

**The Hope in Confronting the Unspeakable  
in the Assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy**

Jim Douglass

Coalition on Political Assassinations (COPA) Conference

20 November 2009

Dallas, Texas

<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/JFK/Unspeakable/COPA2009.html>

This is the keynote address by Jim Douglass, author of *JFK and The Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters*. You can watch the video at <http://vimeo.com/35174755>. Audio and video are downloadable from the site referenced above, which also offers other links and both an incredible set of annotated well-worth-reading endnotes (indicated with [ ]s here) and an excellent Afterward by the site's editor David Ratcliff. These have been omitted here only to keep the page count of this document down.

Introduction (John Judge)....	1
Address.....	3
Questions/Answers .....	22

---

"You believe in redemption don't you?"

John F. Kennedy

May 1, 1962

**Introduction**

Recently you may know that Oliver Stone was on the Bill Maher show he and gave him a copy of the book we're going to be talking about tonight, *JFK and the Unspeakable* by Jim Douglass. Stone wrote in a recent article,

The murder of President Kennedy was a seminal event for me and for millions of Americans. It changed the course of history. It was a crushing blow to our country and to millions of people around the world. It put an abrupt end to a period of a misunderstood idealism, akin to the spirit of 1989 when the Soviet bloc to began to thaw and 2008, when our new American President was fairly elected.

Today, more than 45 years later, profound doubts persist about how President Kennedy was killed and why. My film JFK was a metaphor for all those doubts, suspicions and unanswered questions. Now an extraordinary new book offers the best account I have read of this tragedy and its significance. That book is James Douglass's JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters. It is a book that deserves the attention of all Americans; it is one of those rare books that, by helping us understand our history, has the power to change it.

The subtitle sums up Douglass's purpose: *Why He Died and Why it Matters*. In his

beautifully written and exhaustively researched treatment, Douglass lays out the "motive" for Kennedy's assassination. Simply, he traces a process of steady conversion by Kennedy from his origins as a traditional Cold Warrior to his determination to pull the world back from the edge of destruction.[1]

Jim Douglass is an author. I know him somewhat also through the Catholic Worker's movement[2] and his peace work over the years. His most recent book, *JFK and The Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters* was published in April 2008 by Orbis Books [and released by Simon & Schuster in paperback in 2010].

From 1963 to '65 he served as a theological adviser on questions of nuclear war and conscientious objection to Catholic Bishops at the Second Vatican Council in Rome. That must have been a tough job, Jim. He then taught theology at Bellarmine College [now called Bellarmine University] in Louisville, Kentucky, the University of Hawaii, and in the Program for the Study and the Practice of Nonviolence at the University of Notre Dame.

Jim and Shelley Douglass helped form the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action[3] alongside the Trident Submarine base in Seattle, Washington. He served a year and a half in jail for acts of civil disobedience at the Trident base. The Douglass's and Ground Zero developed an extended community in 250 towns and villages and cities, vigiling by the railroad tracks of the Trident nuclear weapons shipments.

In September of '89 they moved to Birmingham, Alabama. From Birmingham he has taken part in a series of peace making journeys to the Middle East and peace walks through Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan, and five visits to Iraq. In '93 the Douglass' founded Mary's House, a Catholic Worker house of hospitality in Birmingham for homeless families.[4]

He has also written four books on the theology of nonviolence: *The Nonviolent Cross* (Macmillan 1968),[5] *Resistance and Contemplation* (Doubleday 1972),[6] *Lightning East To West* (Crossroads 1983),[7] and *The Nonviolent Coming of God* (Orbis Books 1991).[8] All four book have been republished by WIPF and Stock Publishers in Eugene, Oregon.

This is the distinguished guest we have to talk to us tonight and we're glad that his search for the truth of theology and nonviolence has led him into the truth of these assassinations. Jim Douglass.

---

## Keynote Address

I had to think a long time about what to say here tonight. I'm not primarily a researcher. I come at this from a different perspective maybe and I don't have the expertise of probably 90 percent of the people, or 100 percent of the people in this room. So after thinking about what I could share with you I decided to talk about hope and the hope of confronting the unspeakable in the assassination of President Kennedy. Let's see where it goes and then maybe you can share your reflections on what I have to share.

Concerned friends have asked me -- as perhaps they have asked you as well -- over the years if engaging in such a probe into darkness as John Kennedy's assassination hasn't made me profoundly depressed. But on the contrary, my experience has been it's given me great hope.

As Martin Luther King said, the truth crushed to earth will rise again. Gandhi spoke hopefully of experiments in truth, because they take us into the most powerful force on earth and in existence, what he called **truth force, satyagraha**.

That is how I think of this work, as an experiment in truth; one that will open us up, both personally and as a country, to a process of nonviolent transformation. I believe this experiment we are doing into the dark truth of Dallas, and more significantly of Washington, can be the most hopeful experience of our lives.

But as you know, it does require tenacity and patience to confront the unspeakable. We, first of all, need to take the time to recognize the sources in our history for what happened in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

The doctrine of "plausible deniability" in an old government document provides us with a source of the assassination of President Kennedy. The document was issued in 1948, one year after the CIA was established, 15 years before JFK's murder. That document, National Security Council Directive 10/2, [on June 18, 1948,][9] "gave the highest sanction of the [U.S.] government to a broad range of covert operations"[10] -- propaganda, sabotage, economic warfare, subversion of all kinds, [and eventually assassinations][11] -- that were seen as necessary to "win" the Cold War against the Communists. The government's condition for those covert activities by U.S. agencies, coordinated by the CIA, was that they be, as the document says, "so planned and executed that . . . if uncovered the US government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them." [12]

In the 1950's, under the leadership of CIA Director Allen Dulles, the doctrine of "plausible deniability" became the CIA's green light to assassinate national leaders, conduct secret military operations, and overthrow governments that our government thought were on the wrong side in the Cold War. "Plausible deniability" meant our intelligence agencies, acting as paramilitary groups, had to lie and cover their tracks so effectively that there would be no trace of U.S. government responsibility for criminal activities on an ever-widening scale.

The man who proposed this secret, subversive process in 1948, diplomat George Kennan, said later, in light of its consequences, that it was "the greatest mistake I ever made." [13] President

Harry Truman, under whom the CIA was created, and during whose presidency the plausible deniability doctrine was authorized, had deep regrets. He said in a statement on December 22, 1963:

For some time I have been disturbed by the way the CIA has been diverted from its original assignment. It has become an operational and at times a policy-making arm of the Government. This has led to trouble and may have compounded our difficulties in several explosive areas. . . .

We have grown up as a nation, respected for our free institutions and for our ability to maintain a free and open society. There is something about the way the CIA has been functioning that is casting a shadow over our historic position and I feel that we need to correct it. [14]

Truman later remarked: "The CIA was set up by me for the sole purpose of getting all the available information to the president. It was not intended to operate as an international agency engaged in strange activities." [15]

President Truman's sharp warning about the CIA, and the fact that warning was published one month to the day after JFK's assassination, should have given this country pause. However, his statement appeared only in an early edition of *The Washington Post*, then vanished without comment from public view.

What George Kennan and Harry Truman realized much too late was that, in the name of national security, they had unwittingly allowed an alien force to invade a democracy. As a result, we now had to deal with a government agency authorized to carry out a broad range of criminal activities on an international scale, theoretically accountable to the president but with no genuine accountability to anyone.

Plausible deniability became a rationale for the CIA's interpretation of what the executive branch's wishes might be. But for the Agency's crimes to remain plausibly deniable, the less said the better to the point where CIA leaders' creative imaginations simply took over. It was all for the sake of "winning" the Cold War by any means necessary and without implicating the more visible heads of the government.

One assumption behind Kennan's proposal unleashing the CIA for its war against Communism was that the Agency's criminal power could be confined to covert action outside the borders of the United States, with immunity from its lethal power granted to U.S. citizens. That assumption proved to be wrong.

During the Cold War, the hidden growth of the CIA's autonomous power corresponded to the public growth of what was called a fortress state. What had been a struggling post-war democracy in our country was replaced by the institutions of a national security state. President Truman had laid the foundations for that silent takeover by his momentous decision to end the Second World War by a demonstration of nuclear weapons on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to stop a Soviet advance to Japan. Truman's further, post-war decision for U.S.

nuclear dominance in the world rather than allowing for international control of nuclear weapons was his second disastrous mistake, in terms of initiating the nuclear arms race in the world and subverting democracy in the U.S.A.

A democracy within a national security state cannot survive. The president's decision to base our security on nuclear weapons created the contradiction of a democracy ruled by the dictates of the Pentagon. A democratic national security state is a contradiction in terms.

The insecure basis of our security then became weapons that could destroy the planet. To protect the security of that illusory means of security, which was absolute destructive power, we now needed a ruling elite of national security managers with an authority above that of our elected representatives.

So from that point on, our military-industrial managers made the real decisions of state. President Truman simply ratified their decisions and entrenched their power, as he did with the establishment of the CIA, and as his National Security Council did with its endorsement of plausible deniability.

His successor, President Eisenhower, also failed to challenge in his presidency what he warned against at its end, the military-industrial complex.[16] He left the critical task of resisting that anti-democratic power in the hands of the next president, John Kennedy.

When President Kennedy then stood up to the Pentagon, the CIA, and the military-industrial complex, he was treated as a traitor. [His attempt to save the planet from the weapons of his own state was regarded as treason. (inserted by Bill Kelly)] The doctrine of plausible deniability allowed for the assassination of a president seen as a national security risk himself.

The CIA's "plausible deniability" for crimes of state, as exemplified by JFK's murder, corresponds in our politics to what the Trappist monk and spiritual writer Thomas Merton[17] called "the Unspeakable." Merton wrote about the unspeakable in the 1960's, when an elusive, systemic evil was running rampant through this country and the world. The Vietnam War, the escalating nuclear arms race, and the interlocking murders of John Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and Robert Kennedy were all signs of the unspeakable.

For Merton, the unspeakable was ultimately a void, an emptiness of any meaning, an abyss of lies and deception. He wrote the following description of the unspeakable shortly after the publication of *The Warren Report*, which he could have been describing. He said, "[The Unspeakable] is the void that contradicts everything that is spoken even before the words are said; the void that gets into the language of public and official declarations at the very moment when they are pronounced, and makes them ring dead with the hollowness of the abyss." [18]

The void of the unspeakable is the dark abyss. It's the midnight reality of plausible deniability that we face when we peer into our national security state's murder of President Kennedy. And that, I believe, is precisely where hope begins.

Why President Kennedy was murdered can be, I believe, a profound source of hope to us all,

when we truly understand his story.

Now how can that possibly be? The why of his murder as a source of hope?

Let's begin with the way Kennedy himself looked at the question.

One summer weekend in 1962 while he was out sailing with friends, President Kennedy was asked what he thought of *Seven Days in May*, a best-selling novel that described a military takeover in the United States. JFK said he would read the book. As you know he was a very fast reader. He came back the next day and said, yes, he'd read it. And then he discussed with his friends the possibility of their seeing just such a coup in the United States. These words were spoken by him after the Bay of Pigs and before the Cuban Missile Crisis:

"It's possible. It could happen in this country, but the conditions would have to be just right. If, for example, the country had a young President, and he had a Bay of Pigs, there would be a certain uneasiness. Maybe the military would do a little criticizing behind his back, but this would be written off as the usual military dissatisfaction with civilian control. Then if there were another Bay of Pigs, the reaction of the country would be, 'Is he too young and inexperienced?' The military would almost feel that it was their patriotic obligation to stand ready to preserve the integrity of the nation, and only God knows just what segment of democracy they would be defending if they overthrew the elected establishment."

Pausing a moment, he went on, "Then, if there were a third Bay of Pigs, it could happen." Waiting again until his listeners absorbed his meaning, he concluded with an old Navy phrase, "But it won't happen on my watch." [19]

Let's remember that JFK gave himself three strikes before he would be out by a coup, although he bravely said it wouldn't happen on his watch.

As we know, and as the young president John Kennedy knew, he did have a Bay of Pigs. The president bitterly disappointed the CIA, the military, and the CIA-trained Cuban exile brigade by deciding to accept defeat at the Bay of Pigs rather than escalate the battle.

Kennedy realized after the fact that he had been drawn into a CIA scenario whose authors assumed he would be forced by circumstances to drop his advance restrictions against the use of U.S. combat forces. He had been lied to in such a way that in order to "win" at the Bay of Pigs, he would be forced to send in U.S. troops.

But JFK surprised the CIA and the military by choosing instead to accept a loss. "They couldn't believe," he said, "that a new President like me wouldn't panic and try to save his own face. Well, they had me figured all wrong." [20]

We know how JFK reacted to the CIA's setting him up. He was furious. When the enormity of the Bay of Pigs disaster came home to him, he said he wanted "to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds." [21]

He ordered an investigation into the whole affair, under the very watchful eyes of his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

He fired CIA Director Allen Dulles, Deputy Director Richard Bissell, Jr., and Deputy Director General Charles Cabell. That was a huge decision firing the top of the CIA's hierarchy, including the legendary leader who had come to personify the agency, Allen Dulles.

The president then took steps "to cut the CIA budget in 1962 and again in 1963, aiming at a 20 per cent reduction by 1966." [22] John Kennedy was cutting back the CIA's power in very concrete ways, step by step. [23]

We know how the CIA and the Cuban exile community regarded Kennedy in turn because of his refusal to escalate the battle at the Bay of Pigs. They hated him for it. They did not forget what they thought was unforgivable. [24]

In terms of JFK's own analysis of the threat of an overthrow of his presidency, he saw the Bay of Pigs as the first strike against him. It was the first big stand he took against his national security elite, and therefore the first cause of a possible coup d'etat.

However, in terms of our constitution, our genuine security, and world peace, the position Kennedy took in facing down the CIA and the military at the Bay of Pigs, rather than surrendering to their will, was in itself a source of hope. No previous post-war president had shown such courage -- or any president since then.

Truman and Eisenhower had, in effect, turned over the power of their office to their national security managers. Kennedy was instead acting like he was the president of the country by saying a strong No to the security elite on a critical issue. If we the people had truly understood what he was doing then on our behalf, we would have thought the president's stand a deeply hopeful one.

In terms of his *Seven Days in May* analysis of a coming coup, John Kennedy did have a second "Bay of Pigs." The president alienated the CIA and the military a second time by his decisions during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

JFK had to confront the unspeakable in the Missile Crisis in the form of total nuclear war. At the height of that terrifying conflict, he felt the situation spiraling out of control, especially because of the actions of his generals.

For example, with both sides on hair-trigger alert, the U.S. Air Force test-fired missiles from California across the Pacific, deliberately trying to provoke the Soviets in a way that could justify our superior U.S. forces blanketing the USSR with an all-out nuclear attack.

As we know from Kennedy's secretly taped meeting with his Joint Chiefs of Staff on October 19, 1962, the Chiefs were pushing him relentlessly to launch a pre-emptive strike on Cuba, and ultimately the Soviet Union. In this encounter, the Chiefs' disdain for their young commander-in-

chief is summed up by Air Force Chief of Staff General Curtis LeMay when he says:

LeMay: "This [blockade and political action] is almost as bad as the appeasement [of Hitler] at Munich. . . . I think that a blockade, and political talk, would be considered by a lot of our friends and neutrals as bein' a pretty weak response to this. And I'm sure a lot of our own citizens would feel that way too.

"In other words, you're in a pretty bad fix at the present time."

Kennedy: "What did you say?"

LeMay: "I say, you're in a pretty bad fix."

Kennedy: [laughing] "You're in with me, personally." [25]

As the meeting draws to a close, Kennedy rejects totally the Joint Chiefs' arguments for a quick, massive attack on Cuba. The president then leaves the room but the tape keeps on recording. Two or three of the generals remain, and one [Shoup] says to LeMay,

[Shoup:] "You pulled the rug right out from under him."

LeMay: "Jesus Christ. What the hell do you mean?"

[Shoup:] "He's finally getting around to the word 'escalation.' . . . If somebody could keep 'em from doing the *goddamn thing* piecemeal, *that's* our problem . . ." [26]

The White House tapes show Kennedy questioning and resisting the mounting pressure to bomb Cuba coming from both the Joint Chiefs and the Executive Committee of the National Security Council. At the same time, John Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, the two men most responsible for the Cuban Missile Crisis, seemed locked in a hopeless ideological conflict. The U.S. and Soviet leaders had been following Cold War policies that now seemed to be moving inexorably toward a war of extermination.

Yet, as we have since learned, Kennedy and Khrushchev had been engaged in a secret correspondence for over a year that gave signs of hope. Even as they moved publicly step by step toward a Cold War climax that would almost take the world over the edge with them, they were at the same time smuggling confidential letters back and forth that recognized each other's humanity and hope for a solution. They were public enemies who, in the midst of deepening turmoil, were secretly learning something approaching trust in each other.

I re-read several of these letters yesterday. A man was asking me to read them to him over the radio. I was struck especially by the first things that Khrushchev says in his first letter to JFK when he is sitting by the Black Sea in his home. [27] He's looking out over the water and it's a very beautiful letter, beginning of the letter especially. He looks out over the water and he reflects on what he's seeing and how what a contrast this is to what they're trying to address.

He says I want to suggest to you Mr. President a symbol of our problem. This is Khrushchev, the communist: 'It's Noah's Ark. Let's not try to distinguish who are the clean and the unclean on this Ark Mr. President. We're in a sea of nuclear weapons. Let's just keep the Ark afloat.'

Kennedy, who after this letter was smuggled to him in a newspaper to his press secretary, wondered, 'Why do I want a newspaper given to me by a KGB agent?' He found out there was a

26-page letter (<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v06/d21>) to the President inside it from Nikita Khrushchev.[28] When Kennedy responded to this he was sitting by the Atlantic Ocean in Hyannis Port. He talks about the beauty there and says, 'Yes, Mr. Chairman, Noah' Ark -- that's our symbol. We have to keep the Ark afloat.'[29]

So even in the midst of the missile crises these two men had begun to, through their secret communications, they had begun, almost beyond their intentions, to develop a bit of trust in each other.

On what seemed the darkest day in the crisis, when a Soviet missile had shot down a U2 spy plane over Cuba, intensifying the already overwhelming pressures on Kennedy to bomb Cuba, the president sent his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, secretly to Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. RFK told Dobrynin, as Dobrynin reported to Khrushchev, that the president "didn't know how to resolve the situation. The military is putting great pressure on him . . . Even if he doesn't want or desire a war, something irreversible could occur against his will. That is why the President is asking for help to solve this problem."[30]

In his memoirs, Khrushchev recalled a further, chilling sentence from Robert Kennedy's appeal to Dobrynin: "If the situation continues much longer, the President is not sure that the military will not overthrow him and seize power."[31]

The editor to Khrushchev's memoirs felt he had to stick an endnote in there and say, There's no evidence of this. There's no evidence of this. [Laughter] Well, apparently, the president thought there was some.

Sergei Khrushchev, Nikita's son (who as you probably know is now in this country and is a citizen), has [recounted] the thoughts his father described to him when he read Dobrynin's wired report relaying John Kennedy's plea: "The president was calling for help: that was how father interpreted Robert Kennedy's talk with our ambassador."[32]

So at a moment when the world was falling into darkness, Kennedy did what from his generals' standpoint was intolerable and unforgivable. JFK not only rejected [his] generals' pressures for war. Even worse, the president then reached out to their enemy, asking for help. That was treason.

When Nikita Khrushchev had received Kennedy's plea for help in Moscow, he turned to his Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko and said, "We have to let Kennedy know that we want to help him."

Khrushchev stunned himself by what he had just said: Did he really want to help his enemy, Kennedy? Yes, he did. He repeated the word to his foreign minister:

"Yes, help. We now have a common cause, to save the world from those pushing us toward war."[33]

How do we understand that moment? The two most heavily armed leaders in history, on the

verge of total nuclear war, joined hands against those on both sides pressuring them to attack. Khrushchev ordered the immediate withdrawal of his missiles, in return for Kennedy's public pledge never to invade Cuba and his secret promise to withdraw U.S. missiles from Turkey -- as he would in fact do.

By the way, I was in Rome, Italy at this time. I didn't know, of course, the secret pledge that Kennedy had given to Khrushchev or that he would in fact withdraw his missiles from Turkey. So I wrote an article for Dorothy Day's *Catholic Worker* newspaper -- the most radical Catholic paper in the country if not in existence -- and proposed what I thought was outrageous (and Dorothy published it right away), that what we should do is in exchange for Khrushchev withdrawing the missiles from Cuba, Kennedy should have had the guts to withdraw his missiles from Turkey.

This was outrageous for this to even be suggested in the most radical publication I could find in my particular community. Kennedy did it. Kennedy did it. I remember that history. I remember what was unthinkable for him to do such a thing.

The two Cold War enemies -- both of them -- had turned, so that each now had more in common with his opponent than either had with his own generals. As a result of that turn toward peace, one leader would be assassinated thirteen months later. The other, left without his peacemaking partner, would be overthrown the following year. Yet because of their turn away from nuclear war, today we are still living and struggling for peace on this earth. Hope is alive. We still have a chance.

What can we call that transforming moment when Kennedy asked his enemy for help and Khrushchev gave it?

From a Buddhist standpoint, it was enlightenment of a cosmic kind. Others might call it -- from their perspective -- a divine miracle. Readers of the Christian Gospels could say that Kennedy and Khrushchev were only doing what Jesus said: "Love your enemies." That would be "love" as Gandhi understood it. Love as the other side of truth; a respect and understanding of our opponents that goes far enough to integrate their truth into our own. In the last few months of Kennedy's life, he and Khrushchev were walking that extra mile where each was beginning to see the other's truth.

Neither John Kennedy nor Nikita Khrushchev was a saint. Each was deeply complicit in policies that brought humankind to the brink of nuclear war. Yet, when they encountered the void -- that Merton, for example, was talking about -- then by turning to each other for help, they turned humanity toward the hope of a peaceful planet.

John Kennedy's next "Bay of Pigs," his next critical conflict with his national security state, was his American University Address. *Saturday Review* editor Norman Cousins summed up the significance of that remarkable speech: "At American University on June 10, 1963, President Kennedy proposed an end to the Cold War." [34]

I believe it is almost impossible to overemphasize the importance of President Kennedy's

American University address.[35] It was a decisive signal to both Nikita Khrushchev, on the one hand, and JFK's national security advisers, on the other, that he was serious about making peace with the Communists. After he told the graduating class at American University that the subject of his speech was "the most important topic on earth: world peace," he asked:

"What kind of peace do I mean? What kind of peace do we seek?" He answered, "*Not* a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war."

Kennedy's rejection of "a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war" was an act of resistance to the military-industrial complex. The military-industrial complex was totally dependent on "a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war." That Pax Americana, policed by the Pentagon, was considered the system's indispensable, hugely profitable means of containing and defeating Communism. At his own risk Kennedy was rejecting the very foundation of the Cold War system.

In its place, as a foundation for peace, the president put [forward] a compassionate description of the suffering of the enemy, the Russian people. They had been our allies during World War Two and had suffered mightily.[36] Yet even their World War Two devastation he said, would be small compared to the effects of a nuclear war on both their country and ours.

In his speech, Kennedy turned around the question -- I heard this question all the time in the 1960s, every time in the peace movement we tried to suggest alternatives -- that question that was always asked when it came to prospects for peace was, "What about the Russians?" It was assumed the Russians would take advantage of any move we might make toward peace.

Kennedy asked instead, "What about us?" He said, "[O]ur attitude [toward peace] is as essential as theirs." What about our attitude toward war and the nuclear arms race?[37]

Within the overarching theology [of our country] -- the Cold War was a big theology -- a theology of total good versus total evil (and you know who the total good is, it's us), Kennedy was asking a heretical question, coming especially from the president of the United States.

Kennedy said he wanted to negotiate then, a nuclear test ban treaty. Where did he want to do it? With the Soviet Union in Moscow. He wants to go to Moscow. He doesn't trust, trying to negotiate a nuclear test ban treaty in Washington. He says I want to go to Moscow, in their capitol, not ours, as soon as possible.

So to clear the way for such a treaty what does he do? He said he was suspending U.S. atmospheric tests unilaterally. He is doing unilateral renunciation of his testing before anything with Khrushchev.[38]

John Kennedy's strategy of peace penetrated the Soviet government's defenses far more effectively than any missile could ever have done. The Soviet press, which was accustomed to censoring U.S. government statements, published the entire speech all across the country. Soviet radio stations broadcast and rebroadcast the speech to the Soviet people. In response to Kennedy's turn toward peace, the Soviet government even stopped jamming all Western

broadcasts into their country.

Nikita Khrushchev was deeply moved by the American University Address. He said Kennedy had given "the greatest speech by any American President since Roosevelt." [39]

JFK's speech was received less favorably -- where? -- in his own country. The New York Times reported his government's skepticism: "Generally there was not much optimism in official Washington that the President's conciliation address at American University would produce agreement on a test ban treaty or anything else." [40] In contrast to the Soviet media that were electrified by the speech, the U.S. media ignored or downplayed it (as they're done to the present). For the first time, Americans had less opportunity to read and hear their president's words than did the Russian people. A turn-around was occurring in the world on different levels. Whereas nuclear disarmament had suddenly become feasible, Kennedy's position in his own government had become precarious.

President Kennedy's next critical conflict with his national security state, propelling him toward the coup d'etat he saw as possible (this was number 4), was the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that he signed with Nikita Khrushchev on July 25, 1963, just six weeks (if you can imagine that -- six weeks to negotiate that treaty) after the American University Address.

The way he did it was he sent Averell Harriman as his representative to Moscow. Every time Averell Harriman had a question from the Soviet negotiators, he said, 'Excuse me please.' He ran to a telephone and he ran back with the answer. The telephone was directly to Kennedy. Kennedy negotiated that treaty point by point, personally, right straight through. That's why it happened in six weeks. [41]

The president did a total end run around his military advisers [the Joint Chiefs of Staff] who were opposed to it. He didn't even consult them on it.

He was fiercely determined but he was not optimistic that the Test Ban Treaty [would] be ratified by the defense-conscious Senate. In early August, he told his advisers that getting Senate ratification of the agreement would be "almost in the nature of a miracle." And we can understand, given what is happening in Congress today, what he faced in terms of at the height of the Cold War, getting a nuclear test ban treaty through the Senate. He said if a Senate vote were held right then, on August 7, it would fall far short of the necessary two-thirds. [42]

What did he do? He initiated a whirlwind public education campaign on the treaty, coordinated by *Saturday Review* editor Norman Cousins, who directed a committee of -- whom? -- people like us -- peace activists. He also got business leaders, he got labor leaders, he got editors of women's magazines, he got everybody he could together with Norman Cousins doing all the coordinating. They went out and they did a job, a furious round of public education.

In September public opinion polls showed a turnaround -- 80 percent of the American people were now in favor of the Test Ban Treaty. On September 24, 1963, the Senate approved the treaty by a vote of 80 to 19 -- 14 more than the required two-thirds. No other single accomplishment in the White House gave Kennedy greater satisfaction. [43]

On September 20, when Kennedy spoke at the United Nations, he suggested that its members see the Test Ban Treaty as a beginning and engage together in an experiment in peace:

Two years ago I told this body that the United States had proposed, and was willing to sign, a Limited Test Ban treaty. Today that treaty has been signed. It will not put an end to war. It will not remove basic conflicts. It will not secure freedom for all. But it can be a lever, and Archimedes, in explaining the principles of the lever, was said to have declared to his friends: "Give me a place where I can stand and I shall move the world."

My fellow inhabitants of this planet: Let us take our stand here in this Assembly of nations. And let us see if we, in our own time, can move the world to a just and lasting peace.[44]

When he said these words, John Kennedy was secretly engaging in another risky experiment in peace. That same day at the United Nations, Kennedy told UN Ambassador Adlai Stevenson that his assistant William Attwood should go ahead "to make discreet contact" with Cuba's UN Ambassador Carlos Lechuga.[45] The question: Was Fidel Castro interested in a dialogue with John Kennedy? A strongly affirmative answer would come back from Castro, who had been repeatedly urged by Khrushchev -- by Khrushchev -- to begin trusting Kennedy.

Now think about that a moment. This is Khrushchev who is telling Castro to trust Kennedy. What had been the relationship with Khrushchev and Castro? Castro was furious with Khrushchev for what he did in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Khrushchev didn't consult with Castro. He pulled the missiles out because he was afraid that -- like that -- they were going to have a nuclear war. And when Kennedy said 'I need your help' he responded to Kennedy with help to keep the world from going down in nuclear war. From Castro's standpoint he's pulling out the deterrent from aggression from the north by the American capitalist president.

So Castro would not talk to Khrushchev. He had no communication with him for half a year. He was totally boycotting communication with him. Finally Khrushchev wrote one of these letters of his and this time he writes it to Castro about how beautiful the sea is.[46] Castro said afterwards how beautiful a letter that was.[47] So he consented to go over to the Soviet Union and travel around with Khrushchev for a month and be comrades again.

During that month what did Khrushchev do? He did a teach-in. He brought Kennedy's correspondence and he read Kennedy's correspondence to Castro during that month like a teach-in.[48] So when Castro went back to Cuba, he went back with a conviction, I've got to deal with this man. I've learned. And at that point Kennedy is reaching out to Castro. This is an incredible kind of underground communication that's going on while in the midst of the United Nations they're condemning each other and shaking their fists and so forth.

Kennedy and Castro actually began that dialogue on normalizing U.S.-Cuban relations, through a series of mediations but the primary one was a French journalist named Jean Daniel who had gone to Washington to the White House to see Kennedy and then he went from there directly to Cuba to see Castro. Kennedy gave him questions and concerns to share with Castro.

When Daniel was in Cuba he thought he wouldn't even get a chance to see Castro because Castro was overwhelmed with stuff. All of a sudden Castro appeared at his hotel and he sat up with him all night asking him to repeat, time after time after time again exactly what Kennedy had said. Then they had several subsequent meetings.

On the afternoon of November 22, 1963 when John Kennedy was killed, those two men were together speaking about the hope that came from what Kennedy was trying to do in reaching out to Castro. The phone call came, that he was dead, and Castro stood up and he said, "Everything is changed. Everything is going to change." [49]

This was all written about [three] weeks later in the New Republic magazine by Jean Daniel and it's as if historians never knew this existed. The whole thing was out there [three] weeks after these events took place and Jean Daniel reported what Kennedy had said, what Castro had said -- the whole shebang. [50]

On October 11, 1963, President Kennedy issued a top-secret order to begin withdrawing the U.S. military from Vietnam. In National Security Action Memorandum 263 (<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/JFK/FRUSno194.html>), he ordered that 1,000 U.S. military personnel be withdrawn from Vietnam by the end of 1963, and that the bulk of U.S. personnel be taken out by the end of 1965. [51]

Kennedy decided on his withdrawal policy, against the arguments of most of his advisers, at a contentious October 2 National Security Council meeting. When Defense Secretary Robert McNamara was leaving the meeting to announce the withdrawal to the White House reporters, the President called to him, "And tell them that means all of the helicopter pilots, too." [52] Everybody is going out.

In fact, it would not mean that at all. After JFK's assassination, his withdrawal policy was quietly voided. In light of the future consequences of Dallas, it was not only John Kennedy who was murdered on November 22, 1963, but 58,000 other Americans and over three million Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians.

In his reflections on *Seven Days in May*, John Kennedy had given himself three Bay of Pigs-type conflicts with his national security state before a possible coup. What about six?

1. The Bay of Pigs;
2. The Cuban Missile Crisis;
3. American University Address;
4. Nuclear Test Ban Treaty;
5. the beginning of the back-channel dialogue with Fidel Castro;
6. JFK's order to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam.

This, however, is a short list of the increasing conflicts between Kennedy and his national security state. A short list.

We can add to the list a seventh Bay of Pigs: the steel crisis, in which he profoundly alienated the military industrial complex before the Cuban Missile Crisis even took place. The steel crisis was a showdown the president had with U.S. Steel and seven other steel companies over their price-fixing violations of an agreement he had negotiated between U.S. Steel and the United Steelworkers' Union.

In a head-on confrontation with the ruling elite of Big Steel, JFK ordered the Defense Department to switch huge military contracts away from the major steel companies to the smaller, more loyal contractors that had not defied him. After the big steel companies bitterly backed down from their price raises, JFK and his brother, Robert, were denounced as symbols of "ruthless power" by the Wall Street power brokers at the center of the military industrial complex.

By an editorial titled, "Steel: The Ides of April"[53] (the month in which Kennedy faced down the steel executives), Henry Luce's Fortune magazine called to readers' minds the soothsayer's warning in Shakespeare of the assassination of Julius Caesar. Fortune was warning Kennedy that his actions had confirmed the worst fears of corporate America about his presidency, and would have dire consequences. As interpreted by the most powerful people in the nation, the steel crisis was a logical prelude to Dallas. It was a seventh Bay of Pigs.

An eighth Bay of Pigs was Kennedy's diplomatic opening to the fiery third-world leadership of President Sukarno of Indonesia. Historians never mention this. Sukarno was "the most outspoken proponent of Third World neutralism in the Cold War." He had actually coined the term "Third World." That's where it comes from, from Sukarno of Indonesia [who had coined it] "at the first Conference of Non-Aligned Nations that he hosted at Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955." [54] The CIA wanted Sukarno dead. It wanted what it saw as his pro-communist "global orientation" obliterated. [55] During Eisenhower's presidency, the CIA repeatedly tried to kill and overthrow Sukarno but failed.

JFK, however, chose to work with Sukarno, hoping to win him over as an ally, which he did. Sukarno came to love Kennedy. The U.S. president resolved what seemed a hopeless conflict between Indonesia and its former colonial master, the Netherlands, averting a war. To the CIA's dismay, in 1961 Kennedy welcomed Sukarno to the White House. Most significantly, three days before his assassination, President Kennedy said he was willing to accept Sukarno's invitation to visit Indonesia the following spring. [56] Sukarno even built a house for him there. His visit to Indonesia would have dramatized in a very visible way Kennedy's support of Third World nationalism, a sea change in U.S. government policy. That decision to visit Sukarno was an eighth Bay of Pigs.

Kennedy's Indonesian policy was also killed in Dallas, with horrendous consequences. After Lyndon Johnson became president, the CIA finally succeeded in overthrowing Sukarno in a massive purge of suspected Communists that ended up killing 500,000 to one million Indonesians. [57]

Last Sunday I interviewed Sergei Khrushchev about an important late development in the relationship between his father and President Kennedy. In his interview, Mr. Khrushchev

confirmed that his father had decided in November 1963 to accept President Kennedy's repeated proposal that the U.S. and the Soviet Union fly to the moon together.

In Kennedy's September 20, 1963, speech to the United Nations, he had once again stated his hope for such a joint expedition to the moon. He had proposed it earlier [in September 1961].[58] However, neither American nor Soviet military leaders -- neither side, jealous of their rocket secrets -- were ready to accept his initiative. If they merged their rocket secrets, they can't use them in war. Nikita Khrushchev, siding with his own rocket experts, felt that he was still forced to decline Kennedy's proposal -- when Kennedy had re-proposed it in September [1963].

JFK was looking beyond the myopia of the generals and scientists on both sides of the East-West struggle. He knew that merging their missile technologies in a peaceful project would also help defuse the Cold War. It was part of his day-by-day strategy of peace in the [American University] speech that John [Judge] was quoting.

Sergei Khrushchev said his father talked to him about a week before Kennedy's death on the president's idea for a joint lunar mission. Nikita Khrushchev had broken ranks with his rocket scientists. He now thought he and the Soviet Union should accept Kennedy's invitation to go to the moon together, as a further step in peaceful cooperation.[59]

In Washington, Kennedy acted as if he already knew about Khrushchev's hopeful change of heart on that critical issue. JFK was already telling NASA to begin work on a joint U.S.-Soviet lunar mission. On November 12, 1963, JFK issued his National Security Action Memorandum 271 (<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/qVncp893wEmJFpIIn1AlHA.aspx>), ordering NASA to implement, as he put it, my "September 20 proposal for broader cooperation between the United States and the USSR in outer space, including cooperation in lunar landing programs."[60]

That further visionary step to end the Cold War also died with President Kennedy. As you know, the U.S. went to the moon alone. U.S. and Soviet rockets continued to be pointed at their opposite countries rather than being joined in a project for a more hopeful future. Sergei Khrushchev said, "I think if Kennedy had lived, we would be living in a completely different world." [61]

In the final weeks of his presidency, President Kennedy took one more risky step toward peace. It can be seen in relation to an amazing meeting he had the year before [on May 1, 1962] with six Quakers who visited him in his office. This is the President with six Quakers -- just the seven of them.[62]

One thousand members of the Society of Friends[63] had been vigiling for peace and world order outside the White House. President Kennedy agreed to meet with six of their leaders. So that's all we have to do to see the President -- just vigil outside the White House -- he'll invite you in.

I have interviewed all three survivors of that meeting with the president, from 47 years ago. They remain uniformly amazed -- they were amazed then and they're just as amazed today when they talk about it -- these are radical peace activists, they've all been arrested multiple times (as have I

for that matter) -- they remained uniformly amazed at the open way in which the President listened and responded to their radical Quaker critique of his foreign policy.

They said they'd never met anybody who listened as well as he did. As one of them said you could tell he wasn't thinking of something to say to them, and he wasn't countering or whatever -- although he said honest things as we'll see in a moment here.

Among their challenges to him was a recommendation that the United States offer its surplus food to the People's Republic of China. China was considered an enemy nation. Yet it was also one whose people were beset by a famine.

Kennedy said to the Quakers, "Do you mean you would feed your enemy when he has his hands on your throat?"

The Quakers said they meant exactly that. They reminded him it was what Jesus had said should be done. Kennedy said he knew that, and knew that it was the right thing to do, but he couldn't overcome the China lobby in Washington to accomplish that.[64]

Nevertheless, a year and a half later in the fall of 1963, against overwhelming opposition -- again, nobody reports this today --, Kennedy decided to sell wheat to the Russians, who had a severe grain shortage. He outraged critics who said in effect to him what he had said to the Quakers: Would you feed an enemy who has his hands on your throat? Kennedy was getting the same thing back.

By the way, when I met with one of these Quakers, who is a very very good friend named David Hartsough, who's a big peace activist in San Francisco I said, 'David, do you realize you got President Kennedy killed?' [laughter] And he says 'Ohhh.'

There is a whole series of things that the Quakers recommended -- I'm only citing one of them -- that Kennedy did. Like the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, like peaceful initiatives like selling wheat to the Russians; he carried out. I don't even know that Kennedy ever even referred to his meeting with the Quakers. He just did it. I'm sure he was thinking about such things on his own. But this is the perspective of the President of the United States at the height of the Cold War.

Vice President Lyndon Johnson said he thought Kennedy's decision to sell wheat to Russia would turn out to be "the worst political mistake he ever made." [65] Today JFK's controversial decision "to feed the enemy" has been forgotten, It's been wiped out. In 1963, the wheat sale was seen as a threat to our security: feeding the enemy to kill us. Yet JFK went ahead with it, as one more initiative for peace.

The violent reaction to his decision was represented on Friday morning, November 22, 1963, by a threatening, full-page advertisement addressed to him in the Dallas Morning News. The ad was bordered in black, like a funeral notice.

Among the charges of disloyalty to the nation that the ad made against the president was the question: "Why have you approved the sale of wheat and corn to our enemies when you know

the Communist soldiers travel on their stomachs' just as ours do?"[66] JFK read the ad before the flight from Fort Worth to Dallas. He pointed it out to Jacqueline Kennedy, and he talked about the possibility of his being assassinated that very day.

"But, Jackie," he said, "if somebody wants to shoot me from a window with a rifle, nobody can stop it, so why worry about it?"[67]

President Kennedy's courageous turn from war to a strategy of peace provided many more than three Bay-of-Pigs-type causes for his assassination -- many more. Because he turned toward peace with our enemies, the Communists, he was continually at odds with his own national security state. Peacemaking was at the top of his agenda as president. That was not the kind of leadership that the CIA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the military industrial complex wanted in the White House. Given the Cold War dogmas that gripped those dominant powers, and given Kennedy's turn toward peace, his assassination followed as a matter of course.

That is how he seemed to regard the situation: that it would soon lead to his own death. As you know he was not afraid of death. As a biographer observed, Kennedy talked a great deal about death, and about the assassination of Lincoln in particular.[68]

His conscious model for struggling truthfully through conflict, and being ready to die as a consequence, was Abraham Lincoln. On the day when Kennedy and Khrushchev resolved the missile crisis, JFK told his brother, Robert, referring to the assassination of Lincoln, "This is the night I should go to the theater." Robert replied, "If you go, I want to go with you." [69]

Kennedy prepared himself for the same end Lincoln met during his night at the theater -- he prepared for it. Late at night on the June 5, 1961, plane flight back to Washington from his Vienna meeting with Nikita Khrushchev, a very weary President Kennedy wrote down on a slip of paper, as he was about to fall asleep, a favorite saying of his from Abraham Lincoln -- it was really a prayer. Presidential secretary Evelyn Lincoln discovered the slip of paper on the floor. On it she read the words: "I know there is a God and I see a storm coming. If he has a place for me, I believe that I am ready." [70]

Kennedy loved that prayer. He cited it repeatedly. More important, he made the prayer his own. In his conflicts with Khrushchev, then much more profoundly with the CIA and the military, he had seen a storm coming. If God had a place for him, he believed that he was ready.

For at least a decade, JFK's favorite poem had been "Rendezvous," a celebration of death. Rendezvous was by Alan Seeger, an American poet killed in World War One. With the same background as Kennedy: from Harvard, volunteering for the war. The poem was Seeger's affirmation of his own anticipated death.[71]

The refrain of Rendezvous, "I have a rendezvous with Death," articulated John Kennedy's deep sense of his own mortality. Kennedy had experienced a continuous rendezvous with death in anticipation of his actual death: from the deaths of his PT boat crew members, from drifting alone in the dark waters of the Pacific Ocean, from the early deaths of his brother Joe and sister Kathleen, and from the recurring near-death experiences of his almost constant illnesses.

He recited *Rendezvous* to his wife, Jacqueline, in 1953 on their first night home in Hyannis after their honeymoon.[72] She memorized the poem, and recited it back to him over the years. In the fall of 1963, Jackie taught the words of the poem to their five-year-old daughter, Caroline.

I have thought many times about what took place then in the White House Rose Garden one beautiful fall day in 1963.

On the morning of October 5, 1963, President Kennedy met with his National Security Council in the Rose Garden. It was a beautiful day so they went outside. Caroline suddenly appeared at her father's side. She said she wanted to tell him something. He tried to divert her attention so that the meeting could continue. He told her to go over across the lawn where her mother was riding a horse.

Caroline kept tugging at his coat and persisted. So the president smiled and he turned his full attention to his daughter like he would to anybody he was speaking with which is what people always said -- he gave you his *total* attention. And he said, 'Go ahead. What do you want?' While the members of the National Security Council sat and watched, Caroline looked into her father's eyes and she said:

I have a rendezvous with Death  
At some disputed barricade,  
When Spring comes back with rustling shade  
And apple-blossoms fill the air --  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand  
And lead me into his dark land  
And close my eyes and quench my breath --  
It may be I shall pass him still.  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
On some scarred slope of battered hill,  
When Spring comes round again this year  
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows 'twere better to be deep  
Pillowed in silk and scented down,  
Where love throbs out in blissful sleep,  
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,  
Where hushed awakenings are dear . . .  
But I've a rendezvous with Death  
At midnight in some flaming town,  
When Spring trips north again this year,  
And I to my pledged word am true,  
I shall not fail that rendezvous.[73]

After Caroline said the poem's final word, "rendezvous," Kennedy's national security advisers sat in stunned silence. One of them said later the bond between father and daughter was so deep "it was as if there was 'an inner music' he was trying to teach her." [74]

JFK had heard his own acceptance of death from the lips of his daughter. While surrounded by a National Security Council that opposed his breakthrough to peace, the president once again deepened his pledge not to fail that rendezvous. If God had a place for him, he believed that he was ready.

So how can the why of his murder give us hope?

Where do we find hope when a peacemaking president is assassinated by his own national security state? How do we get hope from that?

The why of the event that brings us together tonight encircles the earth -- the why encircles the earth. Because John Kennedy chose peace on earth at the height of the Cold War, he was executed. But because he turned toward peace, in spite of the consequences to himself, humanity is still alive and struggling. That is hopeful. Especially if we understand what he went through and what he has given to us as his vision.

At a certain point in his presidency, John Kennedy turned a corner and he didn't look back. I believe that decisive turn toward his final purpose in life, resulting in his death, happened in the darkness of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Although Kennedy was already in conflict with his national security managers, the missile crisis was the breaking point.

At that most critical moment for us all, he turned from any remaining control that his security managers had over him toward a deeper ethic, a deeper vision in which the fate of the earth became his priority. Without losing sight of our own best hopes in this country, he began to home in, with his new partner, Nikita Khrushchev, on the hope of peace for *everyone* on this earth -- Russians, Americans, Cubans, Vietnamese, Indonesians, everyone on this earth -- no exceptions. He made that commitment to life at the cost of his own. What a transforming story that is.

And what a propaganda campaign has been waged to keep us Americans from understanding that story, from telling it, and from re-telling it to our children and grandchildren. Because that's a story whose telling can transform a nation.

But when a nation is under the continuing domination of an idol, namely war, it is a story that will be covered up. When the story can liberate us from our idolatry of war, then the worshippers of the idol are going to do everything they can to keep the story from being told. [75]

From the standpoint of a belief that war is the ultimate power, that's too dangerous a story. It's a subversive story. It shows a different kind of security than always being ready to go to war.

It's unbelievable -- or we're supposed to think it is -- that a president was murdered by our own

government agencies because he was seeking a more stable peace than relying on nuclear weapons.[76]

It's unspeakable. For the sake of a nation that must always be preparing for war, that story must not be told. If it were, we might learn that peace is possible without making war. We might even learn there is a force more powerful than war. How unthinkable! But how necessary if life on earth is to continue.

That is why it is so hopeful for us to confront the unspeakable and to tell the transforming story of a man of courage, President John F. Kennedy. It is a story ultimately not of death but of life -- all our lives. In the end, it is not so much a story of one man as it is a story of peacemaking when the chips are down. That story is our story, a story of hope.

I believe it is a providential fact that the anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination always falls around Thanksgiving, and periodically on that very day. This year the anniversary of his death, two days from now, will begin Thanksgiving week.

Thanksgiving is a beautiful time of year, with autumn leaves falling to create new life. Creation is alive, as the season turns. The earth is alive. It is not a radioactive wasteland. We can give special thanks for that. The fact that we are still living -- that the human family is still alive with a fighting chance for survival, and for much more than that -- is reason for gratitude for a peacemaking president, and to the unlikely alliance he forged with his enemy.

So let us give thanks this Thanksgiving for John F. Kennedy, and for his partner in peacemaking, Nikita Khrushchev.

Their story is our story, a story of the courage to turn toward the truth. Remember what Gandhi said that turned theology on its head. He said truth is God. That is the truth: Truth is God. We can discover the truth and live it out. There is nothing, nothing more powerful than the truth. The truth will set us free.

---

## Question and Answer

Q: You talked about the quote by Truman in December of 1963, and you said it sunk without a trace. Not quite. In January, Allen Dulles went to Truman, and visited him, and tried to get him publicly to retract that statement. Which is very interesting because he was on the Warren Commission. Secondly, Allen Dulles actually said, 'That Kennedy, he actually thought he was president' after he was dead. A third point: you're talking about the Pentagon versus JFK at the Missile Crisis. You talked about how LeMay was saying after JFK had left the room. I'm sure you know why the tape was there: because he thought that they had all lied to the press about what really happened during the Bay of Pigs. So now he wanted to get them on tape so they couldn't lie again after the missile crisis. And he said afterwards 'One thing about those guys: if I listen to them there'll be nobody to argue with once the holocaust comes.' The last point: when he was preparing for his trip to see Sukarno he asked Allen Dulles for the CIA's file. And Dulles gave him a redacted version of the file. But there was enough in it that he could read it and he said, 'No wonder this guy doesn't like us. We tried to overthrow his government.'

JD: Thank you.

Q: Jim could you repeat again about President Truman's column in the *Washington Post*, December 22, 1963. You're telling me it only lasted as long as the early edition until somebody probably made some phone calls?

JD: The question is what happened to that column, that statement that President Truman made that was published in the December 22, 1963 *Washington Post*. [14] It vanished. There is a researcher who discovered it sometime later. He did as much research as he could to try to find out where it appeared after this early edition of the *Washington Post*. It didn't appear in any further edition of the *Washington Post* nor anyplace else. Zero. That's what the researcher could discover. What happened? Lisa [Pease] has got an idea on that.

LP: I stumbled across this recently where, in later years somebody said, 'It wasn't really Truman who wrote that. It was one of his aides who wrote it using Truman's name.' And as we all know Harry Truman was alive at the time and if that was not his statement he would have been the first to come forward and say that's not what I believe. You can see how they try and whitewash that in different ways.

JD: As Jim was saying he resisted Dulles, when Dulles tried to get him to retract the statement. [15]

LP: And there was nothing else in the press going on at that time that would have given rise to those comments. The only thing that had happened was the assassination of Diem a month earlier.

JD: Right after the assassination of John Kennedy, there's Truman saying 'the CIA is casting a shadow over our history.' One month to the day. [14]

Q: Two things. One, you mentioned about the proposal to change the moon race to be a

cooperative effort. You can't find that on NASA's website. And was the U.N. speech the first place where this floated?

JD: No he said it back in '61. He was already proposing it to Khrushchev in '61. And he proposed it repeatedly. He was intent on getting the missile technology together so that they wouldn't be using it as rockets. But Khrushchev, just a week or two before the assassination, Sergei is quite emphatic about this: he had changed his mind. And Kennedy had a National Security Memorandum on this subject simultaneously with that.[60] Either he is awfully intuitive or they were communicating. Sergei said he didn't know of any official communication.

Q: The other question is tangential: have you looked at John Paul the First?

JD: I know the book on John Paul I and what he might have done. He only lasted a month as folks who remember him would recall. I've read the work and I think it's interesting. I'm not a researcher into John Paul I.

I am into John XXIII. He was amazing. I didn't mention him tonight, but he was the mediator between Khrushchev and Kennedy at the height of the missile crisis. He made a public appeal -- of course we didn't hear about it in this country -- but he made a global public appeal after checking with both of them on how he could say it in a way that would truly mediate them.

Khrushchev said afterwards that Pope John XXIII's words were the most hopeful thing he experienced at that point in the missile crisis that gave him a huge amount of hope.

Then John XXIII became a kind of unofficial spiritual advisor to these two guys, one in Moscow and one in Washington. When he issued his [encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris* ("Peace on Earth"), published on April 11, 1963, centering on the principles of mutual trust and cooperation with an ideological opponent] -- he was dying at the time, he had cancer. And they knew he was dying -- especially Khrushchev.

Khrushchev loved Pope John XXIII. And John XXIII issued this incredible papal statement that's the background for the American University Address.[35] It has the same kinds of themes in it. The first person to receive a copy of that -- the first person in the world outside the Vatican is, who? Khrushchev.

Nikita Khrushchev, in russian translation was handed a copy of that -- a couple of weeks before it was published -- by Norman Cousins who said, 'The pope wants you to have this.' Khrushchev could not believe he was being given that and he went through it with Norman Cousins. Then Cousins said I've got something else for you and put it around his neck: a papal medal from the Pope to Khrushchev.

So when Norman Cousins left from visiting Khrushchev and Khrushchev had this papal medal on, he walks into the next office for a meeting with all his Commissars and everybody and he's going like this. Nobody says anything. So he takes it off and he drops it on the floor. Finally someone says, 'What's that?' and he says, 'Oh it's only a medal from the Pope.'

So when Cousins came back and met with him again Khrushchev told him this story with glee. And Cousins went back and told it to Kennedy. And Kennedy smiled at Cousins and said 'There are some things that Chairman Khrushchev can do that I can't do as the first Catholic President. I can't brag about my medal from the Pope.' He didn't get one -- Khrushchev did.

But that's the kind of undercurrent there was at the time. There was hope, hope, hope, that we would move -- I mean we in the big, big, big sense -- would move in a different direction. A lot of people felt that. Even here in the U.S. when Kennedy went out west on a so-called conservation tour, he's talking about conservation and he mentioned that the Test Ban Treaty had just been passed. Everybody stood up in Salt Lake City, no liberal center, and gave him a standing ovation for ten minutes. What's going on here?

Q: They were downwind.

JD: They were downwind and they were also outside the beltway. A lot of people outside the beltway had been terrified by the missile crisis -- rightly so, as Kennedy and Khrushchev were. And when this *new wind* -- not a downwind from the radiation -- was going on, that was hope. That was hope. We don't remember this stuff. It's meant to be wiped out. Those who control the past control the future. Those who control the present control the past. Mr. Orwell had it down.

Q: Can I add a tag? The person who followed Pope John XXIII in was James Angleton's asset -- the guy who became Pope Paul. He had been running since World War II. Kinda sad.

JD: We don't get too many saints as Popes -- or as presidents either for that matter. And John Kennedy was not a saint. But he was something else. You know what the term martyr means, it means witness. It means witness. He was a witness to a vision. He was a martyr. Not a saint but he was a martyr. That's good enough for a President.

Q: Thanks Jim. This is purely speculative but there was a lot of talk about hope this past election year. Do you have any idea how whether or not Obama might be aware of this work? There was a article a couple of months ago where Leon Panetta made some kind of strange remark that sounded like he was aware of your book. I mean Obama seems to be in the same situation that Kennedy was in.

JD: Leon Panetta and I went to school together. We were friends. We went to Santa Clara University together for four years and we graduated in the same class, 1960. I liked him. He liked me I, think.

Q: Did you send him your book?

JD: I did. I did send Leon a copy. I haven't seen Leon Panetta since 1960, let me be clear. I'm not going to destroy his security clearance with what I say [laughter]. When he was selected as the director of the CIA a mutual friend of ours at the Resource Center for Nonviolence in Santa Cruz, called me -- he was a good friend of Leon's -- and said he wanted to give him and Sylvia, Leon's wife, the book. So he said 'Will you inscribe it for him?' So I did. And he gave it to Sylvia Panetta for her and Leon.

And Obama was given the book. A friend of a friend was at a rally. I learned about this months later. When Obama was walking out of the rally he was shaking hands with people, he got a book. So he had to walk away with this book. What he did with the book, I don't think it's necessarily on his night table every night.

But there is something a little bit hopeful here. You know a guy named Larry Wilkerson? Lawrence Wilkerson is the former Chief of Staff of Colin Powell. He apparently read this thing. A friend of mine and he had lunch together and he was going on about this.

There was an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine two weeks, three weeks ago about Obama and the Generals.[77] It's a very important article. A very important article. [Richard Dreyfuss --] A guy who's a very good analyst of the situation in Washington -- I've read his articles before in *Rolling Stone* -- he said that Obama was facing then, and now, rebellion by his generals.

It's pretty obvious. Here's General McChrystal, he's not supposed to be President of the United States. He's supposed to be taking orders and here he is lobbying for 60,000 more American troops. Obama had actually told him, according to this article last August that he didn't want him to make that recommendation. And McChrystal not only makes the recommendation, he goes public with it.

This is insubordination of a major nature. I'm reading the article and there's Lawrence Wilkerson being quoted in it. And the article ends with Lawrence Wilkerson being quoted in it and he says, What Obama has to do is to face down his General McChrystal just the way that President John F. Kennedy faced down General Curtis LeMay in the Cuban Missile Crisis. That's what we need in this moment in history.[78]

So we have got to keep telling this story, telling this story. It does get through. It does get through to people at all kinds of levels. Whether you went to school with them or not. And I don't know how it gets through -- all you got to do is just tell the story. This is a transforming story.

Some people say, Obama is terrified because he understands the implications of his power. That's quite possible. But Kennedy understood the implications of his power. He wasn't just terrified. He was inspired by what he *could do* with that regardless of the consequences.

And if *we* understand it sufficiently, the first time around, we got to understand it right now and get far enough out ahead of this President so that, as the people lead, the leader will follow, and has a little bit of space because of us. That's the key. It's not Obama.

Q: As a researcher I try to think linearly to piece it all together. What struck you as a final, final of those 9 or 10 things that he's doing right?

JD: In my opinion -- this is only my opinion, I don't know -- in my opinion, they had a profile on Kennedy before he became President of the United States. Before he became a President of the United States they knew -- I'm talking about the Central Intelligence Agency in particular -- they

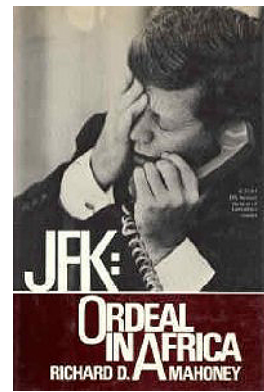
knew he was a supporter of third world nationalism. That was a major, major theme in his campaign. No historian writes about this.

There are hundreds of references in his campaign for his support for third world nationalism. It was his way also of saying I'm a kind of supporter of civil rights. He wasn't coming right out a giving a big -- of course he phoned to help Martin Luther King and that signaled it in a big, big way.

He was a person who was sympathetic to Patrice Lumumba. And Patrice Lumumba was not assassinated *after* Kennedy became president. Although Seymour Hersch says so in his book. He is absolutely wrong.[79]

Patrice Lumumba was assassinated days before Kennedy became President. And *why* was he assassinated at that time? So that he would not be imprisoned at a time when a man would become President of the United States who was sympathetic to Patrice Lumumba.

There is a picture of Kennedy when he receives the news of Patrice Lumumba's assassination. We have it -- it's on the cover of Richard Mahoney's book, a very fine book on Kennedy's African policies.[80] You look at that picture: Kennedy is stricken at the very moment -- with a kind of agony in his face -- when he hears on the phone that Patrice Lumumba has just been assassinated. Because he felt, that perhaps if he had spoken out as a Presidential candidate on Lumumba that wouldn't have happened.



Kennedy took responsibility for all this stuff including the assassination of Diem, which was being pushed, as you know, by other folks -- very, very heavily. He was trying to get Diem to do certain things that would avoid it.

When you're President of the United States, these people in these certain positions, they don't just do what you say you want them to do. And Obama, of course, has that problem too.

So I think the profile of Kennedy was very high before he even came in. I don't think the decision to assassinate him was made before he came in. But I think they had their eye on him from the moment he came into office. And when he's making remarks to Eisenhower which indicates he wants to negotiate with Laos -- even in his meeting with Eisenhower before he becomes President, he's asking questions of Eisenhower that already are a sign that he's going to negotiate peace in Laos rather wage war with them. Which as Eisenhower says, 'There's no choice but to wage war in Laos.' Kennedy says, 'Oh. Alright.' Right away he negotiates a peace.

I didn't even include that one. *That* could have been a first Bay of Pigs right around *the* Bay of Pigs. He's negotiating peace with the Communists in Laos for a neutralist government. There is all kinds of stuff that has been wiped out of the history that we have.[81]

Thank you.