

# HAROLD WEISBERG

7627 Old Receiver Rd.  
Frederick, MD 21702

5/10/94

Mr. Stephen Ambrose  
Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis  
88 College Avenue  
New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Dear Mr. Ambrose,

I suppose I should not be surprised at your refusal to answer my question, "what basis you had for making the statements so widely used to sell and popularize a book that to one who knows those facts (referring to what precedes in my letter) is an overt ~~fraud~~ and deliberate fraud." I referred to Posner's admittedly mistitled Case Closed.

Your refusal to answer when you took the time for arrogant pontification to others does speak for itself.

To the degree possible I have been devoting myself to perfecting the record on the JFK assassination and its investigations to the degree now possible for me. I'm 81 and in impaired health.

My book of which I told you, rather severely reduced in size in the belief that what was not eliminated is more than enough to make the Case Open point, ~~has~~<sup>has</sup> been in the stores for some ~~time~~<sup>time</sup>, more than a month. I have heard nothing from Posner about it. He cannot fault it on fact. I regret that it was rushed, the rushing having made a few problems that do not influence the text at all.

In failing to respond you have made the record that will exist for history and, as other than a professional historian, can be taken as your own reflection of your regard for your reputation, for all the honors you have won.

That you would neither justify what you did ~~not~~<sup>not</sup> express any regret for it was out of my mind until another historian and a sociologist sent me a copy of your review of Reeves' book in Foreign Affairs, of which you are a book review editor. I was taken by some of your words and with your silence when your own reputation was involved in your grossly uninformed and uninhibited praises of Posner's whoring with our history, I do not expect any response. But I do ask you the basis for this ~~language~~<sup>usage</sup> from that review because I also studied these matters:

"Kennedy botched the Bay of Pigs because of his inexperience, aggressiveness and a flawed decision-making apparatus. In the missile crisis he took the gravest possible risk over a relatively small issue and then lucked through. He was the central American agent in the plot against Diem, the point of which was to get on with ~~the~~ winning the war. ... Did he miss a unique opportunity to get rid of Castro?"

You are on the faculty ~~of~~<sup>of</sup> a "Center for Historical Analysis," I am not. But I know more than a mere something about what Posner did that you ~~prised~~<sup>prised</sup> so highly and something about the matters you refer to in this review, where what you write is propaganda, not

history or historical analysis, so I ask you if you have solid support for what I quote?

Kennedy inherited the Bay of ~~pigs~~ Pigs. It was not his concept. What alternatives did he have once he inherited it, practical alternatives? And how did he, personally, "botch" it with what ~~the~~ "isenhower/Nixon administration gave him to cope with?

The missile crisis "small issue" you do not identify was getting those USSR missiles out of Cuba. That is "small"? So small it was feared it could ~~be~~ incinerate the world?

"... he took the gravest possible risk" in eliminating that problem, you say. You do not say whether there were any alternatives or whether, if there were, any were less of a "possible risk."

You seem to be saying that the United States had a right to invade Cuba. Where does it or did it get that right? From the United Nations? Our Latin American treaties and other arrangements with those nations? Under any provision of international law?

You also do not say what your "unique opportunity to get rid of Castro" is or was. In a sense perhaps that is wise because I am ~~convinced~~ <sup>sure</sup> that you will not now say what that "unique opportunity" was, but I do ask it of you.

You say of Viet Nam that Kennedy was what at the least is ambiguous, "the central agent in the plot against Diem" and that this had "the point ... to get on with winning the war." Is the "central agent" the one who conceives the plot? The one who imple-ments it? Or sees to its execution? Is this really any more than hate-Kennedy propaganda? And how were we going to win that war with or without the end of Diem? You say it was for us to win that war but his record is the exact opposite, as reflected in the NSAMs and as General James <sup>C. GAYN</sup> ~~Gair~~ told me when I interviewed him in 1967. And what that <sup>say</sup> NSAM and what General <sup>C. GAYN</sup> ~~Gair~~ told me - and there is much else available on this, as you should know - is the exact opposite of "Kennedy's goal was victory in Vietnam, that he had no intention of withdrawing."

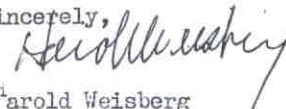
You are among those who make it clear that as war is too important to leave to the generals, so is our history too precious to leave to professional historians.

If the foregoing and your ignorant praises of Posner's fraud represent ~~his~~ "historical analysis" we are in deep trouble and our young will be educated to even more ignorance.

I suppose it is the prejudice and ignorance you reflect in this review that can in a way explain your lusty endorsement of Posner's commercialization and exploitation of that great tragedy that leads you to look forward to the "Kennedy revisionist school" in your review. Is it that you hate the man and all he stood for that drives you to ~~self~~ self-defamations, to such impeachments of your own professional qualifications and character? To prostitute your legitimate qualifications so shamelessly?

I'm sorry, as I told you, that my typing cannot be any better.

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg



12-1-1993

Dear Gerry,

Thank you for the latest info on Posner. November 22, 1993 was a very sad day for me. I put aside lecture notes and spoke instead on the assassination. Sadly, few of my freshmen students had any clue as to the basic facts of JFK's murder. Later, some even missed a multiple-choice question asking them to recognize the date of the killing. The media blitz in support of the Warren Commission made me physically ill.

I wonder about the motivation of those trumpeting Posner's work as the final chapter in the JFK story. Perhaps these people are trying to protect the reputations of those on the Warren Commission. One connection between the Warren Commission and some of the men involved with the Case Closed saga is the Council on Foreign Relations. Consider the following:

1. John J. McCloy and Allen Dulles were directors of the Council on Foreign Relations in 1963. Today Gerald Ford is a member.

2. The vice president and editorial director of Random House is Jason Epstein. He is a member of the Council. (See Who's Who entry attached.)

3. Stephen E. Ambrose is quoted as saying Case Closed is "absolutely brilliant, absolutely convincing." (See copy of Random House advertisement for Case Closed). Ambrose is on the staff of Foreign Affairs, the journal published by the Council on Foreign Relations. His job? Book review editor. (See attached Foreign Affairs masthead. Enclosed also are samples of Ambrose's reviews on JFK from Foreign Affairs).

4. Peruse the Foreign Affairs masthead. The Board of Advisors includes Garrick Utley (NBC News anchor/commentator), Jim Hoagland (New York Times), Charlayne Hunter-Galt (PBS MacNeil/Lehrer anchor), Felix Rohatyn (Time), and Theodore C. Sorensen (pundit-at-large, reputed Profiles in Courage ghostwriter, and Principal Keeper of the Camelot Flame).

5. Regarding the motivation of US News & World Report: The 13 September 1993 masthead of that magazine lists Mortimer B. Zuckerman (Chairman and Editor-in-Chief), Peter W. Bernstein (Executive Editor), and Christopher Ma (Deputy Editor). All three are members of the Council on Foreign Relations. (See attached US News masthead).

I find these connections interesting. Again, thanks for the







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## BUYING TIME F

The most important President Boris Yeltsin of a constitutionally democracy in Russia over the obstruction of a historical Yeltsin to fail, the will or from control, the grime, disintegration,

Raising up democracy is because fixing sustained fortifying such support and disillusioned engaging them last month's stalemate between, public of many moods—was over, disapproval that it was the old corrupt new mafia business public was future with Yeltsin past with Russia.

Transformation acquiescence in government calls for democracy

## The United States

STEPHEN E. AMBROSE

*President Kennedy: Profile of Power.* BY RICHARD REEVES. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993, 763 pp. \$27.50

Because it is a story of the highest drama told by a veteran journalist who has dug up all sorts of new information (and from documentary rather than unidentified oral sources), this book makes compelling reading. Reeves' technique is to stick as closely as possible to President Kennedy's point of view. At critical moments, such as the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile crisis or the coup against Diem, Reeves presents virtually every document Kennedy read over a several-day period, and most of what he heard, said or did.

For all the new material, however, some of it significant, Reeves' conclusions are not startling. Kennedy botched the Bay of Pigs because of his inexperience, aggressiveness and a flawed decision-making apparatus; in the missile crisis, he took the gravest possible risk over a relatively small issue and then lucked through. He was the central American agent in the plot against Diem, the point of which was to get on with winning the war.

What is missing here is not the factual content, not who said or did what, but rather any attempt at analysis. Not to excuse Kennedy, but shouldn't the CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Department of Defense and Congress take some of the blame for the Bay of Pigs? With regard to the missile crisis,

the author's technique allows him to avoid confronting such questions as: Did Kennedy have a right to make a promise binding on his successors, done without Senate approval, pledging the United States never to invade Cuba? If he had the right, was it wise? Did he miss a unique opportunity to get rid of Castro? Reeves quotes inside conversations that show the Kennedy administration believed Castro could not last another year—three at the most. What were the consequences? Reeves does not speculate. Nor does he ever say directly that Kennedy's goal was victory in Vietnam, that he had no intention of withdrawing and that his commitment reflected that of a large majority of his countrymen. But his documents make it clear that such was the case.

Reeves disapproves Kennedy's womanizing, his ruthless ambition, his lack of principles; but most of all he disapproves Kennedy's penchant for out-and-out lies, private and public. That he gives so many examples will lead some to dismiss the book as mere Kennedy-bashing. That would not be accurate.

More important, Reeves' book leads to the observation that presidential reputations go through some big swings. Truman was at 23 percent approval when he left office; today he is at about 90 percent. Kennedy was at about 50 percent when he was killed; he is all but worshipped today by a majority of the public, especially younger people. Yet with the scholars who look at him in depth, who study the record rather than watch the film clips, his reputation has sunk nearly out of sight. All of which means there will soon be a Kennedy revisionist school,



May 4, 1994

Dear Harold,

Enclosed is some information you might find of some interest regarding connections between Stephen Ambrose, Random House, and possibly others. It was sent to me by a history professor who I have gotten to know since last Spring when I gave a talk on the assassination to one of his classes. He originally wrote this in Dec. '93 but did not send it until last week after I wrote to him about Case Open being available.

I still have another long week-and-a-half of grading ahead of me, before I can really give some close attention to reading Case Open among other things. I also plan to write to In These Times again, with reference to Case Open and the letter I wrote last Dec. 30<sup>th</sup> which I took them to task for not criticizing Posner as they should have. I will send you a copy when I get around to writing it, soon I hope.

Best Wishes,  
Gony