

What is new about that headline? Nothing much, since Jim Garrison and I released that information more than two years ago. During the past two years we have witnessed numerous denials, primarily based upon the assumption that John Kennedy never showed any inclination to wind down the war, and was in fact fervently committed to maintaining American troops (then called advisors) in Vietnam. Now Kenneth P. O'Donnell, appointments secretary and close personal friend (later for that) of the late president, reveals that John Kennedy was committed to the complete withdrawal of all American personnel just after his re-election in 1964. O'Donnell said that Kennedy felt "that if he announced a total withdrawal of American military personnel from Vietnam before the 1964 election there would be a wild conservative outcry against returning him to the presidency for a second term."

O'Donnell then quoted Kennedy: "In 1963, I'll be damned everywhere as a Communist appeaser, but I don't care. If I tried to pull out completely now, we would have another Joe McCarthy red scare on our hands. But I can do it after I'm re-elected. So we had better make damned sure that I am re-elected."

Instead they made damned sure that he was dead and unable, therefore, to run for re-election.

O'Donnell's statement was not immediately followed by the official denials that we have come to associate with the aftermath of all truthful revelations. Instead, the Senate Democratic leader, Mike Mansfield, said at once that, after a White House breakfast in the Spring of 1963, Kennedy told him he agreed that a "complete withdrawal of all Americans from Vietnam was necessary." The president added, Mansfield reported, that this could not be done until after the 1964 elections, but should be done immediately after the elections.

According to O'Donnell, Kennedy met with Gen. Douglas MacArthur and then gave his staff a complete account of the discussions:

"MacArthur implored the President to avoid a US military build-up in Vietnam, or any other part of the Asian mainland, because he felt that the domino theory was ridiculous in a nuclear age. MacArthur went on to point out that there were domestic problems — the urban crisis, the ghettos, the economy — that should have far more priority than Vietnam."

I take you back to Nov. 22, 1963. Do you remember what kind of a country we lived in then? Compare it

to America 1970. Think of the months and years that followed the assassination of President Kennedy. Years of silence. Two years in which not a single voice dissenting the official version of President Kennedy's assassination was permitted on network radio or television. Think of the responsible editorials in the responsible press congratulating Lyndon Johnson for his every act of escalation, declaring that he has donned the Kennedy mantle as he increased our investment from 15,000 advisors to more than half a million combat troops. Do you recall how the voice of the liberals was heard in the land? I.F. Stone, the *New York Post*, *The Nation* filled with support for the Warren Report and condemnation for those who dared to think that not all the questions had been answered. And how many radicals were heard to jeer that JFK was all part of the pig power structure anyway, and that his death was an insignificant bit of trivia.

During the past half year we have learned that the former chief of the Dallas police force, Jesse Curry, has concluded at long last that they never did have any evidence to show that Oswald did it alone; and that Senator Richard Russell, a member of the Warren Commission, always did believe that there was a conspiracy to murder the president (even, evidently,

to kill Russell and the Warren Commission). We have felt constrained to associate with Curry in a book and in subsequent media interviews, Russell in an earlier television interview, Johnson in an earlier television interview, and Kennedy in an exclusive interview. In a relevant portion of which I had asked CBS to delete. CBS, of course, having had a great deal of experience with re-writing and falsification of information in the field, completely.

Where this all leaves the Warren and his lone hapless associate, Louis Nizer, is a matter for self-described "contemporary historians" such as William Bradford Huie to ponder.

The rest of us might wonder what Ken O'Donnell, described in the book as JFK's close personal friend, Robert Kennedy; Ted Kennedy; Ted Sorensen and as the other JFK confidants are thinking as they hear Lyndon Johnson order more men to Vietnam and explain that he was following the policy laid down by his predecessor, and what the surviving Kennedy confidants have thought until now as Nixon escalated, invaded a neutral country, bombed North Vietnam, sent troops into Laos as quietly as one can send troops into another neutral country, and explained it all as part of the commitment of American military personnel to Southeast Asia — a commitment, he explained, that was entered into and fully supported until his death by John F. Kennedy.

They all said they were his friends, and surely he died as much for them as for any others. Yet in a display of deference to power and with certain aspirations for a place near the throne, they remained silent as his memory was tarnished, the cause for which he died scattered to the winds, the best of our youth became victims of executions and often both, and as the evil that was always present here — as it is in all countries — became so dominant that the country lost its basic redeeming characteristics and became an evil place.

Neither Lyndon Johnson nor Richard Nixon could have wrought such a monumental change alone. They required the silence of John Kennedy's friends and relatives.

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