

## QUESTIONS

Dear Vincent,

It has been a long time--more than three years--since I have heard from you. And a long time since our last conversation, following your return from New Orleans, in which, if memory has not falsified the event, I believe you told me you intended thenceforth to confine your interest in the assassination of John F. Kennedy to study and writing. Much has happened since but I am glad to note from the speech you made in October 1971 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom your interest continues.

I have read your speech a number of times, first avidly and again slowly and thoughtfully. And I have been pondering it since I received a copy of it several weeks ago. By the way, why didn't you send me a copy of it?

Your emphasis on the evidentiary significance of the Zapruder film is gratifying, as is your flat assertion that the evidence of conspiracy in the assassination is "overwhelming and voluminous" and "irrefutable". At the same time, entirely justified, if belated, is your stress on the primary necessity for establishing the reasons for Kennedy's murder and "the elements...behind it," rather than concentrating exclusively on evidentiary problems. I agree wholeheartedly, it is essential to elaborate a theory of the assassination; an "adequate model" you called it. But some ideas in your talk trouble me. Let me presume on an old tic to ask you to clarify them for me.

I sympathize with your disavowal of "fact picking the assassination," of the "microanalytic or nit-picking approach in the assassination inquiry." I applaud your candor in admitting it is "not a source of pride." But I fail to comprehend your sweeping repudiation of the value of physical evidence, your "confession" of "guilt" in having made "protracted analyses of the shots, trajectories, and wounds of the assassination." While I have reservations about your speculations concerning the number of shots fired in the assassination and the specific locations from which they were fired, I have always respected your early attack on the shuffled and stacked ballistic evidence of the Warren Commission; your assault on it is as valid today as when you first made it. I see no reason to denigrate or recant it; and now an added reason to reaffirm it. Doesn't your confession of guilt comfort the government? Why did you make it?

The bulk of your speech was devoted to political analysis. Good! But I wonder why you included references to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school controversy in New York City a few years ago. Even if your exposition of the role of the Ford Foundation in that affair and granting the validity of the inferences you draw therefrom, is only for the sake of discussion, what has all that to do with the assassination of President Kennedy? Don't you think, now that you have had opportunity to reflect on it, that reference to McGeorge Bundy, whom I detest as much as you do, as "the great nephew of A. Lawrence Lowell, one of the murderers of my Italian brothers, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti," was irrelevant, unfair, and attribution of guilt by familial association?

What interests me most, however, is your theory of the assassination, your "model". That is the crucial thing. I want to understand it. Your central underlying idea seems to have been an attempt to link the assassination with American foreign policy. The idea has merit. But your analysis is puzzling. You discussed two possible motivations for the assassination. Referring presumably to Kennedy's search for detente with the Soviet world and accommodation with the anticolonialist, so-called Third World, you said, "Before the assassination we were on a course which could have ended the Cold War." You speculated that the assassination conspiracy was "a plot to eliminate Kennedy to ensure continuation of the Cold War."

Your second theme was the flowering of armed conflict. "After the assassination," you said, "key foreign policy changes were put into effect immediately." Within weeks of Kennedy's murder--you quoted from The Politics of Escalation in Vietnam --"the United States had made the crucial decision to reverse the policy announced during the last day of President Kennedy's Administration of gradually withdrawing U.S. troops from South Vietnam. Was it all a coincidence that a change in leadership in Washington was followed by a change in policy...?" What the other key foreign policy changes were that followed the assassination you did not say.

Progression from cold war to armed conflict seems logical and, in the light of the irreconcilable antagonism underlying the challenges of the "communist" world to the ascendancy of the older capitalist social order, inevitable. But this was not your thought. You didn't "see the Cold War as authentic." You viewed it "as a cooperative effort to foist on both the American and Russian civilian populations an enormous military-intelligence budget." It is a novel idea, seemingly contradictory to well-documented, established, historical fact. Isn't it also irrelevant for your "model" of the assassination? Wouldn't an "authentic" cold war serve as well as a spurious conflict as motivation for Presidential murder?

Moreover, your idea introduces gratuitous contradiction between the two motivations you cited for Kennedy's assassination. On the one hand is continuation of a cooperative effort to delude Americans, Russians, and the world into believing the American and Soviet governments are antagonistic. On the other hand is promotion of military conflict in southeast Asia to which the Soviet government became a party by arming and supporting the enemies of the American government. I wonder that you adduced no evidence and made no political analysis to support your belief.

Motivation, we apparently agree, is inseparable from source. It is proof of the Warren Commission's dishonesty, I have long believed, that it professed inability to find a motive for the assassination, yet convicted Oswald as its sole source. The double motivation you described you attributed to two principal sources. One was the military. It is a logical suspect. On leaving office, as all the world knows, Eisenhower warned his successor, prophetically it turned out, and the nation, of the danger of "unwarranted influence...by the military-industrial complex." Yet few have linked the military with the assassination.

You made no reference to Eisenhower's warning and rested your case on other grounds. "Kennedy himself," you said, "Did not regard a military take-over as implausible." From The Pleasure of His Company you quoted Kennedy as saying, "It could happen in this country, but the conditions would have to be just right." You listed five conditions "outlined by the President" and added, "These conditions were

approximated during the Kennedy administration." There was "much evidence," you told your audience, "to indicate military involvement in the assassination," but you adduced only the malign role of the military-service pathologists in the autopsy on Kennedy in Bethesda Naval Hospital. Was there nothing implicating the military in the plot to kill Kennedy and in its execution?

But whatever its motive, which you thought "pervertedly patriotic in nature," and whatever the evidence, or lack of it, the military was not, in your opinion, the principal conspirator; it played only a secondary role in the assassination. "It does seem rather beyond the intelligence of the American military to have accomplished this crime alone." It acted with the CIA to which it is a "clumsy cousin." "At the time of the assassination the interests of the CIA and military coincided." There was "a congruence of interests."

You indicted the CIA as "the prime mover in the killing of Kennedy." It is an attractive idea. The CIA had strong motives. Antagonism between President Kennedy and this agency which had pursued an independent foreign policy under Eisenhower, at times in conflict with the State Department's policy, was great; Kennedy threatened to dismantle the CIA. To boot, the CIA had much expertise in the pursuit of foreign military adventures, the overthrow of recalcitrant governments, and the assassination of inconvenient political figures obstructing the course of American imperialism. When you spoke others had already laid onus for the assassination on the CIA. Mark Lane, I think, was one of the first to do so publicly, at a "Public Inquest" at Columbia University in 1966 in which he linked the CIA also to the massacre of half a million "communists" in Indonesia. And Garrison, with whom Lane and you yourself had collaborated in the prosecution of Clay Shaw, had reportedly and publicly attributed responsibility for the assassination to the same source.

Motivation is inseparable from source but the connection cannot be made automatically. It must be established by evidentiary proof and political analysis. Eisenstein's Why Was Lincoln Murdered? is a good example. Lane offered neither proof nor analysis in his talk. Garrison, who demonstrated the impossibility of implicating the CIA by criminal prosecution in a state court, addressed himself only to motive in Heritage of Stone, which is barren of concrete evidentiary linkage to indicated source. Your own address was, I regret to say, in Garrison's mold. You adduced no evidence establishing complicity of the CIA in the assassination of President Kennedy, not even to the extent of the Pentagon Papers, to which you referred only in another connection, implicated the CIA in the murder of President Diem of South Vietnam only three weeks before Kennedy was slain. Incidentally, why has no one looked for a link between the murders of the two presidents?

Conceptually, your idea of a military-intelligence conspiracy is similar to Garrison's "military-intelligence alliance" (Heritage of Stone, page 22) or "military-intelligence combine" (page 95), but you cast a wider net. The CIA, in your "model", had another collaborator in Presidential murder besides the stupid American military. "Do you think it irrational," you asked, "to suggest that the Soviet and American intelligences cooperated in the American governmental game of killing the President?" Apparently you thought it rational. Soviet intelligence, however, must have played only a secondary role in the "game" in which "the American government destroyed its own chief of state." But you suggested no motive for Soviet intelligence to serve as an accomplice to the CIA in murdering Kennedy in "Cold War America where for twenty-five years a virtual garrison concerning communist plotting had prevailed," and thereby to risk nuclear holocaust as soon after the Cuban missile crisis.

"Some evidence of a leftist conspiracy" linked the cooperating intelligence agencies. "On January 21, 1964, in a secret executive session, the Warren Commission had to deal with the problem of Marina Oswald giving evidence that Oswald was a Soviet agent. Senator Richard Russell said: 'That will blow the lid if she testifies to that'." But Allen Dulles averted catastrophe. Using the services of the notorious anti-communist, Isaac Don Levine, he "apparently was successful in erasing from the prospective sworn testimony any reference to Soviet intelligence connections with Oswald." You raised the question whether this was subornation of perjury. What was your thought? That Oswald was a Soviet intelligence agent involved in the assassination plot and therefore, whatever his specific role, guilty of murder as charged by the Warren Commission?

Strangely excluded from your "model" as a source of the assassination was an experienced ally of the CIA, an obviously logical suspect, the "political non-governmental right." You gave three reasons. You thought Chairman Earl Warren of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy would not willingly have "surrendered his credentials to protect the right." His credentials as a liberal? It may be so but isn't your reasoning uncomfortably reminiscent of the rationale of those supporters of the Commission who rejected your criticism of its findings on the ground that "a man like Warren" would not be guilty of a frame-up of Oswald? If we follow your reasoning must we not approve the Warren Commission?

The political integrity of the Commission liberals, however, is not the issue. They were motivated, it seems, by more elementary considerations. For "Liberals ...to cover for the extra-governmental right in matters of assassination," you said, "is for them to sign their own death warrants." I thought the Warren Commission which included both "liberals" and outright reactionaries had "covered" the assassins by approving the frame-up of Oswald. I thought exposure, not cover up, of the conspiracy might be a dangerous thing for establishmentarians to do, and that fear may have played a part in restraining the surviving Kennedys from demanding the truth about their brother's murder. You drew contrary inferences from their silence. It is true, the Commission "liberals" continue to live. But their reactionary collaborators on the Commission, with the exception of Russell who died a natural death, also are alive. What does that signify?

Your third reason for excluding the "ultra right" as a source of the assassination is geopolitical. It would seem logical and convenient for these rightists to have chosen Dallas as the site of the execution. Dallas, called the hate capital of the world, was host to a number of fanatic anti-communist groups, one or more of which had assaulted Lyndon Johnson and Adlai Stevenson; it was the headquarters of ex-General Walker who had been forced to resign from the U.S. Army over indoctrination of troops under his command with propaganda of the John Birch Society, and who previously had called for fifty thousand armed men to join him in opposing Federal troops over the enrollment of a black man in the University of Mississippi. In Dallas the "ultra right" could count on cooperation by the police and support by Texas officials. You remember Kennedy's remark that in traveling to Fort Worth and Dallas he was entering "enemy territory".

Yet you thought "It would make no sense for the right" to kill the President "in an ultra right city such as Dallas"; it would "impute blame to the right." If the site of Presidential murder has an inverse bearing on the political identity of the killers, what political tendency would you have eliminated had Kennedy been slain in New York City? Or Philadelphia? Why was Malcolm X killed in New York? Martin Luther King in Memphis? Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles? Why was Dallas chosen as the murder site?

Excluded for various reasons as sources of the assassination were the FBI and Lyndon Johnson. "Oil interests" whose billion-dollar depletion allowances had been threatened by Kennedy and in whose administration over-charges of natural gas prices had been refunded to the tune of more than half a billion were eliminated because Warren would not risk his "credentials" to protect them. By extension and by omission all economic interests were eliminated from consideration as sources of the assassination, making consistent and understandable the omission of any reference in your analysis and "model" to the military-industrial complex.

In decapitating the American state at the peak of its imperialist power the trio of murdering agencies in your "model" effected a coup d'etat. On page two of your text this coup was "covert", on page three, "transparent". Open or concealed, this "illegitimate seizure of power" brought "new rulers" to "absolute power". They rule through a "new illegitimate apparatus." November 22, 1963 was an "historical day when the republic expired." In peroration you asked, "Was not Wall Street successfully stormed by way of Dealey Plaza?" And, mirabile dictu! "...was not the capitalist system...overthrown by a new class in the United States?"

Startling news! How did your audience receive it? I have difficulty absorbing it. Let me ask questions.

First, about the vanished republic. What followed it? You characterized the "new illegitimate governmental apparatus" as an "uncontrolled war machine." Did you mean to suggest a military dictatorship? Or a fascist regime? Exactly how does the state of 1964-1972 differ in form and structure from its historical predecessor, the republic of 1787-1963?

If "absolute power" replaced balance of power in the government of the United States, why wasn't the Constitution scrapped? What is the significance of the conflicts between the Presidency and Congress? How can the Supreme Court strike down Congressional enactments and enjoin Executive action? Why did our absolute rulers bother to spawn and nourish the Warren Commission?

Who wields the "absolute power" of the new state? One man? Who is he? Or does a junta rule? Who are they? Are they covert like the coup d'etat that brought them to power, but opaque? Why aren't they visible like the Greek colonels or the Brazilian generals?

Wall Street stormed in Dealey Plaza! It's odd. No one seems to have noticed. Your own realization, you acknowledged, was belated. Do you think the stock and commodity exchanges are now aware of it? Morgan Guaranty Trust, Chase Manhattan, Bank of America, and the rest of that fraternity, have they been alerted? What of General Motors, U. S. Steel, the "oil interests", other corporate giants, and the mammoth conglomerates, are they still capitalizing profit in blissful ignorance of the loss of the capital market?

No matter, with Wall Street went the capitalist system. I am astounded. Misled by such classic Marxist works as the Communist Manifesto, I thought, in common with millions of other deluded men and women the world over, the "gravediggers" of capitalism would be its wage slaves and other oppressed classes who would overthrow the system by revolutionary mass action, in the United States as well as in Europe and Asia. I never dreamed and, I am convinced, neither did Oswald who

looked forward to a future better society following nuclear holocaust, a "new class" would achieve the overthrow of capitalism with a single murder which was also a covert and transparent coup. I am chagrined. I failed--I confess it--to observe the historic event. Did anyone?

Must I abjure Marxism? Before I jettison the learning and convictions of a lifetime, instruct me. Capitalism was overthrown in the United States, you said. What took its place? What social system? What do you call it? Is it historically unique? Is it an exploitative system? Who exploits whom? How does the anonymous American social system differ from the capitalist system? From the social order of the "communist" world? What is its mode of production? Its impact on profit, prices, unemployment, housing, science, the arts? What is its ethos? Its ideology?

And the "new class", what is it? Not the working class, I take it. Nor the middle class which old revolutionists call the petty bourgeoisie. Is it an historically new social class? What are its antecedents? Its economic roots? Why was it anti-capitalist? Hostile to the republic? How and by whom can it be dislodged from power?

What has been the impact of the demise of American capitalism on the global power balance between the capitalist and "communist" worlds? Capitalism overthrown in the United States should signify, should it not, quietus to American imperialism? Alas, why do they seem unaware of it in Hanoi, Saigon, Vientiane, Phnompenh, Bangkok, Seoul, Pyongyang, Tokyo, Manila, New Delhi, Dacca, Rawalpindi, Tel Aviv, Cairo, Athens, Moscow, Bonn, Paris, London, Madrid, Havana, Mexico City, Guatemala City, Panama City, Brasilia, Santiago, New York, Dallas, and Washington? How do you imagine Mao Tse Tung and Chou En Lai will greet Richard Nixon in Peking? If not as a comrade in arms in the battle for socialism, will they hail him as a brother in the fight against imperialism?

On second thought, perhaps I make much ado about little. After all, you made only a single passing oratorical reference toward the end of your speech to the passing of American capitalism. You did not dwell on it, flesh it out with fact and quotation, elaborate it analytically. Why did you include it? It is not essential, either as fundamental premise or ineluctable conclusion, to your "model" of the assassination. In fact, your theory of Kennedy's murder stands or falls without it whereas for me the assassination of Kennedy was an incident in the struggle between giant capitalist interests, made possible by the passivity of the working class, for control of the state, with the aim of reorienting the basic policy of the government. As this was achieved and as I found nothing in your speech to cause me to alter my view of the assassination I will continue to anticipate the revolutionary end of capitalism in the United States in the not too distant future.

My best to your charming wife.

Fraternally,

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