

Notes on the Dynamics of Public Denial in the Assassination

by *E. Martin Schotz*

Contents

- [*On the Theory of a Black Star at the Center of Our Culture and Certain Psychological Implications*](#)
- [*On the Psychological Process of Denial by Journalists When Confronted with Salandria's Work*](#)
- [*The Battle of Belief Against Knowledge in the Struggle Over Oliver Stone's Film, JFK*](#)
- [*With Regard to Salandria's Correspondence with Chomsky*](#)
- [*The Vietnam Diversion*](#)
- [*The Centrality of Kennedy's Cuban Policy to the Motivation for the Assassination*](#)

May 3, 1992

To Vincent Salandria:

On the Theory of a Black Star at the Center of Our Culture and Certain Psychological Implications

I imagine that at the moral center of our culture is a black star which absorbs all light which is thrown onto it. If you write something which impinges too closely to the center and send it to someone well-situated in the bureaucracy, you will rarely receive a reply. The existence of this black star is an essential element in the workings of our society; everyone relates to it in one way or another. When an individual accommodates this star, accepts it as morally valid, relinquishes the search for the truth, ceases to struggle against it, this process is reflected as a central moral blindness in the personality of the individual.

On the Psychological Process of Denial by Journalists When Confronted with Salandria's Work

By what psychological process could we conceive of competent journalists seriously investigating the murder of the President and yet denying to themselves and the public the obvious

truth which Salandria's work established?

I think the process occurs as an automatic response beyond the awareness of the journalist. That the process goes on beyond the journalist's awareness makes it that much easier for him to engage in it.

Consider the following: A journalist is seriously looking into the President's murder. He starts talking to people and one way or another he turns up your articles [See Salandria's articles in *Liberation* in [Appendix III](#)]. He reads them. Now the immediate, inescapable conclusions of reading your articles are that: (1) there is no doubt there was a conspiracy; (2) the Warren Report is fraudulent; (3) the government of the United States is engaged in a criminal conspiracy after the fact to shield the assassins. There is one further conclusion, depending on the point in time this is happening. The journalistic establishment is by now more or less involved in the cover-up depending on how close to the release of the Report we are considering.

Let us limit ourselves to 1, 2, and 3. These are very powerful conclusions, which if accepted, would shatter the journalist's identification with the government. Remember what Fonzi said after that interview with Arlen Specter — that his faith was forever shaken in his government. These conclusions are very disturbing. To accept them is to suffer an intense sense of alienation, something akin to the profound sense of disturbance some people experience when first becoming aware of our government's actual policy toward nuclear weapons and the fallacies of nuclear deterrence. There is the sense that a system which one looked to for security and protection has turned against one. There is a sense of betrayal and danger, which is very painful. The more adult the person, the more formed the person's identity as contrasted with the typical adolescent, the more identified the person is with the system, the more disturbing will be these three conclusions.

What is the journalist likely to do under the threat of this experience? From psychotherapy we know the phenomenon of the person who has horribly disturbing obsessions, but despite them is able to function. How does the person do this? One of the ways this is accomplished is for the individual to keep the thoughts secret. Just as a dream tends to fade from memory if it is not written down or told to someone, so waking thoughts of a terrible nature which are not shared have only a partially conscious quality. Talking about such thoughts or writing them down stabilizes them by giving them existence beyond the internal psychology of the person. Once this occurs they cannot be so easily erased or forgotten.

So the journalist, having read your articles, is likely not to talk to anyone about them. If the journalist can keep from doing that, the experience which the articles created initially with time will begin to fade like a dream. The exact arguments and details will become blurred. Your proof that there was a conspiracy will be transmuted into your "theory" that there was a conspiracy — one theory among many competing theories.

What goes for not talking about your articles with anyone also applies to not writing about your articles. Having gone through the process of eliminating the very troubling experience with which your articles had threatened the journalist, there is now an understandable automatic tendency to avoid these articles when one sits down to write about the case. On a conscious level the journalist may just be thinking your articles were not that important: "There's nothing that different about Salandria's articles, so no need to quote them." On an unconscious level the mere thought of your articles sets off some dysphoric response which is likely to set in motion an avoidance reaction.

The journalist may well believe that there was a conspiracy. He may be very sympathetic to the critics and even to you. But he will only *believe* that there was a conspiracy; he will have

avoided *knowing* that there was a conspiracy. And in that transmutation lies the transformation of a person who was on the verge of investigating the truth of the murder into an unwitting part of the cover-up.

What is true of the journalist holds true for the journalist's audience. They do not want a reporter who knows there was a conspiracy and explains it to them. Rather, the typical citizen is much more content to have a journalist who believes there was a conspiracy, but at the same time indicates there is doubt, room for debate, and thus one is not in a position to draw any firm conclusions and there is nothing to be done.

The "powers that be" can count on the fact that the more important the person or institution which commits a crime and the more serious the crime in regard to the system, the more central will be the threat of knowledge of the truth to the ordinary citizen, the more the psychological interest in uncertainty and confusion.

May 14, 1992
To Vincent Salandria:

*The Battle of Belief Against Knowledge
in the Struggle Over Oliver Stone's Film, JFK*

Oliver Stone's *JFK* is a truly great [film](#), and yet it is important to examine what happened to Stone in the period prior to its release and subsequently.

Prior to the film's release, indeed prior to even the final editing of the film, Stone was subjected to an unprecedented barrage of criticism in the media. He was called crazy and a drunk. The pressure was intense and Stone turned for advice to Frank Mankiewicz, an old Kennedy ally.

The advice apparently was that Stone should not insist that his film was the truth (which he knew it was), but that he should simply present it as his *interpretation*. Thus, with the release of the film Stone began referring to the film as his "myth." The instant he did that, the criticism was muted. He was invited to address Congress and call for the release of more information. Once again he became acceptable.

Stone knows this movie is not myth. It is a brilliant synthesis of twenty-five years of critical work by Garrison and independent citizens. It is completely factual except for the obviously created and condensed scenes. Beyond that, to call on the government to provide further information is to logically contradict the film's central thesis that the government was behind it. So Stone wound up being turned against his own film.

There is a very important lesson in this. There is no mystery in the JFK assassination today. And to pretend otherwise is to join the cover-up, something Stone has done in calling for the release of more information and referring to his film as "myth."

Stone was threatened with being completely blackballed by the media and left with no one to talk to. So he compromised. He traded his knowledge of the truth for belief and access.

What we have here is the way "the black star" organizes and perpetuates its tyranny of confusion, by threatening people with isolation and being labeled insane if they aren't willing to

compromise.

March 25, 1993
To Vincent Salandria:

With Regard to Salandria's Correspondence with Chomsky

I think it may be helpful to examine carefully Chomsky's reply to you, taking him at his word.

In his letter to you he begins by saying he has "no opinion" on who killed JFK. He goes on to say his only interest is in whether there might have been a motive for a high level government conspiracy, and in attempting to answer this he examines the "record" seeking any talk of killing the President or any evidence that Kennedy might have differed from his high level advisors. He focuses on Vietnam as the center piece of the conspiracy theories, etc. He finds no evidence and finds it hard to imagine that he is reading a sanitized record, including conspiracy by "physicists and the medical profession." Then he ends up willing to accept the "low-level CIA conspiracy" theory as possible but of no consequence.

He has no opinion on who killed the President? No opinion? No opinion whatsoever? No opinion on whether Lee Harvey Oswald killed him? No opinion on whether the Warren investigation was a totally fraudulent process and whether the government of the United States and the media are in essence accessories after the fact in the murder of a President? Only someone profoundly uninterested in the murder of the President could honestly have no opinion on all this. So we must start off with that. At a very fundamental level Chomsky is not interested in this case.

Because he is uninterested in the case, he doesn't know the facts of the case. And Chomsky doesn't want to know, because Marcus spent hours with him years ago. We know that now because of [the notes Marcus has in Addendum B](#) and the letters they exchanged.

So Chomsky is conveniently ignorant of the physical evidence and passes over all this and wants to ask whether the CIA could have had a motive. The correct question is not whether there was a motive but what was the motive. Chomsky then goes to the record on Vietnam.

The Vietnam Diversion

It is significant that he focuses on Vietnam. He focuses on Vietnam because that is where Oliver Stone and our media now focus, a media which has all along been cooperating in the coverup.

Why Vietnam? By focusing the assassination around Vietnam, one is permitted to argue, "We Americans really do have a wonderful country which has somehow gotten off track. Our democracy has been deformed by our military industrial complex as President Eisenhower warned, and it went out of control and killed a President and led us into Vietnam. And we the people have to get it back." Thus, the Vietnam War, Eisenhower's "military industrial complex," and the murder of JFK are torn out of the entire fabric of American foreign policy. The murder of Kennedy, the military industrial complex, and Vietnam are aberrations which are set against American democracy, as opposed to being seen as part and parcel of democracy as it is practiced in this country.

This is what Chomsky is reacting to. Fundamentally uninterested in the case, Chomsky reacts

to Oliver Stone and the media hype. And understanding it from that point of view, you can see that wittingly or unwittingly Chomsky doesn't look at the murder of Kennedy but at an interpretation the public is being given of the murder, which is a subtle level of cover-up and distortion engendered by ideological bias.

*The Centrality of Kennedy's Cuban Policy
to the Motivation for the Assassination*

If you want a central motivation for the assassination, you have to look at Kennedy's relations with Cuba and his rapprochement with Khrushchev. I think the Cuban Missile Crisis is the absolute center out of which the plot to kill Kennedy came.

As far as Chomsky not being able to find Kennedy fighting with top advisors, of course you, as an ardent "Chomskyist," are deluging him with public accounts from the time of the fight that was taking place. If Chomsky isn't looking at a sanitized record, where are the notes of the meeting where Dulles and his colleagues or the Joint Chiefs discussed the firing of Allen Dulles? Where are the records of their reactions to the test ban treaty, [McCloy-Zorin](#), or the arms embargo Kennedy imposed on the Dominican Republic? Where are the minutes of the meeting at which our government leaders discussed the Katzenbach memoranda to [Moyers](#) and [Warren](#)? But most of all where are the notes of the meetings where Dulles and the Joint Chiefs and Angleton *et al.* reacted to the Cuban Missile Crisis, because here is where Kennedy stumbled into something and violated standard operating procedure for American foreign policy.

Standard U.S. operating procedure *vis-à-vis* the Third World is "we do what we want." And here you have Kennedy negotiating the withdrawal of missiles on a *quid pro quo* basis. Senator Stuart Symington, a former Air Force Secretary, was complaining on the Senate floor after the Bay of Pigs that the military was questioning the loyalty of the President in secret sessions before congressmen. Can you imagine what they were saying to themselves after the Cuban Missile Crisis?

Cuba has had the temerity to insist on its sovereignty. And this ninety miles off our shore. This is unheard of as far as the United States is concerned. This was the basis of the Cold War, that the Soviets throughout their history had loomed as a counterweight to the U.S. in the Third World. Indeed, once China started cooperating with us in the Third World we had no problem with them. But Cuba asserts for itself a right to send troops into Angola, a right to nuclear weapons just like us. And Kennedy's embargo of Cuba was an absolutely unjustifiable act, a gross violation of Cuban national sovereignty, typical of the U.S. when it comes to the rights of others. Kennedy's act was the height of irresponsibility, bringing us to the brink of using nuclear weapons. And he did this because the Cubans had the idea that they had the same international rights which we do.

But in the middle of this horror for which JFK was responsible, something totally unprecedented happened. He started dealing with Khrushchev. Behind the facade of "diktat" Kennedy *negotiated* the withdrawal of those missiles. And this was an act of treason to men like Allen Dulles and James Angleton or in this day and age an Elliot Abrams or Jeanne Kirkpatrick. This was a total violation of the U.S. policy of domination. With this act Kennedy demonstrated a weakness as far as people like Dulles were concerned, which made him unreliable and unacceptable. Not that Kennedy's actions were simply generated by moral concerns, but when it came down to it, there was a limit to the risk of nuclear annihilation that he was willing to run and in the process he had wound up negotiating with the Soviets.

This is not my personal view. This is the view of the two people in the world who were in the best positions to know, Fidel Castro and Nikita Khrushchev. Look at Khrushchev's letter after the Cuban Missile Crisis and [the Castro speech on the assassination](#). You will see that the central distinction that Castro draws between the Kennedy people and the forces that were opposing them is that Kennedy had shown himself to be someone with whom the Cubans could deal. Let's not forget that William Attwood, as Kennedy's emissary, was secretly negotiating the recognition of Cuba in the U.N. at the time of the assassination.

This is very significant, because if the United States could have co-existed peacefully with Cuba, it could have done so with Popular Unity in Chile, with Maurice Bishop, with Juan Bosch in the Dominican Republic. It could have peacefully co-existed with the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Think about this and I think you will see what the implications were for a very different Latin and South America. But the United States has not been willing to peacefully co-exist with Cuba and is still not. And thirty years ago Dulles *et al.* were not about to live with a President who might be drifting in that direction, and we still don't have a President who is willing to speak of moving in that direction.

Thirty years later we have still not recognized Cuba and are violating international law by attempting to sow political chaos with our economic blockade. What seems so ironic is that one of Chomsky's great contributions is his withering documentation of the systematic and undeviating pattern of terror in U.S. foreign policy which is aimed at usurping rights of Third World people by any and all means necessary, and of the role of the U.S. media in selling this to the American people as a great humanitarian and democratic crusade.