person in power, protests by resigning? You could have this only if it is not really a coup. You could have this only if, no matter how distasteful it may be, all these people are

prepared to find what had been done ultimately acceptable. The fact that for American democracy it was acceptable for the CIA to shoot Kennedy is proven by the fact that it was accepted virtually without protest.[15]

At first glance this idea may seem disorienting, shocking, even bizarre. Is it really conceivable that it is acceptable to the entire spectrum of the governmental establishment, the entire spectrum of the university establishment, the entire spectrum of our media establishment that the CIA can very obviously carry out the murder of a president? This seems crazy. But it is what happened. It was accepted, ergo it was acceptable.

Now I think the first thing the skeptical reader is likely to say in reading this is, “Well, wait a second. Maybe it wasn’t all that obvious. Maybe all these people didn’t know the CIA had done it.” So let’s allow this for argument’s sake. Maybe they didn’t know the CIA did it. But certainly they knew there was a conspiracy. Certainly no honest person could ever accept the “single bullet theory.” So then we have a situation in which all these people basically know the [Warren Report](#) is a fraud. They know there has been a criminal conspiracy to kill the President and a conspiracy after the fact to obstruct justice in the murder of the President by the government. And they choose not to find out what happened. They look the other way. They are willing to live with the CIA’s confusion and mystery story cover-up. Where does that leave us? Virtually the entire establishment knows that there was a conspiracy to kill the President but chooses not to find out who did it and why. What does that say? It says that a conspiracy to kill the President and its cover-up are acceptable. Not legal, mind you. Nor moral. Upsetting? Of course. But, in the end, acceptable. The government continues to function and everyone remains in place. This is American democracy.

Now I grant you, virtually none of these people are aware that it is acceptable to them for the CIA to kill the President. If you asked them, “Is it acceptable for the CIA to kill the President?” everyone would say, “No.” And they would not be lying in any conventional sense. But here we must take another page from clinical psychiatry, because what we have here is a case of what is technically termed “denial.” Only in this instance we have it on a mass scale.

Let me describe this phenomenon as it presents itself in the clinical situation. I am not infrequently confronted with a psychologically disturbed family which includes an anti-social teenager, a family in which the parents tell me that what the child is doing is “totally unacceptable.” And then I start looking into the situation and I find that this isn’t true. Much as the parents may not like what the teenager is doing, they are so wedded to the child and their need for the child, that they are unwilling to take the steps necessary to stop the process. So in reality what the teenager is doing is acceptable, and at the same time the parents maintain in their own minds the fiction about themselves that it isn’t acceptable. This is “denial” in a technical sense, a part of the psychological illness, the ideological falsity, that can exist in a family system that is complicit with, if not actually fostering, anti-social conduct by a teenager.[16]

So I think we need to go back to the beginning and look at how this case unfolded all over again. I think we need to focus particular attention on Carey McWilliams and *The Nation*. Very early on *The Nation* published [Harold Feldman’s article](#) which pulled together the available evidence pointing to Oswald as a U.S. intelligence agent, and explicitly identified the government as a possible suspect in the assassination. But at the same time that *The Nation* was publishing this article, what was their editorial policy in regard to the assassination and the government? Go back and look at that editorial process.[17]

Basically, *The Nation’s* position was one of tolerance and patience, urging their readers not to rush to judgment, that Feldman’s material was important but that everyone should wait to see what

the Warren Commission would come up with.

At first glance this position seems fair and open-minded. However, if we think about it, we see something else. There is a big problem in *The Nation's* position which should have been obvious to us from the outset. If there was not U.S. governmental involvement in the murder, one would expect the government to be able to investigate the assassination; but what if there was? After all, Oswald certainly looked like a low-level CIA agent. Would it be reasonable to assume that the Warren Commission could actually entertain and honestly investigate the possibility that there had been a CIA conspiracy? Did such a question ever occur to Carey McWilliams and *The Nation*? It had to. And yet nowhere did they address this question to their readers. And this is critical.

Perhaps the Warren Commission could be expected to assess honestly a non-governmental conspiracy, but it would certainly not be in a position to investigate a governmental conspiracy, since this would amount to the government investigating itself. At a very minimum, *The Nation* had the responsibility to ask the government what steps the Commission would take to ensure an honest investigation of the possibility of a conspiracy from within the U.S. government. In failing completely to address this point, *The Nation* was not being honest with its readers. Honesty would have compelled *The Nation* to say that that section of investigation which dealt with whether a U.S. government agency itself had been involved could not be carried out by the Warren Commission and would have to be handled by some institution or group of people independent of the U.S. government. And *The Nation* could have played this role. It could have assembled the same data which [Castro](#), [Salandria](#), and others assembled. It could have brought together a fearless group of individuals, its own Commission completely un beholden to the U.S. government, and asked them to provide an analysis. And, of course, if this had been done, the group would have come to the inescapable conclusion that it was obvious that the CIA had killed the President.

Clearly *The Nation* did not wish to do this. From the outset its position was in reality that if there had been a government conspiracy, it would go unchallenged. Note again that they had in fact taken this position at the same time that they were publishing Harold Feldman's article. So we are left with the unavoidable conclusion that the staunchest liberal leaders of American democracy were prepared to accept a CIA assassination of President Kennedy and not object or protest; quite to the contrary, they were fully prepared to cooperate. And indeed *The Nation's* editorial role in the cover-up has never wavered.

Think of it this way. Try to put yourself into the shoes of McWilliams, I.F. Stone, and Chomsky. You are leading participants in this process we call American democracy. You are opinion makers. You have access to the media and the media reports what you say to the public. You are leading figures in this "civilized" process of struggle we call our democracy. You represent certain forces and they struggle against other forces, but they must conduct themselves in a civilized manner. As leaders in the left/liberal establishment you may hate the military and the CIA and not give a damn what they think of you, but you cannot afford to be indifferent to what liberal, and more importantly, moderate members of Congress or the media think of you. You certainly would not want to wind up painting Earl Warren as an enemy in this civilized discourse. You are interested in building coalitions to effect change, and moderates are part of the process. Now if you go off and start calling Earl Warren an accessory after the fact in the murder of the President, where does that leave you? It leaves you totally outside.

Go back and look at [Fred Cook's memoir](#) about his efforts to get *The Nation* to publish his piece on the case.<sup>[18]</sup> McWilliams is just silent. He doesn't respond to Cook, because he can't. Cook is a reporter, but McWilliams is more than this; he is a player. And when you're playing a game, you don't go around trashing your opponent beyond a certain point, or there is no game any more.

And that was the situation in which the left/liberal establishment found itself with the assassination. “Do we or don’t we blow the whistle on this game? Because if we level with the American people over what has happened, there is no telling what would happen. People might start asking questions. We might have wholesale unrest. Or maybe some kind of right-wing reaction, maybe a pogrom on the left. . . . Better leave well enough alone and go on with our struggle by continuing the game.”[19]

Look at what Chomsky tells us: “My friends in the National Academy of Sciences are not going to lie about this.”[20] I.F. Stone did the same thing. He was apoplectic over the accusation that Warren was engaging in a fraud. But that tells us Stone is in an enormous bind or he wouldn’t be driven to react in such an emotional fashion.

We are thus left with a conclusion that the President’s murder by the CIA was accepted throughout the entire establishment. Indeed the liberal leadership ultimately confirmed that the murder of the President by the CIA and the military could go unpunished and unrevealed without disturbing our constitutional process. It is they who made the decision that the murder of the President by the CIA would be politically acceptable. And as a result, this murder did not cause the ripple of a single resignation. It was business as usual. This is not an ideological conclusion. This is a logical conclusion based on a factual analysis of the way our democracy reacted to the crime.

But why? Why did the CIA kill Kennedy and how did we get into this situation where the murder of the President by the CIA is acceptable? These are some of the questions to which I now want to turn.

## PART TWO

Up to this point my analysis has not depended on any ideological orientation, just commitment to facts and logic. We must however go beyond this level of analysis if we want to see the assassination in the context of our society as it really is. We thus turn to an aspect which inevitably draws upon a certain ideological orientation to the world.

Ten years ago I wrote a scene in a play in which [Allen Dulles and JFK confront each other in heaven](#) and Dulles insists that he was the true upholder of American values and out of his patriotic duty had Kennedy killed. Eventually in the dialogue Kennedy is won over to Dulles’ position and in the end JFK accepts the assassination.[21] Curiously when I wrote this scene, I did it as a way of simply exploring the logic of certain political positions. I did not fully understand what I was writing and the full truth of the ideas being expressed there. I say this because there is one critical point in the dialogue when Dulles says to JFK in heaven, “Look Jack, suppose you’d had a stroke and died in Dealey Plaza that afternoon. Would the history of the United States be any different? We didn’t take over the government. We just shot you.” And it turns out that from the standpoint of historical truth, this claim by the fictional Dulles is quite correct. Dulles and the CIA didn’t take over the government, because they didn’t have to. The CIA reasoned quite correctly that basically the balance of forces would be on its side if Kennedy were removed.

Kennedy ran afoul of the CIA because he departed from the Cold War script in his dealings with the U.S.S.R., and on the critical issue of peaceful coexistence with socialism. Kennedy’s [movement on the peace question](#), [his rapprochement with Khrushchev facilitated behind the scenes by Pope John XXIII](#), his “secret” [efforts in the U.N. to move toward normalization of relations with Cuba](#), all of this following [the Cuban Missile Crisis](#), was the critical point at which Kennedy

“stepped over the line.”

For ideological reasons, liberal opinion, which remains steeped in anti-communism and the mentality of the Cold War, cannot acknowledge the significance of the moral challenge that the Cuban Revolution represents to the United States. Mike Morrissey has recently pointed out that Chomsky has publicly declared that in spite of everything, he (Chomsky) still considers the United States to be the freest country in the world. Such a statement reflects a narrow notion of freedom, which is characteristic of liberalism and perhaps explains why for all of Chomsky’s radical critique of American foreign policy he is still so welcome in the halls of the establishment.[22]

Failing to note the critical significance of the Cuban Revolution, the left/liberal intellectuals will not be able to take account of the full significance of Kennedy’s rapprochement with Khrushchev and Castro. They will note it of course, and support it, but they will not be aware of the critical departure that these actions represented on Kennedy’s part. And consequently they will not be able to make sense of the reasons the CIA felt compelled to do away with Kennedy. They will not correctly assess the significance of the split in socialism as well as within capitalism that was represented by the Sino-Soviet split and the split of Kennedy from the CIA. I have detailed the importance of all this in earlier correspondence in a discussion of the “radical” nature of Kennedy’s shift at the Cuban Missile Crisis.[23] Similarly the question of the significance of the break in capitalism and socialism is discussed in the analysis of Khrushchev’s very important January 31, 1963 letter to Castro.[24]

All of this will be of little or no interest to people who do not include social and economic democracy within their concept of freedom. And unfortunately that probably characterizes the majority of Americans at this point.

I would argue that the lack of interest in social and economic democracy which Americans manifest today, the failure of American society to address the problems of social and economic democracy, is ultimately related to the vulnerability of American society to the Kennedy assassination. Again, how, after all, did we come to a point as a society in which this conspiracy to murder the President would be acceptable? This is a critical question. In order to answer it we have to go back and look at this democracy we call America, the real one, as it is day in and day out.

Let us turn to what Michael Parenti reminds us of — the murder and suppression of the radical leadership that emerged in the sixties.[25] Think about “Jim Crow” and the lynchings in the South, where African Americans were subjected to systematic terror for asserting basic democratic rights, while in the North legal forms of discrimination, an American form of apartheid, served and serves similar purposes. This was the America which accepted the murder of President Kennedy, the America which was prepared to accept the systematic terror of African Americans.

Indeed, President Kennedy as President was prepared to accept this.[26] Shortly after coming into office, he had a meeting with a number of African American leaders who urged him to take action on the problem of systematic racist terror in the South and his response was to tell them not to rock the boat, that the Democrats had won a narrow victory over the Republicans, that he was not in a political position to take a stand on this question. Of course, he didn’t say and didn’t have to say that he owed his election in part to Lyndon Johnson and the racist southern power structure.

We are talking about an American democracy that found McCarthyism acceptable as a means of ridding our labor movement, the entertainment industry, and our educational institutions of “communists,” people who refused to accept the legitimacy of the Cold War and insisted that the United States should reach accommodation with the Soviet Union, people who insisted that the arms



race was a rip-off of the American people and the world. The systematic persecution of these people was acceptable within American democracy. The murder of the Rosenbergs was acceptable. The repression and persecution of Robeson and DuBois and all the others was acceptable. All of it was acceptable to America and her democracy. Indeed, McCarthy was only brought down when he lost his wits altogether and began to attack the military itself. And of course here Robert Kennedy can be found playing a role as a McCarthyite witch-hunter.

As steeped in this Cold War tradition as President Kennedy was, he nevertheless was capable of moving beyond the confines of Cold War thought. He was a person with a certain independence of mind. He was sensitive to the erosion of civilian control of the military. He was appalled at the glib approach the Pentagon could take to the idea of millions and millions of casualties in a nuclear war. He was, as Castro has pointed out, a person of a certain kind of “moral authority” in his connection with the American people. And thus when roused by them as he was in the crisis over civil rights, he was capable of providing a definite moral leadership. And roused by his own sense of disquiet over the direction and implications of the Cold War domestically as well as internationally, Kennedy set about trying to work out some alternative. But in this case, unlike the case of the civil rights issue, there was no mass movement to propel Kennedy and to provide the social momentum necessary for ending the arms race and the Cold War. In this case Kennedy took the lead, hoping eventually to galvanize sufficient support.[27] He backed off on Cuba and started negotiating recognition.[28] He refused to support the junta in the Dominican Republic. He was dragging his feet in Vietnam. He began working with the Pope and Khrushchev on the nuclear arms race (a portion of Kennedy’s correspondence with Khrushchev is still hidden from the American people[29]). And in doing all this he was moving in a direction which communists had been advocating for decades. Castro tells us that the Cuban government had come to recognize that it was possible to talk with Kennedy, that he was someone who could be dealt with, and that there was, with him in office, the possibility of accommodation.[30]

Look at Kennedy’s [American University speech](#) in which he tried to indicate to the American people the direction our nation needed to go in securing world peace.[31] Interestingly he could not bring himself to tell the American people about the dangerous conflict that had erupted in Washington over the direction he was taking, even though at the time his brother, the Attorney General, was sending messages to Khrushchev to cool it, because they were worried about the possibility of assassination.[32]

This American University speech is so important. As I go back and reread it, I realize how advanced Kennedy’s position was at that time, much more advanced than anything we have coming from our government today. In that speech there is an understanding very close to the position George Kennan articulates in the later essays in *The Nuclear Delusion*.[33]

What I am referring to is an understanding that there was something of value to the powers that be in the United States, as well as to the people of the United States, in the existence of the Soviet Union: namely that there was an organized force on “the other side” that was also interested in disarmament. When I go back and read Mikhail Gorbachev’s Perestroika[34] today I think of where Kennedy and Khrushchev were in 1963 and the opportunity that was beginning to emerge and that was destroyed.

I know that no one seems to be interested in the McCloy-Zorin agreement.[35] Hardly anyone even knows about it any longer. And I really don’t understand why. Maybe they were just words as far as Kennedy was concerned in 1961 when it was signed. But as events developed, particularly after the Cuban Missile Crisis, I think the McCloy-Zorin agreement began to take on real significance. Because if you go back and look at that American University speech, I think Kennedy

is talking about the McCloy-Zorin agreement without mentioning it by name. Khrushchev and Kennedy were talking about worldwide disarmament, *conventional* as well as nuclear. That is really radical. That is what Gorbachev was talking about, that you can't settle problems with military means any longer. And the "powers that be" in this country didn't want Gorbachev. And even the liberals were ecstatic when the Soviet Union collapsed and Yeltsin replaced Gorbachev. You read the American University speech by Kennedy and George Kennan's later writing and you read Castro, Gorbachev, and Nelson Mandela[36] and you realize how foolishly narrow the political mind set that dominates this country is.

People are always asking how would our history be different if President Kennedy hadn't been assassinated. For me this isn't the question to ask. Rather ask how would history have been different if President F.W. de Klerk had been assassinated in the midst of South Africa's transition to majority rule and the ending of apartheid. It seems to me that South Africa would still have gone through the changes it has accomplished because that society had the organized social momentum to move in that direction.

This is why I see Kennedy as a "de Klerk without an ANC." He saw the handwriting on the wall in our situation, the way de Klerk did in his. But Kennedy didn't have an "ANC," an organized social movement for peaceful coexistence that could compel the society to move in that direction. So he was in a very vulnerable position.

And as in South Africa before the ascendancy of Nelson Mandela and the ANC to the government, we too in America are confronted by a "third force" which is shadowy and operates behind the scenes. You will recall that this "third force" in South African society turned out to have the clandestine backing of the government.

It seems to me that at the moment of the assassination the Kennedy forces had a choice. They could openly acknowledge to the American people what had happened. To do this might have meant to release a popular disillusionment with the military and the CIA. You understand that in such a situation these liberal leaders as well as the conservatives might lose control of the situation to popular forces. Or they could decide not to run that risk; they could accept the assassination as a brutal, heinous wound to their side, but nevertheless keep going with the people in the dark. Obviously this was the decision that was made. And in so doing they decided (perhaps unconsciously like the "innocent" parents of the anti-social teenager) that the CIA murder of the President was acceptable to American democracy. The fact that our press and universities fell into line is an indication that they too accepted American democracy as delimited by this liberal-conservative establishment.

Are the American people really any different? Do they really want to know what happened and take responsibility, as opposed to indulging themselves in endless speculation?

Warren Commission member John J. McCloy is quoted by Edward J. Epstein in *Inquest* as saying that the paramount importance of the Commission was to "show the world that America is not a banana republic where a government can be changed by conspiracy." [37] Nowhere has the primary concern of the establishment been more honestly acknowledged in this case.

Anyone with any real access to the public, any person of importance who dared to speak the truth that would threaten the purposes of the government would be immediately suspended. Note if you will the case of Malcolm X, who instinctively read the situation correctly and said publicly, "[the chickens have come home to roost.](#)" He was immediately censured by Elijah Muhammad and the Black Muslim leadership for being insensitive to the American people.

As far as I am concerned, in confronting the murder of JFK we are not confronted with the task of repairing something that has been injured. We are confronted with the task of addressing a society that in 1963 was already profoundly ill, and if anything has become sicker in the intervening years. At the core of this illness is that mentality which pursues anti-communism and the Cold War above all else, a mentality which will subordinate any crime, including the threat to annihilate mankind, in pursuit of defeating this supposed enemy. I reiterate, what did Kennedy in was his effort to depart from this insanity. And on this score, in deciding to handle the assassination as they did, the left/liberal establishment revealed that when push came to shove, when they had to make a choice, this left/liberal establishment was more addicted to the military and the CIA than to the Constitution. And by and large the American people are part and parcel of this addiction.

Of course this is not to say that you or anyone else must accept this liberal/conservative definition of American democracy. But in practical terms, the quality of American democracy is ultimately up to the American people to determine. And the people for now are dominated by the “powers that be” and their press. For American democracy to return to being governed by the Constitution, instead of by the mentality of the Cold War, will mean confronting truly vast forces that will stand in opposition. Such a process can only proceed on the basis of a broad social movement which is prepared to challenge the political assumptions of our society at its roots. Along the way such a movement will inevitably want to know everything it can about the illness it must overcome.

I believe that as people become part of such a movement they will want to know, they will need to know, who killed President Kennedy and why and how the murder was covered up. They will need to know because they will be struggling to overcome the Orwellian forces that today dominate our nation and the world. And this case is a window on those forces. So no matter if our work is ignored today, it will have something to offer people eventually.

From my point of view, the Kennedy assassination is a strand in the fabric of a society suffering from an illness which is the outgrowth of more than a century, an illness which has been growing since shortly after the American Civil War, when the reconstruction process was short-circuited. From that point on, the “powers that be” in the United States from a moral standpoint have more often than not been on the wrong side of history, frustrating change, opposing human freedom, exploiting the majority in the interest of the privileged few. For most of this century anti-communism and the Cold War formed the rationale for this American policy.

The only exception is the period in which Hitler went too far and had to be called back, at which point the United States joined with the Soviet Union. And the minute Hitler was out of the picture, U.S. policy reverted. Our military intelligence began working with the Nazis, helping them find their way to South America, coordinating repression in Latin America with fascist military regimes, embarking on domestic witch hunts in order to cancel the cultural and political progress which the American people had achieved through the struggles of the Depression and World War II.

The real reason for the Cold War was that the Soviet Union, with all its problems and deviations, remained throughout an obstacle to the U.S. policy of dominance in the Third World. The minute Communist China abandoned the anti-colonialist stance, it was able to normalize relations with the United States. The reason the United States will not normalize relations with Cuba is because of Cuba’s determined, principled anti-colonialist foreign policy and the fact that its development as a Third World country independent of U.S. control stands as a glaring alternative to the results in those third world countries which submit to United States domination.

Look at [the points where Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. were assassinated](#). These are

also political assassinations in which there is evidence of involvement by the federal government. Malcolm was killed when he had joined the struggle of African Americans in the United States with the anti-colonialist movement internationally. King was killed at the point he was joining our civil rights movement to our anti-war movement, again with the possibility of our domestic movement being linked with a worldwide movement against colonialism.

As an example of the timeliness of these issues I am enclosing an article which appeared in [the March 22nd issue of \*Granma International\*](#),<sup>[38]</sup> remarks that Fidel Castro recently made in Europe at the U.N.-sponsored conference on social development.

So this is where we are today. The assassination of President Kennedy is a window onto the reality of American democracy, a militarist political democracy lacking in social and economic democracy and justice, a system that is apparently threatened by a small island of a few million people ninety miles off its shore who for thirty-five years have refused to allow the United States to define for them their notion of freedom, democracy, and justice. And make no mistake about it. Although the powers that be are trying to convince everyone that the Cold War has ended, the refusal by the U.S. to recognize Cuba and to peacefully coexist with this nation, the continuing attempt to embargo this nation — all this is proof that the Cold War is not over. Virtually every month brings a new expose on the role of the CIA in horrors committed in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Chile, and so on. But the struggle continues.

Since peace is the order which flows from social justice, so long as there is an absence of social justice in any society, that society will find itself at war. This is a law of human life. It is true for our society, and it is true for the world. The struggles for social and economic justice in the United States are connected with the struggles against colonialism and for social and economic development throughout the world, and these struggles are connected with the struggle for peace and the transformation of mankind's relationship to nature.

I leave you with the following quotation from Chinghiz Aitmatov, the great Kirghiz writer:

The movement for peace is an irreversible process of the social awakening of the masses, a spiritual birth. Mankind is proposing liberation from a universal humiliating terror, from feelings of isolation, indifference, and cruelty — from everything that impudently inspires and provokes one through propaganda to serve insanity. . . . In the movement for peace, as in no other, concretely and not abstractly, the contemporary thought of mankind in all its fullness is reflected, tests itself, and is realized.<sup>[39]</sup>

## Notes

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1. On the evening of November 23rd, 1963 Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro delivered a speech, "[Concerning The Facts and Consequences of the Tragic Death of President John F. Kennedy](#)," on Cuban TV and radio. See [Appendix II](#) for an English translation of the speech, which was released by the Cuban Mission at the United Nations shortly after it was delivered.
2. See [Appendix IV](#), which includes internal memoranda by Nicholas Katzenbach, Assistant to the then-Attorney General Robert Kennedy, documenting the early marrying of the new Administration and even the President's own brother to the Oswald story. There were veiled hints of opposition, [one from former President Harry Truman](#). See [Appendix VIII](#). See also [the Castro speech](#), [Appendix II](#), for analysis of immediate response of the U.S. media.

3. Because the work of Salandria, Marcus, and several others provided proof of a conspiracy that was simple and obvious, the media had to distort the work of these critics in order to rescue the government's good name. In this effort the media resorted to Orwellian use of the term "conspiracy theorists" in referring to all Warren Commission critics, including Salandria and Marcus. While there may be many conspiracy *theorists* among the critics of the [Warren Report](#), Salandria and Marcus were not among them. Rather they were conspiracy *provers*. But by this use of language the media were able to take *proof* of conspiracy and turned it into *theory* of a conspiracy. With *proof* turned into *theory*, *knowledge* was turned into *belief* and the government was able to retreat to the position that perhaps the Warren Commission was mistaken, but of course no one would be "so extreme" as to claim that Earl Warren and the other Commission members were anything but honorable men. Thus was launched the thirty-plus year debate over the Warren Report.

Since the [Warren Report](#) was an obvious fraud, so was the pseudo-debate over whether there was or wasn't a conspiracy, a debate over a question which had long ago been answered definitively. This thirty-year pseudo-debate over the validity of the Warren Report has occupied the efforts and attention of many honest citizens who were taken in by it. Unwittingly many honest citizens, tricked into participation, became part of the cover-up, because the debate gave legitimacy to the notion that there was doubt and uncertainty when there really was none.

While Salandria's and Marcus' proofs of conspiracy are detailed and conclusive, it turns out that there is a much simpler and more elegant proof of conspiracy which involves the bullet holes in the back of the President's shirt and jacket. See [Appendix III](#).

4. In 1959, Isaac Don Levine authored [The Mind of An Assassin](#) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959). See [Appendix VI](#) for insight that it throws on the assassination of President Kennedy.
5. Repeatedly we see the Orwellian use of language (e.g., "black is white, peace is war") by the media as a form of mind control. The one public official in the entire country who courageously pursued the truth of the assassination of the President at enormous personal and professional cost was systematically labeled "irresponsible and self-seeking."
6. That the conspirators were not "rogue elephants" in the CIA was proven by the promotion of certain officials after the assassination whom Fonzi identified as being directly involved in the plot. See Fonzi, [The Last Investigation](#), p. 273.
7. Well-known left-wing radical critic of U.S. foreign policy and MIT Professor of Linguistics, Noam Chomsky has pleaded "agnosticism" on the question of whether there was a plot to kill the President, but asserts that even if there was a plot, it would not be relevant, since it had no political significance. When confronted with Salandria's articles, Chomsky took the position that he was "unconvinced," without offering any explanation as to what aspect of the analysis left him unconvinced. In correspondence decades earlier with Marcus, Chomsky seemed quite clear that there had definitely been a conspiracy. See [Appendix VIII](#). When pressed by Morrissey in recent correspondence, he merely retreated to saying that he refused to believe that his friends in the Academy of Arts and Sciences would lie (private correspondence).
8. Regular columnist for *The Nation*, and friend of Chomsky, Cockburn has defended the [Warren Report](#) and attacked critics of the Report. Recently he has been increasingly promoted by the establishment as a leftist critic of merit.
9. Under former editor Carey McWilliams and most recently under retired editor Victor Navasky, *The Nation* has repeatedly published defenses of the Warren Commission. See [Appendix VII](#).
10. Legendary critic on the left through the McCarthy period, I.F. Stone for years published *I.F. Stone's Weekly* as well as other works, including [The Hidden History of the Korean War](#). In order to appreciate I.F. Stone's credentials on the left one need only look at the title of a collection of his essays issued by Random House in 1967, [In a Time of Torment: Our Most Distinguished Independent Journalist on the most Urgent Issues and Key Personalities of our Time: LBJ, the War in Vietnam, Fulbright, the Negro Revolution, the Kennedys, Malcolm X, the Left, Right, and Where Do We Go from Here?](#) This is not an advertisement; this is the title of the book. And, interestingly, you will find in it an essay dated December 9, 1963 in which Stone argues that "Kennedy died just

in time . . . to be remembered as he would like to be remembered” and that “in the tangled dramaturgy of events, this sudden assassination was for the author the only satisfactory way out.” In 1967, with everything that was known about the case, I.F. Stone republished this essay letting such words stand. To appreciate I.F. Stone’s and *The Nation*’s roles in the cover-up, see Appendices [VII](#) and [VIII](#).

11. John Kenneth Galbraith, [The Culture of Contentment](#) (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), pp. 10-12.
12. Fred Cook [has written a long memorandum](#) recounting in detail how Carey McWilliams, then Editor of *The Nation*, frustrated, blocked, delayed, and ultimately sabotaged Cook’s efforts to publish a challenge to the [Warren Report](#). This is all the more significant since at the time Cook was a regular contributor to *The Nation*, and arguably the most significant and prominent investigative reporter in the country on the U.S. military industrial complex. See [Appendix VII](#).
13. Garrison, as the District Attorney of New Orleans, was the only public official who openly took on the CIA over the assassination, trying Clay Shaw as a co-conspirator. Garrison tried to subpoena various federal officials to testify, but the federal authorities refused to cooperate in serving the subpoenas. Salandria played a key role in identifying one of Garrison’s top aides as a CIA agent who had infiltrated his office. Subsequent to the Shaw trial, Garrison was framed on charges of having ties to organized crime. He was eventually exonerated and was ultimately elected a judge.
14. [The JFK Assassination: The Garrison Tapes](#), Blue Ridge Film Trust, Vestron Video, 1992, VHS videotape.
15. This idea is not original with the author. Nobel Peace Laureate Conor Cruise O’Brien actually first broached it. See [“Veto by Assassination?”](#) in *The Minority of One*, December, 1967.
16. For further details and an analysis of [how the typical reporter might fall into denial of a conspiracy when confronted with Salandria’s early articles](#), see [Appendix XI](#).
17. See the review of *The Nation*’s editorial process in [Appendix VII](#).
18. See [Appendix VII](#).
19. Raymond Marcus, [Addendum B: Addendum to the HSCA, The Zapruder Film, and the Single Bullet Theory](#), self-published, July 1995, [pp. 33-40](#). In these pages Marcus has preserved for us a tremendously revealing report of a debate between Mark Lane and a leading liberal spokesman, A.L. Wirin, which took place on the West Coast after the release of the Warren Report. In the debate Wirin attempts to defend the Warren Commission by citing I.F. Stone’s endorsement of the [Warren Report](#), and with the suggestion that those who question the Report should instead feel a sense of relief that the assassination has not led to a pogrom of the left. See [Appendix VIII](#).
20. Unpublished letter from Chomsky to Michael Morrissey. Here Chomsky is doing the same thing Wirin did thirty years earlier. Confronted with unassailable facts, he falls back on insisting that we maintain allegiance to the honor of his colleagues.  
[From the 2007 edition of Michael Morrissey’s book, [Looking for the Enemy](#), see section [07 Addenda](#), part [“6 Correspondence with Noam Chomsky \(1989-1995\)”](#), where the author relates that “Chomsky had offered me the following example of conspiracy craziness:”, “Thus when the National Academy of Sciences refutes by careful experiment the one reason offered by the House Committee to question the Warren Report, we can simply conclude that the scientists are in on the conspiracy. Anyone who knows them personally knows that this is laughable . . .”]
21. The play, entitled *How Ronald Reagan Finally Saved the World, or As You Like It So Long As You Finally Save the World*, is a closet drama which explores the logic of the Cold War and an alternative logic which people might use as a basis for building peace. See [Appendix XII](#).
22. See [Appendix XI](#) for an analysis of the ideological reasons Chomsky would have to be blind to the significance of the assassination.

23. [Unpublished letter to Salandria](#) on the significance for peaceful coexistence of Kennedy's willingness to negotiate the removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba rather than removing them by ultimatum and eventually war. See [Appendix XI](#).
24. "[Premier Khrushchev's Letter to Castro Reviewing the Crisis](#), January 31, 1963," [The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: A National Security Archive Documents Reader](#), ed. C. Chang and P. Kornbluh (New York: The New Press, 1992), pp. 319-29. On January 31, 1964 Soviet Premier Khrushchev wrote a very long letter to Castro in which he describes his view that politically the world has suffered a fracture with the Chinese and right wing Americans on one side, and on the other side moderate elements within the socialist camp including the Soviet Union and Cuba. This document is critical for anyone who wishes to understand the balance of forces in the world on the question of peace that existed in 1963, and the likely impact of Kennedy's removal on this balance. See [Appendix X](#).
25. Michael Parenti, "[State Power and the JFK Assassination](#)," *Prevailing Wind*, issue #1 (1995), pp. 31-39. [CD recording made from 1/4" reel tape is available for a price from the [Pacifica Radio Archives](#)]
26. Richard Reeves, [President Kennedy: Profile of Power](#) (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 54-62.
27. Norman Cousins, [The Improbable Triumvirate: John F. Kennedy, Pope John, Nikita Khrushchev](#) (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972). In this memoir Mr. Cousins details his role as an intermediary between Pope John XXIII, President Kennedy, and Premier Khrushchev in the process of achieving a ban on atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons.
28. William Attwood, [The Reds and the Blacks: A Personal Adventure](#) (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). Attwood, a former editor of *Look Magazine*, was given the secret assignment of discussing normalization of relations with Cuban representatives in the U.N.
29. Reeves, p. 698n: "Khrushchev's letters [to President Kennedy] were long and often rambling, and ranged over a wide variety of topics. Many were unmistakably personally dictated . . . Kennedy based his replies on the sections . . . most palatable to American interests and often closed by sending greetings from his family and his hopes for better relations between the superpowers. . . . In January 1992, a series of Kennedy-Khrushchev letters relating to the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis was released, and it proved highly revealing. These letters were obtained through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit by the National Security Archive and are now available at that institution and at the Kennedy Library. But despite the passage of almost thirty years and the pleas of nearly every top living member of the Kennedy Administration for the release of the rest of the letters, the U.S. State Department has kept much of the remaining correspondence secret."

See [Jim Douglass, JFK and The Unspeakable, Why He Died and Why It Matters](#) (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010): "In July 1993, the U.S. State Department, in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by a Canadian newspaper, declassified twenty-one secret letters between John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev." ([p. 23](#)) Khrushchev's first private letter to JFK was sent on September 29, 1961 during the Berlin crisis. In 1996 all the private correspondence between JFK and Khrushchev was published in [FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges](#) (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office). The [Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges: Document List](#) contains 120 communications, of which 21 make up the secret letters between JFK and Khrushchev. It is not clear precisely which of the 120 make up the subset of 21 private communications. Here is a list of what probably constitutes the bulk of the private missives:

- o [Document 21: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, September 29, 1961
- o [Document 22: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Hyannis Port, October 16, 1961
- o [Document 23: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, November 9, 1961
- o [Document 24: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, November 10, 1961
- o [Document 25: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Washington, November 16, 1961

- [Document 26: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Washington, December 2, 1961
- [Document 27: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, December 13, 1961
- [Document 32: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, February 10, 1962
- [Document 34: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Washington, February 15, 1962
- [Document 37: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, February 21, 1962
- [Document 42: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, March 10, 1962
- [Document 51: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Washington, July 17, 1962
- [Document 71: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, October 30, 1962
- [Document 82: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, November 22, 1962
- [Document 84: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Washington, December 14, 1962
- [Document 85: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, December 19, 1962
- [Document 99: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, May 8, 1963

30. See Castro speech, [Appendix II](#).
31. President John F. Kennedy, at American University, Washington, D.C., June 10, 1963. See [Appendix I](#).
32. Reeves, pp. 347, 364.
33. George F. Kennan, [The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet-American Relations in the Atomic Age](#) (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982). A collection of essays from 1950-82.
34. Mikhail Gorbachev, [Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World](#) (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).
35. In 1961, continuing a process begun by President Eisenhower, John J. McCloy at the direction of President Kennedy held a series of meetings with Valerian A. Zorin, representing the U.S.S.R., and on September 20, 1961 they signed the Joint Statement of Agreed Principles for Disarmament Negotiations, known as the McCloy-Zorin Agreement. The agreement was submitted to the United Nations General Assembly, which on December 13, 1961 adopted it as the foundation for future negotiations towards general disarmament. See [Appendix IX](#).
36. Nelson Mandela, [Long Walk to Freedom](#) (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1994).
37. Edward J. Epstein, [Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth](#) (New York: Viking Press, 1966), p. 33.
38. See [Appendix XIII](#).
39. Chinghiz Aitmatov, "Humanism — The General Language of Mankind," *Sputnik*, September 1983, p. 11. Translated from the Russian edition.