

'CIA killed JFK to keep war going'

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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 our ground troops (then called "Marines" in Vietnam). Now Kenneth O'Donnell, appointments secretary (and close personal friend) (for that) of the late president, reveals that John Kennedy was committed to the complete withdrawal of American military personnel from Vietnam before the 1964 election. There would be a wild conservative outcry against winning him to the White House for a second term.

O'Donnell told John Kennedy: "Let me be damned every way, 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 meeting 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 buildup 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 from 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 had 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 continue 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 when he signed the report holding quite to the contrary) and that Lyndon Johnson, himself, never really did believe the report and always did harbor suspicion that there was a conspiracy to kill Kennedy. The pretense that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin of John F. Kennedy has now been so thoroughly discredited that even the pretenders have felt constrained to abandon it. Curry in a book and in subsequent media interviews, Russell in an Atlanta television interview, Johnson to CBS in an exclusive interview, the relevant portion of which he then asked CBS to delete. CBS, of course, having had a great deal of experience with re-writing and falsifying information in the field, complied.

Where this all leaves poor Earl Warren and his lone hapless defender, Louis Nizer, is a matter for self-described "contemporary historians" such as William Manchester to ponder.

The rest of us might wonder what Ken O'Donnell, described in the press as JFK's close personal friend, Robert Kennedy, Ted Ken-

nedy, Ted Sorenson and all the other JFK confidants were thinking as they heard 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 a 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 cowardly deference to power and with craven 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 or 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.