

Editor's note: This is an annotated transcript of the complete recording of this presentation by Jim Douglass that began with Bill Kelly's [original transcript](#) of just the Keynote Address as a starting point. The book referenced here is the [2010 Simon & Schuster softcover edition](#). Editing of the recording, all hyperlinks, and [endnotes](#) by David Ratcliffe.

Jim Douglass on The Hope in Confronting the Unspeakable in the Assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy Coalition on Political Assassinations Conference 20 November 2009, Dallas, Texas

Jim Douglass, author of *JFK and The Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters*
Delivers the Keynote Address at the [Coalition on Political Assassinations Conference](#)

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Contents

- [Introduction](#) by John Judge 2
- [Keynote Address](#) 3
- [Question and Answer](#). 20
- [Notes](#) 25
- [Editor's Afterword](#). 46

"It's that everything [in the Cold War in 1962-1963] was totally out of control and then, through a kind of incredible process where these two men were communicating secretly with each other over the year previous [Sep 1962-63], and smuggling letters back and forth to each other, in the midst of this conflict, they were beginning to trust each other.... It's a remarkable process. And it's all beneath the surface. But so are all the things that count as Merton understood.... And that's why I have some hopes that if we are willing to go deeply enough into the darkness – and Kennedy was, and Khrushchev was – anything can happen for the good. But if we don't go into the darkness it doesn't happen."

—[Jim Douglass at Elliot Bay Books](#), Seattle, May 6, 2008

What do you hope readers take away from your book?

Hope itself – from seeing what JFK, and all the supporting witnesses in the story, went through to live out the truth. Had he not turned from war, along with his enemy, Nikita Khrushchev, the world would now be a nuclear wasteland. Had these witnesses not been courageous enough to speak the truth, we would know far less of the liberating truth of the story.

What I found remarkable was that the deeper the darkness, the greater the hope, because of his and their transforming witness to the truth. That leaves the question: Are we who hear their story prepared to carry on the peacemaking and truth-telling? Will we live out the truth as they did? It's a hopeful, inviting question.

Is there anything else you uncovered about the JFK assassination conspiracy that you wish had been included in JFK and the Unspeakable, or were you able to fit all of your findings in the book?

I included only what I could back up with solid sources that the reader could check out. Hence all the endnotes. There is far more than this beneath the surface. Yet we know enough, and [have known enough for a long time](#), to see the truth. I believe that what is written here about the assassination is only a tiny, visible piece of a systemic evil that continues to reach into the depths of our world. But grace also abounds. Peace is possible.

—“Questions for the Author,” from the [Reading Group Guide](#),
at the back of *JFK and The Unspeakable*

“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 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 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 a footnote 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'état 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](#), 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](#), 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 an 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.

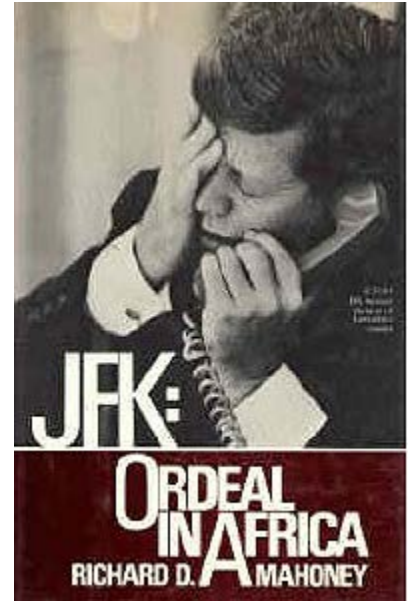
There are hundreds of references in his campaign for his support for third world nationalism. It was his way also of saying I'm a kind of supporter of civil rights. He wasn't coming right out a giving a big – of course he phoned to help Martin Luther King and that signaled it in a big, big way.

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 stucken 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.

John Judge: Thanks for sharing.

Notes

Starting with [No.10 below](#), endnote citations from *JFK and The Unspeakable* begin with “page X, fnY.” indicating page X in the book where the quote (in [this Address](#)) or detail occurs and fnY being the endnote itself. Hyperlinks to most book titles go to [WorldCat.org](#), “the world’s largest network of library content and services. WorldCat libraries are dedicated to providing access to their resources on the Web, where most people start their search for information.” These links were accessed from the greater Boston area. Enter your zip or postal code (e.g. 43017 or S7K-5X2), City and/or state (e.g. Cincinnati, Ohio or Ohio or OH), Province: (e.g. Ontario or ON), Country: (e.g. United States or United Kingdom), or Latitude Longitude (e.g. 40.266000,-83.219250) to see listings of libraries where you live. Where possible book title links reference the precise edition cited in *JFK and The Unspeakable*. Where such editions could not be found, alternate versions are linked to.

1. Oliver Stone, “[JFK and the Unspeakable](#),” *The Huffington Post*, 23 July 2009 ↪
2. See [The Catholic Worker Movement](#) on the internet as well pages on [Wikipedia](#) and [Dorothy Day–Catholic Worker Collection](#) at Marquette University. ↪
3. [Ground Zero Center For Nonviolent Action](#) offers the opportunity to explore the meaning and practice of nonviolence from a perspective of deep spiritual reflection. Providing a means for witnessing to and resisting all nuclear weapons. Address: 16159 Clear Creek Road NW, Poulsbo, WA 98370 ↪
4. ↪ From the [Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama - Directory](#):
Mary’s House - The Catholic Worker House of Hospitality
2107 Avenue G
Birmingham, AL 35218
Contact: Shelley Douglass
205-780-2020
Email: shelleyd9 [at] juno [dot] com
5. *The Nonviolent Cross: A Theology of Revolution and Peace* (2nd edition, Wipf & Stock, 2006). Read the [Foreward by Ched Meyers](#). ↪
6. *Resistance and Contemplation: The Way of Liberation* (2nd edition, Wipf & Stock, 2006). ↪
7. *Lightning East to West: Jesus, Gandhi, and the Nuclear Age* (2nd edition, Wipf & Stock, 2006). ↪
8. *The Nonviolent Coming of God* (2nd edition, Wipf & Stock, 2006). ↪
9. ↪ See description of the Special Group 10/2 and its descendant, the Special Group 5412 or 5412/2, as explained by Col. L. Fletcher Prouty (USAF, ret.) in “[The Forty Committee](#),” *Genesis*, February, 1975, pp.28, 105-108; and “[Appendix C](#), NSC 5412, ‘National Security Council Directive on Covert Operations’,” from David Ratcliffe, *Understanding Special Operations and Their Impact on the Vietnam War Era, 1989 Interview with L. Fletcher Prouty, Colonel USAF (Retired)*, (rat haus reality press, 1999), pp. 330-32.
See also: [Document 292. National Security Council Directive on Office of Special Projects – NSC 10/2](#) from *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945-1950, Retrospective Volume, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).
10. page 381, fn1. ↪
Peter Grose, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), p. 293.
11. The text in square braces above is included as it appears in the Afterword of the [2010 Simon & Schuster paperback edition of JFK and the Unspeakable](#), p. 381. ↪

12. page 33, fn133-35. ↪
cited by Grose, *Gentleman Spy*, p. 293.
13. page 381, fn3. ↪
Grose, *Gentleman Spy*, p. 293.
14. Harry S. Truman, “[Limit CIA Role to Intelligence](#),” *Washington Post*, December 22, 1963, p. A11. ↪
15. page 332, fn679-680. ↪
Excerpt of page 332 follows, with endnotes 679 and 680 following the text.

..President Truman restated his radical critique of the CIA in a letter written six months after the *Washington Post* article.⁶⁷⁹ The managing editor of *Look* magazine had sent Truman the latest *Look* featuring a piece on the CIA. Truman wrote back:

“Thank you for the copy of *Look* with the article on the Central Intelligence Agency. It is, I regret to say, not true to the facts in many respects.

“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.”⁶⁸⁰

679. Letter from Harry S. Truman to William B. Arthur, June 10, 1964. *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*, edited by Robert H. Ferrell (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 408. I am grateful to Tim Murphy for pointing out this letter to me.

680. Ibid. President Truman had either forgotten or was avoiding the fact that his National Security Council on June 18, 1948, approved top-secret directive NSC 10/2. U.S. intelligence agencies were thereby authorized to engage in “propaganda, economic warfare, preventive direct action including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas, and refugee liberation groups.” Peter Grose, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), p. 293. NSC 10/2 was the secret foundation for the enormous buildup of the CIA’s “strange activities” that so alarmed Truman in December 1963.

See Also: [endnote 9, above](#).

16. Hear/See [Audio and Text representations of Eisenhower’s Farewell Address](#) ↪
17. ↪ Thomas Merton, a contemplative monk in the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, was an early mentor to and correspondent with Jim Douglass. See [Thomas Merton’s Life and Work](#), from the [Thomas Merton Center](#) at Bellarmine University. From this Center is available [Merton’s Correspondence with: Douglass, James William, 1937-](#) as well as a complete [List of those in correspondence with Merton](#). On pages 17-20 of *JFK and The Unspeakable* Douglass writes how

Merton was being blocked from publishing his thoughts on nuclear war by his monastic superiors. Merton, like Kennedy, decided to find another way. The words pouring out of Merton’s typewriter were spilling over from unpublished manuscripts into his Cold War letters....

On December 31, 1961, Merton wrote a letter anticipating the Cuban Missile Crisis ten months later. It was addressed to Clare Boothe Luce, the wife of *Time-Life-Fortune* owner Henry Luce, a Cold War media baron whose editorial policies demonized the communist

enemy. Clare Boothe Luce, celebrated speaker, writer, and diplomat, shared Henry Luce's Cold War theology. In 1975 Clare Boothe Luce would lead investigators into the JFK assassination, working for the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), on a time-consuming wild goose chase based on disinformation. HSCA analyst Gaeton Fonzi discovered that Luce at the time was on the board of directors of the CIA-sponsored Association of Former Intelligence Officers.⁶⁷ Even in the early sixties, Merton with his extraordinary sensitivity may have suspected Luce's intelligence connections. In any case he knew her as one of the wealthiest, most influential women in the world, with a decidedly anti-communist mind-set. He welcomed her, as he did one and all, into [his circle of correspondents](#).

In his New Year's Eve letter to Clare Boothe Luce, Merton said he thought the next year would be momentous. "Though 'all manner of things shall be well,'" he wrote, "we cannot help but be aware, on the threshold of 1962, that we have enormous responsibilities and tasks of which we are perhaps no longer capable. Our sudden, unbalanced, top-heavy rush into technological mastery," Merton saw, had now made us servants of our own weapons of war. "Our weapons dictate what we are to do. They force us into awful corners. They give us our living, they sustain our economy, they bolster up our politicians, they sell our mass media, in short we live by them. But if they continue to rule us we will also most surely die by them."⁶⁸

Merton was a cloistered monk who watched no television and saw only an occasional newspaper. However, he had far-flung correspondents and spiritual antennae that were always on the alert. He could thus identify in his letter to Clare Boothe Luce the strategic nuclear issue that would bring humanity to the brink in October 1962: "For [our weapons] have now made it plain that they are the friends of the 'preemptive strike'. They are most advantageous to those who use them first. And consequently nobody wants to be too late in using them second. Hence the weapons keep us in a state of fury and desperation, with our fingers poised over the button and our eyes glued on the radar screen. You know what happens when you keep your eye fixed on something. You begin to see things that aren't there. It is very possible that in 1962 the weapons will tell someone that there has been long enough waiting, and he will obey, and we will all have had it."⁶⁹

"We have to be articulate and sane," Merton concluded, "and speak wisely on every occasion where we can speak, and to those who are willing to listen. That is why for one I speak to you," he said hopefully to Luce. "We have to try to some extent to preserve the sanity of this nation, and keep it from going berserk which will be its destruction, and ours, and perhaps also the destruction of Christendom."⁷⁰

As Merton challenged the Cold War dogmas of Clare Boothe Luce, he was raising similar questions of conscience to another powerfully situated woman, Ethel Kennedy. This was the period in which Merton still had little confidence in John Kennedy. He was nevertheless beginning to catch glimpses of a man who, like himself, was deeply troubled by the prevailing Cold War atmosphere. He began a December 1961 letter to Ethel Kennedy by noting a parallel between JFK's and his own thinking: "I liked very much [the President's speech at Seattle](#) which encouraged me a bit as I had just written something along those same lines."⁷¹ Merton was referring to John Kennedy's rejection, like his own, of the false alternatives "Red or dead" in a speech the president gave at the University of Washington in November 1961. Kennedy had said of this false dilemma and those who chose either side of it: "It is a curious fact that each of these extreme opposites resembles the other. Each believes that we have only two choices: appeasement or war, suicide or surrender, humiliation or holocaust, to be either Red or dead."⁷²

Merton made an extended analysis of the same Cold War cliché, "Red or dead," in the book his monastic superiors blocked from publication, *Peace in the Post-Christian Era*. There he observed: "We strive to soothe our madness by intoning more and more vacuous clichés. And at such times, far from being as innocuous as they are absurd, empty slogans

take on a dreadful power.”⁷³

The slogan he and Kennedy saw exemplifying such emptiness had begun in Germany in the form, “Better Red than dead.” “It was deftly fielded on the first bounce by the Americans,” Merton said, “and came back in reverse, thus acquiring an air of challenge and defiance. ‘Better dead than Red’ was a reply to effete and decadent cynicism. It was a condemnation of ‘appeasement’. (Anything short of a nuclear attack on Russia rates as ‘appeasement’.)”

What the heroic emptiness of “Better dead than Red” ignored was “the real bravery of patient, humble, persevering labor to effect, step by step, through honest negotiation, a gradual understanding that can eventually relieve tensions and bring about some agreement upon which serious disarmament measures can be based”⁷⁴—precisely what he hoped Ethel Kennedy’s brother-in-law would do from the White House. In his letter to her, Merton therefore went on to praise John Kennedy, yet did so while encouraging him to break through Cold War propaganda and speak the truth: “I think that the fact that the President works overtime at trying to get people to face the situation as it really is may be the greatest thing he is doing. Certainly our basic need is for truth, and not for ‘images’ and slogans that ‘engineer consent.’ We are living in a dream world. We do not know ourselves or our adversaries. We are myths to ourselves and they are myths to us. And we are secretly persuaded that we can shoot it out like the sheriffs on TV. This is not reality and the President can do a tremendous amount to get people to see the facts, more than any single person.”⁷⁵

With inclusive language that did not single out JFK, but again with heavy implications for the president, Merton continued: “We cannot go on indefinitely relying on the kind of provisional framework of a balance of terror. If as Christians we were more certain of our duty, it might put us in a very tight spot politically but it would also merit for us special graces from God, and these we need badly.”⁷⁶

Merton was praying that Christians in particular—and a particular Christian, John Kennedy—would become more certain of their duty to take a stand against nuclear terror, which would place JFK especially “in a very tight spot politically.” Besides praying, Merton was doing more than writing words of protest on the backs of envelopes. He was appealing to the president, through Ethel Kennedy, for a courageous stand in conscience. Whether or not JFK ever read Merton’s graceful letter to his sister-in-law, he would soon have to respond, in October 1962, to “special graces from God” if humanity were to survive.

67. Gaeton Fonzi, *The Last Investigation* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth, 1994), pp. 53-59.

68. Thomas Merton, *Cold War Letters*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006), p. 43.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., p. 44.

71. Ibid., p. 26.

72. *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1961*, “Address in Seattle at the University of Washington’s 100th Anniversary Program,” November 16, 1961 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 726.

73. Thomas Merton, *Peace in the Post-Christian Era* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), pp. 121-22.

74. Ibid., p. 122.

75. Merton, *Cold War Letters*, p. 29.

76. Ibid.

From the dust jacket of *Peace in the Post-Christian Era*:

Publisher description: “Substitute ‘war on terrorism’ for ‘war on communism’ and

Merton's insights continue to challenge our culture of war and ourselves to become Gospel people of peace and nonviolence. This book stands at the heart of the Merton canon ... Read it and take up where Merton left off-questioning the culture, denouncing war and nuclear weapons, taking risks for the truth, pointing the way to peace, and discovering anew how to be Christian in these post-Christian times." John Dear, author, *Living Peace*. Writing at the height of the Cold War, Merton issued a passionate cry for sanity and a challenge to the idea that unthinkable violence can be squared with the Gospel of Christ. Censors of Merton's order blocked publication of this work, but forty years later, despite changing circumstances, his prophetic message remains eerily topical. At a time when the "war on terrorism" has replaced the struggle against communism, Merton's work continues to demonstrate the power and relevance of the Gospel in answering the most urgent challenges of our time.

18. page 382, fn5. ↵

Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1966), p. 4.

Douglass also includes this quote in the Introduction on page xv where it is preceded by the following:

"One of the awful facts of our age," Merton wrote in 1965, "is the evidence that [the world] is stricken indeed, stricken to the very core of its being by the presence of the Unspeakable." The Vietnam War, the race to a global war, and the interlocking murders of John Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and Robert Kennedy were all signs of the Unspeakable. It remains deeply present in our world. As Merton warned, "Those who are at present so eager to be reconciled with the world at any price must take care not to be reconciled with it under this particular aspect: *as the nest of the Unspeakable*. This is what too few are willing to see." [Merton's emphasis]

When we become more deeply human, as Merton understood the process, the wellspring of our compassion moves us to confront the Unspeakable. Merton was pointing to a kind of systemic evil that defies speech.

19. page 13, fn36. ↵

Paul B. Fay, Jr. *The Pleasure of His Company* (New York: Dell, 1966), pp. 162-163.

In *The Pleasure of His Company* author Paul Fay writes the following leading up to the quote Jim Douglass begins with on page 162:

The fiasco in Cuba raised strong doubts in his mind about the intelligence and judgement of some of the top military men.

"Looking back on that whole Cuban mess, one of the things that appalled me the most was the lack of broad judgement by some of the heads of the military services," he said one day. "When you think of the long competitive selection process that they have to weather to end up the number one man of their particular service, it is certainly not unreasonable to expect that they would also be bright, with good broad judgment. For years I've been looking at those rows of ribbons and those four stars, and conceding a certain higher qualification not obtained in civilian life. Well, if ----- and ----- are the best the services can produce, a lot more attention is going to be given their advice in the future before any action is taken as a result of it. They wanted to fight and probably calculated that if we committed ourselves part way and started to lose, I would give the okay to pour in whatever was needed. I found out among other things that when it comes to making decisions I want facts more than advice. As good old Harry Truman put it, 'the buck stops right here.' I can see now why McNamara wants to get some new faces over there in the Pentagon."

Between the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban missile crisis, Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey, II brought out a book, *Seven Days In May*, which explored the possibility of a

takeover by the military in this country. Mrs. John R. Fell, an old friend of the Kennedys, had read an advance copy of the book and had recommended it to the President one summer weekend in 1962, during an afternoon sail on the *Honey Fitz*.

“I’d be interested to see if you agree that such a situation could develop in this country,” she said.

“Fletch sent me a copy but I haven’t gotten around to reading it,” the President said. “I’ll read it tonight and let you know.”

We were out on the *Honey Fitz* again the next day, and the President said he had read *Seven Days In May* the previous night. He discussed the possibility of such a military takeover very calmly:

Fletcher Knebel and Charles W Bailey, *Seven Days In May* (New York: N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1962). ↩

20. page 14, fn48. ↩

Kenneth P. O’Donnell and Dave F. Powers with Joe McCarthy, *Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye; Memories of John Fitzgerald Kennedy* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), p. 274.

21. page 15, fn56. ↩

Tom Wicker, John W. Finney, Max Frankel, E. W. Kenworthy, “C.I.A.: Maker of Policy, Or Tool? Survey Finds Widely Feared Agency is Tightly Controlled,” *New York Times* (April 25, 1966), p. 20. A [local photocopy of this article](#) (1.3 MB) was found in [The Harold Weisberg Archive](#) by searching on the string (including quotes): “C.I.A.: Maker of Policy, Or Tool?” and comes up as the first result.

22. page 16, fn59. ↩

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days, John F. Kennedy In The White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 428.

23. page 15-16, fn58. ↩

On pages 15-16 of *JFK and The Unspeakable* Douglass writes how

In his short presidency, Kennedy began to take steps to deal with the CIA. He tried to redefine the CIA's mandate and to reduce its power in his National Security Action Memoranda (NSAMs) 55 and 57, which took military-type operations out of the hands of the CIA. Kennedy's NSAM 55 informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that it was they (not the CIA) who were his principal military advisers in peacetime as well as wartime. Air Force Colonel L. Fletcher Prouty, who at the time was in charge of providing military support for the CIA's clandestine operations, described the impact of NSAM 55 addressed to General Lyman Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs:

“I can't overemphasize the shock – not simply the words – that procedure caused in Washington: to the Secretary of State, to the Secretary of Defense, and particularly to the Director of Central Intelligence. Because Allen Dulles, who was still the Director, had just lived through the shambles of the Bay of Pigs and now he finds out that what Kennedy does as a result of all this is to say that, ‘you, General Lemnitzer, are to be my Advisor’. In other words, I'm not going to depend on Allen Dulles and the CIA. Historians have glossed over that or don't know about it.”⁵⁸

58. David T. Ratcliffe, *Understanding Special Operations: 1989 Interview with L. Fletcher Prouty* (Santa Cruz, CA: rathaus reality press, 1999), pp. 170-71.

24. pages 370-71, fn869-879. ↩

An instance of the hatred people in the Cuban exile community felt and did not forget regarding John

and Robert Kennedy is described in *JFK and The Unspeakable* on pages 370-71:

On Thursday, November 21, as John and Jacqueline Kennedy were arriving on Air Force One in Houston to begin their Texas tour, Wayne January was at Red Bird Air Field in Dallas preparing a DC-3 aircraft for flight. In this narrative, we have already encountered January, who the day before had refused to charter a flight for November 22 to a suspicious young couple, accompanied by a man January later identified as Lee Harvey Oswald.

Wayne January was working on the DC-3 all day Thursday with the pilot who was scheduled to fly it out of Dallas on Friday afternoon.⁸⁶⁹ It was their third day on the job. Working together on a project they both enjoyed – preparing an extraordinary machine for flight – the two men had become friends. Wayne had also become curious about the background of his friend, who said he had been born in Cuba, though Wayne could detect no trace of an accent. The man said he had been in the Cuban Air Force, where he achieved a high rank.⁸⁷⁰

Except for his work with January, the pilot kept totally to himself, refusing Wayne's invitations to eat out with him. The pilot confined himself to eating sandwiches with Wayne by the plane.⁸⁷¹

Wayne became more curious. He asked the pilot about the well-dressed man who had bought the plane from a company January co-owned. The man had carried out the transaction with January's partner by phone. The buyer had made only one appearance at the airfield, when he came with the pilot on Monday.

The pilot described his boss as "an Air Force colonel who deals with planes of this category."⁸⁷² The colonel had bought the plane on behalf of a company known as the "Houston Air Center." January would learn later that the Houston Air Center was a front for the CIA.⁸⁷³ As revealed by the plane's archived papers, the aircraft had originally been a troop transport version of the DC-3, also known as a C-47, made in the Second World War and sold by the government to a private airline after the war.⁸⁷⁴ It was now being sold back to the government for use as a covert CIA aircraft.

As Wayne and the pilot continued talking during their lunch break Thursday, Wayne suddenly found himself in a twilight zone, learning more about secret government operations than he ever wanted to know. The moment of transition came after a pause in their conversation. The other man sat leaning against a wheel of the plane, eating his sandwich. He was silent for a time, mulling over something in his mind.

Then he looked up and said, "Wayne, they are going to kill your president."⁸⁷⁵

As Wayne January described this scene three decades later in a remarkable faxed letter to British author Matthew Smith, he tried to convey his utter incomprehension of the man's words. When Wayne asked the pilot what he meant, the man repeated, "They are going to kill your president."

Wayne stared at him.

"You mean President Kennedy?"

The man said yes. While Wayne kept trying to make sense of his words, his co-worker revealed that he had been a pilot for the CIA. He was with the CIA in the planning of the Bay of Pigs. When many of his friends died there, the planners and survivors of the operation bitterly blamed John and Robert Kennedy for not providing the air cover the CIA claimed they had promised.

Wayne asked if that was why he thought they were going to kill the president.

The man said, "They are not only going to kill the President, they are going to kill Robert Kennedy and any other Kennedy who gets into that position."⁸⁷⁶

Wayne thought he was beginning to catch on. His friend had gone off the deep end. Wayne tried to say so in a polite, circumspect way.

The pilot looked at him. “You will see,” he said.

The two men went back to work. They were behind schedule, with less than twenty-four hours left to complete their task. “My boss wants to return to Florida,” the pilot said. There was room in the plane for more passengers than his boss. Wayne and the pilot were reinstalling twenty-five seats in it.⁸⁷⁷ The DC-3 had to be ready to take off from Dallas by early afternoon the next day, Friday, November 22.

In the course of their work, the pilot made another memorable remark. “They want Robert Kennedy real bad,” he said.

“But what for?” Wayne asked.

“Never mind,” the man said, “You don’t need to know.”⁸⁷⁸

Thanks to the two men’s joint efforts, they succeeded in having the plane ready to go early Friday afternoon. By 12:30 P.M., all the DC-3 lacked was fuel-and whoever would soon get aboard it to depart from Dallas.

As they finished up their work, there was a commotion by the terminal. A police car took off at high speed. Wondering what was up, Wayne walked back to the terminal building. The driver of a passing car slowed down and shouted at him, “The President has been shot!”

Wayne went into the building. He listened to a radio until he heard the announcement that President John F. Kennedy was dead.

He walked back to the DC-3. It had received its fuel. The pilot was putting luggage on the plane. Wayne asked him if he had heard what had happened. Without pausing from his loading, the pilot said he had, the man on the fuel truck had told him.

Then he said, “It’s all going to happen just like I told you.”⁸⁷⁹

Wayne said goodbye to the pilot. With a sense of profound sickness, he left work to find a television set where he could watch the news of the president’s assassination unfold.

869. Matthew Smith, *Vendetta: The Kennedys* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1993), p. 119.

870. Faxed letter from Wayne January to Matthew Smith, December 27, 1992. I am grateful to Matthew Smith for sharing with me his faxed correspondence from Wayne January.

871. Ibid.

872. Ibid.

873. Working with Matthew Smith in 1993, Wayne January used his air craft expertise to trace the DC-3 he and the pilot had worked on, whose FAA registration number he remembered. He had personally flown the plane over four thousand hours and readily recalled its number. January was dumbfounded when the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) reported back to him that there was no such plane. He insisted that AOPA archivists double-check their files. They finally discovered that after the DC-3 had been bought at Red Bird Air Field, “the number had been changed and the original number given to a small aircraft.” Faxed letter from Wayne January to Matthew Smith, February 3, 1993. Also Matthew Smith, *Say Goodbye to America: The Sensational and Untold Story behind the Assassination of John F. Kennedy* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2001), p. 167.

When Smith queried retired Air Force colonel Fletcher Prouty, former liaison between the Air Force and the CIA, on this development, Prouty said that aircraft numbers were never changed, except by the CIA. The CIA had apparently bought the plane.

January’s partner had sold the plane to the Houston Air Center, which did not register the plane until 1965 when it was about to resell it. A Houston investigator, who had once worked for the CIA, identified the Houston Air Center as a CIA front, confirming Fletcher Prouty’s analysis that the DC-3 had become a CIA aircraft upon its purchase at Red Bird Air Field. When the DC-3 flew out of Dallas the afternoon

of November 22, 1963, with an undisclosed number of passengers, it was a CIA plane being flown by a CIA pilot. Ibid.

874. Research on the plane sold by Wayne January to the Houston Air Center was done by Larry Hancock and reported in his book *Someone Would Have Talked: Documented! The Assassination of John F. Kennedy and the Conspiracy to Mislead History* (Southlake, Tex.: JFK Lancer, 2006), p. 256.

875. January to Smith, December 27, 1992.

876. Smith, *Vendetta*, p. 120.

877. Smith, *Say Goodbye*, p. 165.

878. Smith, *Vendetta*, p. 121.

879. Ibid.

25. page 22, fn85. ↩

Sheldon M. Stern, *Averting "The Final Failure": John F. Kennedy and the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings* (Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 123, 126.

From the dust jacket of this book:

The Cuban missile crisis was the most dangerous confrontation of the Cold War and the most perilous moment in human history. Sheldon M. Stern, longtime historian at the [John F. Kennedy Library](#), here presents a comprehensive narrative account of the secret ExComm meetings, making the inside story of the missile crisis completely understandable to general readers for the first time. The author's narrative version of these discussions is entirely new; it provides readers with a running commentary on the issues and options discussed and enables them, as never before, to follow specific themes and the role of individual participants. The narrative highlights key moments of stress, doubt, decision, and resolution – and even humor – and makes the meetings comprehensible both to readers who lived through the crisis and to those too young to remember the Cold War. Stern argues that President Kennedy and his administration bore some of the responsibility for the crisis because of covert operations in Cuba, including efforts to kill Fidel Castro. Yet he demonstrates that JFK, though a seasoned Cold Warrior in public, was deeply suspicious of military solutions to political problems and appalled by the prospects of nuclear war. The President consistently steered policy makers away from an apocalyptic nuclear conflict, measuring each move and countermove with an eye toward averting what he called, with stark eloquence, "the final failure." Previously published transcripts of the secret ExComm meetings are often dense and impenetrable for everyone but the specialist. They also reflect the flaws in the tapes themselves, such as rambling, repetitive exchanges, overlapping conversations, and frustrating background noises. This narrative, on the contrary, concentrates on the essentials and eliminates these peripherals. As Robert Dallek notes in his Foreword, Stern's work "will become the starting point for all future work on President Kennedy's response to the Soviet challenge in Cuba."

Regarding these transcripts, Jim Douglass writes in endnote 83 on pages 399-400,

In 1997 Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow edited and published transcripts of the Cuban Missile Crisis tapes in their book *The Kennedy Tapes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). In 2000 the accuracy of their transcripts was challenged in two articles by Sheldon M. Stern, historian at the [JFK Library](#) from 1977 to 1999: "What JFK Really Said," *Atlantic Monthly* 285 (May 2000): pp. 122-28, and "Source Material: The 1997 Published Transcripts of the JFK Cuban Missile Crisis Tapes: Too Good to Be True?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30 (September 2000): pp. 586-93 [copy of "Source Material" is at [JSTOR](#) which is out-of-reach for most people; one can [purchase a copy on amazon.com for 6 dollars –editor](#)]. When Zelikow, May, and Timothy Naftali brought out a revised set of missile crisis transcripts, *The Presidential Recordings: John F. Kennedy:*

Volumes 1-3, The Great Crises (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), Stern critiqued their revision for further inaccuracies in his article, “The JFK Tapes: Round Two,” *Reviews in American History* 30 (2002): pp. 680-88. Sheldon M. Stern has written a comprehensive narrative account of the missile crisis deliberations of President Kennedy and the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm), citing his own transcripts of the tapes, *Averting the “The Final Failure,”*. My citations of the tapes are taken from *Averting “The Final Failure.”*

26. page 22, fn87. ↪
Ibid. p. 129.

27. From *JFK and The Unspeakable*, p. 23 (includes fn90): ↪

In July 1993, the U.S. State Department, in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by a Canadian newspaper, declassified twenty-one secret letters between John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev.⁹⁰

90. Paul Wells, “Private Letters Shed Light on Cold War,” *Montreal Gazette* (July 24, 1993), p. A1. The private letters between Kennedy and Khrushchev, known as the “Pen Pal Correspondence,” were published with the Cold War leaders’ more formal public letters in the State Department volume *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], 1961-1963, Volume VI: Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

28. ↪ Khrushchev’s first private letter to JFK was sent on September 29, 1961 during the Berlin crisis. In 1996 all the private correspondence between JFK and Khrushchev was published in *FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office). The *Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges: Document List* contains 120 communications, of which 21 make up the secret letters between JFK and Khrushchev. It is not entirely clear precisely which of the 120 make up the subset of 21 private communications. Here is a list of what probably constitutes the bulk of the private missives:

- [Document 21: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, September 29, 1961
- [Document 22: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Hyannis Port, October 16, 1961
- [Document 23: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, November 9, 1961
- [Document 24: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, November 10, 1961
- [Document 25: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Washington, November 16, 1961
- [Document 26: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Washington, December 2, 1961
- [Document 27: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, December 13, 1961
- [Document 32: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, February 10, 1962
- [Document 34: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Washington, February 15, 1962
- [Document 37: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, February 21, 1962
- [Document 42: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy](#), Moscow, March 10, 1962
- [Document 51: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev](#), Washington, July 17, 1962

- Document 71: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, Moscow, October 30, 1962
- Document 82: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, Moscow, November 22, 1962
- Document 84: Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, Washington, December 14, 1962
- Document 85: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, Moscow, December 19, 1962
- Document 99: Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, Moscow, May 8, 1963

This remarkable correspondence was initiated by Khrushchev less than four months after the summit meeting between him and JFK in Vienna on June 3-4 which had ended with a sense of foreboding, as Douglass describes in *JFK and The Unspeakable* on page 12:

The summit meeting with Khrushchev had deeply disturbed Kennedy. The revelation of a storm coming had occurred at the end of the meeting, as the two men faced each other across a table. Kennedy's gift to Khrushchev, a model of the USS *Constitution*, lay between them. Kennedy pointed out that the ship's cannons had been able to fire half a mile and a kill a few people. But if he and Khrushchev failed to negotiate peace, the two of them could kill seventy million people in the opening exchange of a nuclear war. Kennedy looked at Khrushchev. Khrushchev gave him a blank stare, as if to say, "So what?" Kennedy was shocked at what he felt was his counterpart's lack of response. "There was no area of accommodation with him," he said later.

The "So what?" attitude Khrushchev expressed in June 1961 had clearly been transformed by September when he initiated a private correspondence that made a deeper communication and understanding possible between these two human beings.

29. page 25, fn96. ↩

Kennedy's wrote his first letter back to Khrushchev on October 16, 1961. *FRUS 1961-1963, vol. VI, pp. 38-39.*

30. page 174, fn3. ↩

Sergei N. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2000), p. 618-619.

From the dust jacket of this book:

More is known about Nikita Khrushchev than about many former Soviet leaders, partly because of his own efforts to communicate through speeches, interviews, and memoirs. (A partial version of his memoirs was published in three volumes in 1970, 1974, and 1990, and a complete version was published in Russia in 1999 and will appear in an English translation to be published by Penn State Press.) But even with the opening of party and state archives in 1991, as William Taubman points out in his Foreword, many questions remain unanswered. In this book Sergei tells the story of how the Cold War happened in reality from the Russian side, not from the American side, and this is his most important contribution.

31. page 174-75, fn4. ↩

Khrushchev Remembers, ed. Edward Crankshaw (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), p. 498.

32. page 175, fn5. ↩

S. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, p. 622.

33. p. 174, fn2. ↩
S. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, p. 630.
34. page 31, fn125. ↩
Norman Cousins, *The Improbable Triumvirate: John F. Kennedy, Pope John, Nikita Khrushchev* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), p. 9.
35. Complete text of the American University Speech is available at ratical.org/JFK061063.html. Audio and video recordings are also included. The text is a representation of President Kennedy's actual delivery which is slightly different from the text version at the [JFK Library](#) as well as the copy in the Appendix in *JFK and The Unspeakable*. ↩
36. ↩ President Kennedy acknowledged the profound suffering the Russian people underwent:

Among the many traits the peoples of our two countries have in common, none is stronger than our mutual abhorrence of war. Almost unique among the major world powers, we have never been at war with each other. And no nation in the history of battle ever suffered more than the Soviet Union in the Second World War. At least 20 million lost their lives. Countless millions of homes and families were burned or sacked. A third of the nation's territory, including two thirds of its industrial base, was turned into a wasteland – a loss equivalent to the destruction of this country east of Chicago.

37. ↩ President Kennedy's vision of peace expressed an awareness and wisdom that is as clear today as it was then.

Some say that it is useless to speak of peace or world law or world disarmament – and that it will be useless until the leaders of the Soviet Union adopt a more enlightened attitude. I hope they do. I believe we can help them do it. But I also believe that we must re-examine our own attitudes – as individuals and as a Nation – for our attitude is as essential as theirs. And every graduate of this school, every thoughtful citizen who despairs of war and wishes to bring peace, should begin by looking inward – by examining his own attitude towards the possibilities of peace, towards the Soviet Union, towards the course of the Cold War and towards freedom and peace here at home.

First: examine our attitude towards peace itself. Too many of us think it is impossible. Too many think it is unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable – that mankind is doomed – that we are gripped by forces we cannot control.

We need not accept that view. Our problems are man-made – therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable – and we believe they can do it again.

I am not referring to the absolute, infinite concept of universal peace and good will of which some fantasies and fanatics dream. I do not deny the value of hopes and dreams but we merely invite discouragement and incredulity by making that our only and immediate goal.

Let us focus instead on a more practical, more attainable peace – based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions – on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements which are in the interest of all concerned. There is no single, simple key to this peace – no grand or magic formula to be adopted by

one or two powers. Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts. It must be dynamic, not static, changing to meet the challenge of each new generation. For peace is a process – a way of solving problems.

38. ↪ An indication of the yearning for peace people in the U.S. had following the terrifying days of the Cuban missile crisis was that the first occurrence of applause in Kennedy’s speech was his announcement in the following that “high-level discussions will shortly begin in Moscow looking towards early agreement on a comprehensive test ban treaty.” Kennedy began the next sentence, “Our hope must be tempered” and had to pause for 8 seconds to let the audience applause subside before continuing. Applause caused the President to pause a second time (again for 8 seconds) after stating in the following paragraph that the U.S. “does not propose to conduct nuclear tests in the atmosphere so long as other states do not do so.” (First at 22:04 and second at 22:37 min:sec in [the audio and video recordings provided with the transcript of JFK’s address.](#))

I am taking this opportunity, therefore, to announce two important decisions in this regard.

First: Chairman Khrushchev, Prime Minister Macmillan, and I have agreed that high-level discussions will shortly begin in Moscow looking towards early agreement on a comprehensive test ban treaty. Our hope must be tempered – Our hopes must be tempered with the caution of history – but with our hopes go the hopes of all mankind.

Second: To make clear our good faith and solemn convictions on this matter, I now declare that the United States does not propose to conduct nuclear tests in the atmosphere so long as other states do not do so. We will not – We will not be the first to resume. Such a declaration is no substitute for a formal binding treaty, but I hope it will help us achieve one. Nor would such a treaty be a substitute for disarmament, but I hope it will help us achieve it.

39. page 46, fn174. ↪
Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p.904.
40. page 46, fn176. ↪
Max Frankel, “Harriman to Lead Test-Ban Mission to Soviet [Union] in July,” *New York Times* (June 12, 1963), p.1
41. Watch, listen to, read the transcript of [Radio and Television Address to the American People by President Kennedy on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, July 26, 1963](#), broadcast the day after “[n]egotiations were concluded in Moscow on a treaty to ban all nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space, and under water.” ↪
42. page 52, fn210. ↪
Cousins, *The Improbable Triumvirate*, pp. 128-29.
43. page 54, fn220. ↪
Theodore C. Sorenson, *Kennedy* (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1965), p. 740.
44. page 177, fn13. ↪
[Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1963](#), p. 698. Text of speech: [Address Before the 18th General Assembly of the United Nations, September 20 1963](#)
45. page 70, fn89. ↪

FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XI, Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath, October 1962-December 1963 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), p. 880.

This is from [Document 374. Memorandum From William Attwood to Gordon Chase of the National Security Council Staff](#), New York, November 8, 1963.

46. page 67, fn72. ↪

Nikita Khrushchev's January 31, 1963, Letter to Fidel Castro; Laurence Chang and Peter Kornbluh, editors, *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (New York: New Press, 1992), p. 319.

Khrushchev's first letter to Fidel Castro opens with the following:

Our train is crossing the fields and forests of Soviet Byelorussia and it occurs to me how wonderful it would be if you could see, on a sunny day like this, the ground covered with snow and the forest silvery with frost.

Perhaps you, a southern man, have seen this only in paintings. It must surely be fairly difficult for you to imagine the ground carpeted with snow and the forests covered with white frost. It would be good if you could visit our country each season of the year; every one of them, spring, summer, fall, and winter, has its delights.

47. page 67, fn71. ↪

Fidel Castro, Address to the Tripartite Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis, January 11, 1992; Chang and Kornbluh, *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, p. 343.

Castro describes the letter in passing and that it was 31 pages in James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba on the Brink, Castro, the Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Maryland, 2002), p. 222.

48. page 68, fn76-77. ↪

76. S. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*, p. 659.

77. Castro's January 11, 1992, Address, Chang and Kornbluh, *Cuban Missile Crisis*, p. 344.

49. page 90, fn176. ↪

Jean Daniel, "[When Castro Heard The News](#)," *New Republic* (December 7, 1963), p. 7.

50. pages 72-74, fn105-09; pages 86-89, fn166-71. ↪

Jean Daniel, "[Unofficial Envoy: An Historic Report From Two Capitals](#)," *New Republic* (December 14, 1963), p. 15-20.

See Also: "[Kennedy Sought Dialogue with Cuba – Initiative With Castro Aborted by Assassination, Declassified Documents Show](#)," [The National Security Archive](#), November 24, 2003.

51. page 188, fn74. ↪

Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume IV: August-December 1963 (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), pp.395-396.

52. page 188, fn73. ↪

O'Donnell and Powers, *Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye* (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), p. 17.

53. page 137-42, fn35. ↪

"Steel: The Ides of April," *Fortune* (May 1962), p. 98.

See "[Fortune's Warning To President Kennedy: Beware The Ides of April](#)" with the complete 1962 Editorial and an excerpt from *JFK and the Unspeakable*.

54. page 375, fn897. ↪

Gerard Colby with Charlotte Dennett, *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson*

55. pages 258-59, fn221-23. ↪

Richard Bissel, cited in Evan Thomas, *The Very Best Men: Four Who Dared: The Early Years of the CIA* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), pp. 232-33.

In 1958 Allen Dulles appointed Richard Bissel to be the CIA's Deputy Director for Plans (DDP). The DDP was responsible for what became known as the CIA's Black Operations. An aspect of Bissel's world view is expressed in the following from pages 258-259 of *JFK and The Unspeakable*.

Kennedy's openness to Sukarno and the nonaligned movement he represented once again placed the president in direct conflict with the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA's Deputy Director of Plans, Richard Bissel, wrote to Kennedy's National Security Advisor, McGeorge Bundy, in March 1961:

"Indonesia's growing vulnerability to communism stems from the distinctive bias of Sukarno's global orientation, as well as from his domestic policies . . . That his dictatorship may possibly endure *as long as he lives* strikes us as the crux of the Indonesian problem."²²¹

The CIA wanted Sukarno dead, and what the agency saw as his pro-communist "global orientation" obliterated. Still justifying the CIA's assassination efforts in an interview long after his retirement, Richard Bissel put Congo leader Patrice Lumumba and Sukarno in the same disposable category: "Lumumba and Sukarno were two of the worst people in public life I've ever heard of. They were mad dogs . . . I believed they were dangerous to the United States."²²²

Assassination plots against such men, Bissel conceded, may at times have shown "bad judgement," but only when they were unsuccessful. He insisted that plotting to kill such "mad dogs" was "not bad morality." He regretted only that certain CIA assassination plots had failed and become public.²²³

221. "Memorandum From the Deputy Director for Plans, Central Intelligence Agency (Bissel) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)," March 27, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963, vol. XXIII*, p. 329 (emphasis added).

222. Richard Bissel, cited in Evan Thomas, *The Very Best Men*, pp. 232-33.

223. *Ibid.*, p233.

56. page 258, fn219. ↪

FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXIII, Southeast Asia (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995), p. 695.

57. pages 376-377, fn902-916. ↪

The endnotes listed above on pages 376-77 of *JFK and The Unspeakable* present background on the fate of President Sukarno. One portion of this is included below occurring near the bottom of page 376:

In October 1965, the enemy that Sukarno had learned to fear most, the CIA, finally succeeded in toppling his government. Ralph W. McGehee, a CIA agent for 25 years, has summarized in his book, *Deadly Deceits*, the CIA's elimination in 1965-66 of both the government of Sukarno and the Communist Party of Indonesia that was represented in it:

"The Agency seized this opportunity [of a failed October 1965 coup attempt by junior Indonesian military officers] to overthrow Sukarno and to destroy the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), which had three million members. As I wrote in *The Nation*, 'Estimates of the number of deaths that occurred as a result of this CIA [one word deleted by the CIA, which censored McGehee's article] operation run from one-half million to more than one million people.'⁹⁰⁹

909. Ralph W. McGehee, *Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years in the CIA* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1983), p. 57. One sentence cited from article by Ralph W. McGehee, “Foreign Policy By Forgery: The C.I.A. and the White Paper on El Salvador,” *The Nation* (April 11, 1981), pp. 423-34 (with deletions by the CIA). McGehee also noted in his *Nation* article, as then cited in his book on pp. 57-58:

“Initially, the Indonesian Army left the P.K.I. [Communist Party of Indonesia] alone, since it had not been involved in the coup attempt. [Eight sentences deleted here by the CIA.] Subsequently, however, Indonesian military leaders [seven words deleted by the CIA] began a bloody extermination campaign. In mid-November 1965, General Suharto formally authorized the ‘cleaning out’ of the Indonesian Communist Party and established special teams to supervise the mass killings. Media fabrications played a key role in stirring up popular resentment against the P.K.I. Photographs of the bodies of the dead generals [who had been killed in the failed coup] – badly decomposed – were featured in all the newspapers and on television. Stories accompanying the pictures falsely claimed that the generals had been castrated and their eyes gouged out by Communist women. This cynically manufactured campaign was designed to foment public anger against the Communists and set the stage for a massacre . . . To conceal its role in the massacre of those innocent people the C.I.A., in 1968, concocted a false account of what happened (later published by the Agency as a book, *Indonesia–1965: The Coup that Backfired*) . . . At the same time that the Agency wrote the book, it also composed a secret study of what really happened. [One sentence deleted by the CIA.] The Agency was extremely proud of its successful [one word deleted by the CIA] and recommended it as a model for future operations [one-half sentence deleted by the CIA].”

58. page xxii. ↩

On September 25, 1961 President Kennedy delivered a speech on disarmament at the United Nations in which he states, “The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us . . . It is therefore our intention to challenge the Soviet Union, not to an arms race, but to a peace race – to advance together step by step, stage by stage, until general and complete disarmament has been achieved. We invite them now to go beyond agreement in principle to reach agreement on actual plans.” JFK Address at U.N. General Assembly, 25 September 1961.

See [film and text transcript at the JFK Library](#).

59. page 383, fn8-9. ↩

8. Jim Douglass’ interview with Sergei N. Khrushchev, November 15, 2009.

9. S. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*, p. 696.

60. page 383-84, fn10. ↩

[National Security Action Memorandum Number 271](#): “Cooperation With the USSR on Outer Space Matters,” November 12, 1963.

61. page 384, fn11. ↩

Frank Sietzen, “[Soviets Planned to Accept JFK’s Joint Lunar Mission Offer](#),” *SPACEWAR* (October 2, 1997), p. 3. In my November 15, 2009 interview with him, Sergei Khrushchev said he thought that if Kennedy had lived, and if he and Nikita Khrushchev had stayed in power for another five-plus years, the two leaders would have ended the Cold War by 1969.

62. pages 321-24, fn629-645. ↩

629. “Visit of Six Friends to President John F. Kennedy on behalf of Friends Witness for World Order, May 1, 1962,” [The Quaker Collection, Haverford College](#).

630. Henry J. Cadbury, "Friends with Kennedy in the White House," *Friendly Heritage: Letters from the Quaker Past* (Norwalk, Conn.: Silvermine Publishers, 1972)
63. The Religious Society of Friends website reads: QUAKERS: RELIGIOUS WITNESSES FOR PEACE SINCE 1660 www.quakers.org ↵
64. pages 323, fn634. ↵
E. Raymond Wilson, *Uphill for Peace: Quaker Impact on Congress* (Richmond, Ind.: Friends United Press, 1975), p. 79.
65. pages 328, fn654. ↵
O'Donnell and Powers, "*Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye*," p. 381.
66. pages 369, fn865. ↵
"WELCOME MR. KENNEDY," Commission Exhibit No. 1031, *Warren Report*, p. 294.
67. pages 369, fn867. ↵
O'Donnell and Powers, "*Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye*," p. 25.
Immediately following this quote on page 369 the author writes in *JFK and The Unspeakable*:

"You know," he said, "last night would have been a hell of a night to assassinate a president." He paused.

"I mean it. There was the rain, and the night, and we were all getting jostled. Suppose a man had a pistol in a briefcase." Kennedy pointed his right hand like a pistol at the wall, moving his thumb as the hammer. "Then he could have dropped the gun and the briefcase, and melted away in the crowd."⁸⁶⁹

In two subliminal scenes, JFK had sketched the assassinations of both himself that same day in Dealey Plaza and of another president (in the making) four and a half years later, his brother, Bobby, the night he would get jostled by the crowd in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles.

868. William Manchester, *The Death of a President* (New York: Harper & Row, Popular Library, 1967), p. 37.

68. page 224, fn14. ↵
Ralph G. Martin, *A Hero For Our Time: An Intimate Story of the Kennedy Years* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983), p. 500.
69. page 224, fn15. ↵
Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York, Signet, 1969), p. 110.
70. page 224, fn16. ↵
Evelyn Lincoln, *My Twelve Years With John F. Kennedy* (New York: Bantam Books, 1966), p. 230.
Immediately following this quote on page 224 the author writes in *JFK and The Unspeakable*:

Kennedy loved that prayer. He cited it at the annual presidential prayer breakfast on March 1, 1962,¹⁷ and again in a speech in Frankfurt, Germany, on June 25, 1963.¹⁸

17. T. S. Settel, editor, *The Faith of JFK* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965), p. 92.

18. Nicholas A. Schneider, *Religious Views of President John F. Kennedy* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1965), p. 99.

71. page 225-26, fn20. ↪
Geoffrey Perret, *Jack: A Life Like No Other* (New York: Random House, 2001), p. 197.
72. page 226, fn21. ↪
Ibid.
73. page 225-26, fn22. ↪
The formal title of Alan Seeger's most famous poem seems to have been "Rendezvous," as it is identified at <http://www.english.emory.edu/LostPoets/Seeger.html>. However, in *The Oxford Book of American Verse*, Seeger's poem is titled by its refrain, "I have a Rendezvous with Death." *The Oxford Book of American Verse*, chosen and edited by Bliss Carman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927), pp. 624-25.
74. page 226, fn23. ↪
Richard D. Mahoney interview of Samuel D. Belk III. Richard D. Mahoney, *Sons & Brothers: The Days of Jack and Bobby Kennedy* (New York: Arcade, 1999) p. 281.
75. ↪ The following, from pages 267-268 and 454-455 of *JFK and The Unspeakable* reveals the level of power and control exercised by specific units of authority within the U.S. Government to cover-up how the assassination of President Kennedy was carried out.

Ed Hoffman had witnessed a critically important scene in the assassination scenario. The "suit man," who tossed the rifle to the "railroad man" for rapid disposal, had been equipped beforehand with a powerful means of identification. His just showing it at the murder scene, with the smell of gunpowder still in the air, had so reassured a suspicious police officer, Joe Marshall Smith, that he immediately put his gun away and let the suspect go without detaining or questioning him.²⁶⁹ The man, whose credentials passed him off as a Secret Service agent, was in fact a methodical assassin in an orchestrated killing of the president. Moments before, as Hoffman had seen, the documented "Secret Service agent" had fired his rifle at President Kennedy before tossing it to an assistant. Thus, the assassins were not only well prepared to identify themselves as government agents. They also seemed confident that they would not be exposed from their bold use of Secret Service credentials to assure their escape. They were right. The Warren Commission went out of its way to ignore the obvious evidence of Secret Service imposters at a source of the shots.

As we learned from Secret Service agent Abraham Bolden, the Secret Service took the extraordinary step of withdrawing and replacing all of its agents' commission books a month and a half following the assassination, moving Bolden to suspect that Secret Service identification had been used as a cover by the assassins of President Kennedy. Officer Joe Marshall Smith, who was familiar with Secret Service credentials, said he had confronted a man behind the fence at the top of the grassy knoll who showed him such credentials. That raises the question: What was the source of the Secret Service identification displayed by JFK's assassins?

In June 2007, in response to a fifteen-year-old Freedom of Information Act request, the CIA finally declassified its "Family Jewels" report. Buried in the 702-page collection of documents was a memorandum written by Sidney Gottlieb, chief of the CIA's Technical Services Division (TSD). Gottlieb was the notorious designer of the CIA's contaminated skin diving suit intended in the spring of 1963 for the assassination of Castro, the scapegoating of Kennedy, and the destruction of an incipient Cuban-American rapprochement.

In his secret May 8, 1973, CIA memorandum, Sidney Gottlieb stated that "Over the years" his Technical Services Division "furnished this [Secret] Service" with "gate passes,

security passes, passes for presidential campaign, emblems for presidential vehicles; a secure ID photo system.”²⁷⁰ The Secret Service supposedly received its identifying documents from the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, as Abraham Bolden said it did in the replacement of its agents’ commission books in January 1964.²⁷¹ Since the Bureau of Engraving and Printing is, like the Secret Service, a part of the Treasury Department, it is reasonable in terms of in-house security and accessibility that it – and especially not the CIA – would provide the Secret Service commission books. Yet here is the CIA’s Sidney Gottlieb acknowledging that “over the years” his Technical Services Division “furnished” such identification to the Secret Service – identification that could just as easily have been given at any time, as might prove useful, to CIA operatives using a Secret Service cover. The source was the same.

There is a certain criminal consistency between Gottlieb’s having prepared a poisoned diving suit meant for Castro’s murder and his perhaps having furnished as well the Secret Service credentials used by the assassins on the grassy knoll. However, Gottlieb was only a CIA functionary who carried out higher orders. The more responsible assassins were above him.

What does the phenomenon of a sniper team supplied with official government credentials for an immediate cover-up tell us about the forces behind the crime?

Would an innocent government, in its investigation of the murder of its president, ignore such evidence of treachery within its own ranks?²⁷²

269. Two books about Ed Hoffman (*Eyewitness*, p. 9; *Beyond the Fence Line: The Eyewitness Account of Ed Hoffman and the Murder of President Kennedy*, p. 33) and the hardcover text of this book (p. 265) have identified the “suit man” seen by Hoffman with the man whom Dallas police officer Joe Marshall Smith confronted with a gun behind the stockade fence. However, Smith said the man he confronted “had on a sports shirt and sports pants,” so how could it have been the same man? (I am grateful to reader Norman J. Granz for raising this question.)

Hoffman communicated that, in addition to the “suit man” and the “railroad man,” he saw two other men behind the fence just before the shooting:

“a) A man in a plaid shirt, labeled ‘P’ (dotted black line on Photo 23) [in *Beyond the Fence Line*, p. 34], stepped around from the north end of the fence, walked up to the man in the business suit ‘A’ and spoke to him a few seconds.

“b) After this brief encounter, the man in the plaid shirt turned and walked back around the east side of the fence and out of Ed’s view (solid black line on Photo 23).

“c) The police officer ‘F’ (Photo 23), who had been standing at the east end of the fence, followed the man in the plaid shirt as he walked around the east side of the fence.” (*Beyond the Fence Line*, p. 32)

The “suit man” walked over to the “railroad man” a final time, spoke with him briefly, and returned to the fence where he bent over, picked something up, and looked over the fence. Hoffman then saw a puff of smoke by the “suit man” after which the “suit man” turned suddenly with a rifle in his hands. The “suit man” ran to the “railroad man,” tossed the rifle to him, then walked back casually alongside the fence until a police officer came quickly around the fence and confronted him with a revolver. (This is *not* the officer who was at the east end of the fence before who, unlike the officer coming around the fence had not been wearing a hat. *Beyond the Fence Line*, p. 33.)

To return to the question, how could the man Officer Joe Marshall Smith confronted, who he said “had on a sports shirt and sports pants,” have been the “suit man” Ed Hoffman was watching?

After the shooting, Officer Smith came around the fence at the same point where

Hoffman's "man in a plaid shirt" had been just moments before. "The man in a plaid shirt" may be the man in "a sports shirt and sports pants" who Smith said showed him Secret Service credentials. Officer Smith may have then confronted a moment later "the suit man" merging the two men in his memory in an interview fifteen years later. (*Conspiracy*, p. 50.)

Other witnesses said they encountered plainclothesmen behind the fence who showed them Secret Service identification. "The man in a plaid/sports shirt," like "the suit man," would likely have had such Secret Service credentials as cover in case he was challenged.

270. CIA Memorandum from Sidney Gottlieb, Chief, TSD [Technical Services Division], to Carl E. Duckett, DDS&T [Director, Directorate of Science and Technology], May 8, 1973. CIA's "Family Jewels," pp. 215, 218. Available at http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB222/family_jewels_full_ocr.pdf. [23.7 MB - See [The CIA's Family Jewels](#) entry point at the [National Security Archive](#).] I am grateful to [Peter Dale Scott](#) for alerting me to this item in the "Family Jewels."

271. Author's interview of Abraham Bolden, July 13, 2003.

272. For the preceding analysis, as well as [this book as a whole](#), I am especially grateful for the work and inspiration of [Vincent Salandria](#), who has long emphasized the importance of the government's ignoring the evidence of phony Secret Service agents in Dealey Plaza. In his landmark speech to the [Coalition on Political Assassinations \(COPA\)](#), given on November 20, 1998, Salandria stated: "We know from the evidence that at the time of and immediately after the assassination, there were persons in Dealey Plaza who were impersonating Secret Service agents. This was clear evidence of both the existence of a conspiracy and the commission of the crime of impersonating federal officers. But our government showed no interest in pursuing this compelling evidence of the existence of a conspiracy nor in prosecuting the criminals who were impersonating federal officers. In refusing to pursue the evidence of conspiracy and in failing to pursue the criminals who were impersonating federal officers, the Warren Commissioners, their staff, the Attorney General's Office, and the FBI became accessories after the fact and abetted the killers." Vincent J. Salandria, *False Mystery: An Anthology of Essays on the Assassination of JFK*, edited and published by John Kelin (1999), p. 114.

76. ↪ Regarding the unthinkable – that a president of the United States was murdered by our own government – see a [transcript of Vincent Salandria's November 20, 1998 address](#) in Dallas to the Coalition on Political Assassinations wherein he argues,

There is no rational manner in which we can strip away the guilt of the highest levels of our national security state. The government's consistent criminal pattern of ignoring a whole series of data indicating conspiracy and consistently twisting the meaning of evidence to support a single assassin killing compels the conclusion that the U.S. national security state killed President Kennedy.

77. Robert Dreyfuss, "[The Generals' Revolt](#) - As Obama rethinks America's failed strategy in Afghanistan, he faces two insurgencies: the Taliban and the Pentagon," *Rolling Stone*, Issue 1090, October 29, 2009.

↪

78. ↪ The relevant segment at the end of the article is:

Wilkerson, the former aide to Colin Powell, hopes Obama will follow the example of President Kennedy, who faced down his generals during the Cuban Missile Crisis. "It's going to take John Kennedy-type courage to turn to his Curtis LeMay and say, 'No, we're

not going to bomb Cuba,” Wilkerson says. “It took a lot of courage on Kennedy’s part to defy the Pentagon, defy the military – and do the right thing.”

79. ↪ On page 211-12 of *JFK and The Unspeakable* the author writes:

On January 17, 1961, three days before John Kennedy took office as president, Congo leader Patrice Lumumba was assassinated by the Belgian government with the complicity of the CIA.²¹³ As Madeleine Kalb, author of *The Congo Cables*, has observed, “much of the sense of urgency in the first few weeks of January [1961] which led to the death of Lumumba came . . . from fear of the impending change in Washington” that would come with Kennedy’s inauguration.²¹⁴ It was no accident that Lumumba was rushed to his execution three days before the U.S. presidency was turned over to a man whose most notorious foreign policy speech in the Senate had been a call for Algerian independence. Senator John Kennedy’s July 1957 speech in support of the Algerian liberation movement created an international uproar, with more conservative critics (including even Adlai Stevenson) claiming he had gone too far in his support of African nationalism.²¹⁵

In 1959, the year before Kennedy was elected president, he had said to the Senate: “Call it nationalism, call it anti-colonialism, call it what you will, Africa is going through a revolution . . . The word is out-and spreading like wildfire in nearly a thousand languages and dialects-that it is no longer necessary to remain forever poor or forever in bondage.”²¹⁶ In Africa and Europe, Kennedy had become well known as a supporter of African nationalism. JFK even took his support of the African independence movement into his 1960 presidential campaign, saying then repeatedly, “we have lost ground in Africa because we have neglected and ignored the needs and aspirations of the African people.”²¹⁷ It is noteworthy that in the index to his 1960 campaign speeches, there are 479 references to Africa.²¹⁸

The CIA took seriously Kennedy’s African nationalist sympathies. As his inauguration approached, the CIA’s station chief in Leopoldville, Lawrence Devlin, spoke of “the need to take ‘drastic steps’ before it was too late.”²¹⁹ CIA analyst Paul Sakwa pointed out in an interview that the decision to put Lumumba in the hands of his assassins was made by men “in the pay of and receiving constant counsel from the CIA station.”²²⁰ The CIA succeeded in having Lumumba killed in haste by Belgian collaborators three days before Kennedy took his oath of office.

213. Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (New York: Verso, 2001). De Witte cites CIA head Allen Dulles’s August 26, 1960, letter concluding that Lumumba’s “removal must be an urgent and prime objective and that under existing conditions this should be a high priority of our covert action.” Ibid., p. 17. Richard Bissell, then head of the CIA’s covert action, said, “The Agency had put a top priority, probably, on a range of different methods of getting rid of Lumumba in the sense of either destroying him physically, incapacitating him, or eliminating his political influence.” Ibid. As De Witte shows, it was the Belgian government that actually carried out Lumumba’s assassination on January 17, 1961, three days before Kennedy became president.

214. Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa – from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), p. 196.

215. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 553-54.

216. Ibid., p. 554.

217. Ibid.

218. Ibid.

219. Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press,

1983), p. 69.

220. Richard D. Mahoney interview of Paul Sakwa, May 2, 1978, Washington, D.C. Summarized by Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, p. 266, endnote 58.

From the jacket of Ludo De Witte's *The Assassination of Lumumba*:

Patrice Lumumba, first prime minister of the Republic of Congo and a pioneer of African unity, was murdered on 17 January 1961. Democratically elected to lead the Mouvement National Congolais, the party he founded in 1958, Lumumba was at the centre of the country's growing popular defiance of the colonial rule of oppression imposed by Belgium. When, in June 1960, independence was finally won, his unscheduled speech at the official ceremonies in Kinshasa received a standing ovation and made him a hero to millions. Always a threat to those who sought to maintain a covert imperialist hand over the country, however, he became within months the victim of an insidious plot, and was arrested and subsequently tortured and executed. This book unravels the appalling mass of lies, hypocrisy and betrayals that have surrounded accounts of the assassination since its perpetration. Making use of a huge array of official sources as well as personal testimony from many of those in the Congo at the time, Ludo De Witte reveals a network of complicity ranging from the Belgian government to the CIA. Chilling official memos which detail "liquidation" and "threats to national interests" are analysed alongside macabre tales of the destruction of evidence, putting Patrice Lumumba's personal strength and his dignified quest for African unity in stark contrast with one of the murkiest episodes of twentieth-century politics.

80. ↪ On page 212 of *JFK and The Unspeakable* the author describes when Kennedy received the news of Lumumba's assassination:

Four weeks later, on February 13, 1961, JFK received a phone call with the delayed news of Lumumba's murder. Photographer Jacques Lowe took a remarkable picture of the president at that moment. Lowe's photo of Kennedy responding to the news of Lumumba's assassination is on the dust-jacket cover of Richard D. Mahoney's book *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*. It shows JFK horror-stricken. His eyes are shut. The fingers of his right hand are pressing into his forehead. His head is collapsing against the phone held to his ear.

Kennedy was not even president at the time of Lumumba's death. However, he recognized that if as president-elect he had spoken out publicly in support of Lumumba's life, he might have stopped his assassination. After Kennedy had won the November 1960 election, Lumumba under house arrest had smuggled out a telegram congratulating Kennedy and expressing his admiration for the president-elect's support for African independence.²²¹ JFK had then asked Averell Harriman, "Should we help Lumumba?" Harriman replied that he "was not sure we could help him even if we wanted to."²²²

In spite of his sympathy for Lumumba, Kennedy had not spoken out on the Congo leader's behalf in the weeks leading up to his assassination and Kennedy's inauguration. When JFK received the delayed news of Lumumba's murder a month later, he was anguished by his failure at not having helped him.

221. Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, p. 59.

222. Ibid.

81. ↪ Another "Bay of Pigs" event – akin to corporate interests versus the public interest as occurred in "The Ides Of April" [conflict JFK had with big Steel industrialists](#) – was his supporting the people of

the Congo in finding their own way in the interests of preventing the spread of the Cold War and improving that nation's own security. From pages 150-151 of *JFK and The Unspeakable*:

In his book *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, Richard Mahoney noted that Kennedy considered Gullion his most trusted third world ambassador. He sent Gullion into the Congo in 1961 because that African nation had become “a testing ground of the views shared by Kennedy and Gullion on the purpose of American power in the Third World. As Kennedy remarked over the phone one day, if the U.S. could support the process of change – ‘allow each country to find its own way’ – it could prevent the spread of the Cold War and improve its own security.”⁹⁰

In the Congo, Gullion also represented Kennedy's support of a UN policy forged by the late Dag Hammarskjöld. Kennedy and Gullion promoted Hammarskjöld's vision of a united, independent Congo, to the dismay of multinational corporations working ceaselessly to carve up the country and control its rich resources.⁹¹ After Kennedy's death, the corporations would succeed in controlling the Congo with the complicity of local kingpins. While JFK was alive, a Kennedy-Hammarskjöld-UN vision kept the Congo together and independent.

Seventeen years after JFK's death, Gullion said, “Kennedy, I think, risked a great deal in backing this operation [of UN forces in the Congo], backing this whole thing.”⁹² The risk came from within his own government. Kennedy rejected his State Department's and Joint Chiefs' proposals for “direct U.S. military intervention in the Congo in September 1961 and December 1962.”⁹³ Kennedy had again feared he was being entrapped by his advisers, as in the Bay of Pigs, Laos, and Vietnam, in an ever-deepening U.S. military involvement. His Congo policy was also being subverted by the CIA, which had been arming the Congo's secessionist regime in Katanga in order to promote Belgian mining interests. “This [CIA] practice,” wrote Richard Mahoney, “was expressly contrary to U.S. policy and in direct violation of the UN Security Council resolutions.”⁹⁴ Kennedy's policy, carried out by Gullion, was to support the UN peacekeeping operation. The president often quoted the statement his UN ambassador Adlai Stevenson made to the Security Council, that the only way to keep the Cold War out of the Congo was to keep the UN in the Congo.⁹⁵ But the CIA *wanted* the Cold War in the Congo.

90. Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 108.

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 246-48.

92. Herbert S. Parmet interview of Edmund Gullion, August 18, 1980, cited in Herbert S. Parmet, *JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Dial Press, 1983), p. 320.

93. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, p. 246.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

Beyond this, an equally profound element of what “has been wiped out of the history that we have” is, as Jim Douglass [articulates above](#), how the national security state implemented in the United States after World War II created “a ruling elite of national security managers with an authority above that of our elected representatives.” Consider how a cadre of support personnel for these national security managers was put in place beginning in the 1950s *and continues to be operated today* (why would it have ever been shut down?) – and that this history is never acknowledged nor addressed by officialdom in the government, media, or corporate domains of our society (from *JFK and the Unspeakable*, pp. 196-197):

While the president struggled to push his newly found politics of peace past the anti-

communist priorities of the CIA, that creature from the depths of the Cold War kept sprouting new arms to stop him. As in Vietnam, the CIA had agents operating in other branches of the government. Those extended arms of the agency acted to forward its policies and frustrate Kennedy's, as in the case of AID's suspension of the Commodity Import Program, thereby setting up a coup. J. Edgar Hoover knew the CIA had infiltrated the FBI's decision making as well, making it possible for the CIA to cancel the FBI's FLASH on Oswald at a critical moment in October, setting up the assassination of Kennedy. How had the CIA's covert arms been grafted onto these other parts of the government?

One man in a position to watch the arms of the CIA proliferate was Colonel Fletcher Prouty. He ran the office that did the proliferating. In 1955, Air Force Headquarters ordered Colonel L. Fletcher Prouty, a career Army and Air Force officer since World War II, [to set up a Pentagon office to provide military support for the clandestine operations of the CIA](#). Thus Prouty became director of the Pentagon's "Focal Point Office for the CIA."¹¹⁰

CIA Director Allen Dulles was its actual creator. In the fifties, Dulles needed military support for his covert campaigns to undermine opposing nations in the Cold War. Moreover, Dulles wanted subterranean secrecy and autonomy for his projects, even from the members of his own government. Prouty's job was to provide Pentagon support and deep cover for the CIA beneath the different branches of Washington's bureaucracy. Dulles dictated the method Prouty was to follow.

"I want a focal point," Dulles said. "I want an office that's cleared to do what we have to have done; an office that knows us very, very well and then an office that has access to a system in the Pentagon. But the system will not be aware of what initiated the request—they'll think it came from the Secretary of Defense. They won't realize it came from the Director of Central Intelligence."¹¹¹

Dulles got Prouty to create a network of subordinate focal point offices in the armed services, then throughout the entire U.S. government. Each office that Prouty set up was put under a "cleared" CIA employee. That person took orders directly from the CIA but functioned under the cover of his particular office and branch of government. [Such "breeding," Prouty said decades later](#) in an interview, resulted in a web of covert CIA representatives "in the State Department, in the FAA, in the Customs Service, in the Treasury, in the FBI and all around through the government—up in the White House . . . Then we began to assign people there who, those agencies thought, were from the Defense Department. But they actually were people that we put there from the CIA."¹¹²

The consequence in the early 1960s, when Kennedy became president, was that the CIA had placed a secret team of its own employees through the entire U.S. government. It was accountable to no one except the CIA, headed by Allen Dulles. After Dulles was fired by Kennedy, the CIA's Deputy Director of Plans Richard Helms became this invisible government's immediate commander. No one except a tight inner circle of the CIA even knew of the existence of this top-secret intelligence network, much less the identity of its deep-cover bureaucrats. These CIA "focal points," as Dulles called them, constituted a powerful, unseen government within the government. Its Dulles-appointed members would act quickly, with total obedience, when called on by the CIA to assist its covert operations.

As the son of an ambassador to Britain and from his many years in the House and Senate, John Kennedy had come to understand the kind of power he would face as a changing president, trying to march to the beat of a different drummer. However, in his struggles with the CIA, Kennedy had no one to tell him just how extensive the agency's Cold War power had become beneath the surface of the U.S. government, including almost certainly members of his own White House staff. In his final months, JFK knew he was being blocked by an enemy within. However, he was surrounded by more representatives

of that enemy than he could have known.

110. Prouty interview by Ratcliffe, *Understanding Special Operations*, p. 122.

111. Ibid., p. 123.

112. Ibid.

As members of this country's society – taught from grade school on that “We the people” collectively aspire to be sovereign and self-governing as proclaimed by such founding documents as the Declaration of Independence – we are all responsible for recovering and reclaiming the history and purpose of our time and our place for the sake of our children and for the benefit of all life that follows us here.

Editor's Afterword

I was eight when President Kennedy was killed. At home sick in bed that day, my father walked up the stairs, responding to my “Hi Dad” greeting in a voice I'd never heard before with, “President Kennedy's been shot.” As for so many, something in him died that day. In 1977 a lawyer friend loaned me his copy of Arthur Schlesinger's *A Thousand Days, John F. Kennedy In The White House*. I'd never read dry biography like that before. By the time I was finished, a budding understanding had begun of what JFK was trying to do while he was President. That he was learning French in anticipation of meeting DeGaulle in early 1964, to establish a more thorough communication of ideas and meaning with the French President, was an example of the type of engagement with life John Kennedy expressed.

I read many books on JFK's life and death in the later seventies and eighties. In subsequent years, from [interviewing Fletcher Prouty in 1989](#), to the release and ferment created by Oliver Stone's film *JFK* in 1991, I wondered what might surface to clarify our obfuscated history. I briefly communicated with Jim Douglass in 2000 when he contacted me to purchase a copy of *Understanding Special Operations* and sent along a copy of his article, “[The Martin Luther King Conspiracy Exposed in Memphis](#)”. At that time I was not aware of this trial. I asked if I could reprint the article on ratical. He was pleased and gave his permission. Twelve years later this work has been updated with links to the original sources referenced throughout the [complete trial transcript](#).

Now with *JFK and The Unspeakable* we have an outstanding sourcebook weaving together *many* threads leading to *the* seminal event of post-WWII America. [Speaking after the book's release at Powell's Bookstore in Portland, June 2008](#), Douglass recounted how he sought to make the story as clear as possible by summarizing it in about 5 sentences. The following excerpt from the talk (14:45-16:50 minutes) includes a segment from the Preface (page ix), the last portion quoted here:

Thanks to the truth-telling of many, many witnesses who have risked their lives; thanks to a recent flood of documents, through the [JFK Records Act](#) – hundreds of thousands of documents are now available on the Kennedy assassination as a result of that law, passed as a result of [Oliver Stone's film](#) and the appeal at the end of it – thanks to all of that the truth is available. Not only can the conspiracy that most Americans have thought was likely now be seen in detail. Not only can we know what happened in Dallas. More important than filling in the crime scene, we can know the larger historical context of the assassination: *why* President Kennedy was murdered. We can know the liberating truth. The story of *why* JFK was gunned down is the subject of this book. I have told the story

chronologically point-by-point through a sea of witnesses. In brief that story is:

On our behalf (he was President of the United States so he did it on our behalf), at the height of the Cold War, John F. Kennedy risked committing the greatest crime in history, starting a nuclear war.

Before we knew it, he turned toward peace with the enemy who almost committed that crime with him (Nikita Khrushchev).

For turning to peace with his enemy (and ours), Kennedy was murdered by a power we cannot easily describe. Its unspeakable reality can be traced, suggested, recognized, and pondered. That is one purpose of this book. The other is to describe Kennedy's turning.

I hope that, by following the story of JFK's encounter with the unspeakable, we'll be willing to encounter it too.

In November 1963, Charles "Chip" Bohlen, a distinguished member of the U.S. foreign service, was serving as U.S. Ambassador to France. He recounted his thoughts and feelings at the time of President Kennedy's death:

Emotions are often difficult to recall, but I well remember feeling, as I sat under the soaring arches of the great cathedral, that the future had collapsed on the present. Here I was, with thirty-five years of experience in the Foreign Service and extremely skeptical about the great men in public life, yet completely crushed by Kennedy's death. I still feel that a great future was extinguished by his death.

Had Kennedy lived, in all probability he would have visited the Soviet Union. Such a visit would not have changed Soviet policy any more than an Eisenhower visit would have, but he would have captured the Russian's hearts.

Except for the Cuban missile crisis and the nuclear test ban treaty, Kennedy's record of achievements in foreign affairs is sparse. By the time of his assassination, he was beginning to move with more confidence. I am sure he would have tried some innovations to end the dreary cold war. I do not know what they would have been, but he would have had a fine second term.

([Charles E. Bohlen](#), *Witness To History, 1929-1969*, Norton, 1973, p. 504)

Among other posts, Mr. Bohlen was ambassador to the Soviet Union and an expert on its society. The management and manipulation of people's awareness and perceptions by official investigations like the Warren Commission and House Select Committee on Assassinations, as well as collusion by the commercial press with government pronouncements, has literally been "unbelievable." In the above quotation, Ambassador Bohlen edges as far as he was psychologically able to towards asking the question, Why?

Jim Douglass dedicates his book "[To Vince Salandria and Marty Schotz, teachers and friends](#)". Illuminating speeches by each man at the 1998 COPA conference provide transformative clarity. Vincent Salandria's "[The JFK Assassination: A False Mystery Concealing State Crimes](#)" presents a detailed explication listing many factual instances of malfeasance, misfeasance, and obstruction of justice carried out by officials of the U.S. government responsible for the investigation of President Kennedy's assassination – some of whom were themselves criminal accessories after the fact. Martin Schotz's "[The Waters of Knowledge versus the Waters of Uncertainty: Mass Denial in the Assassination of President Kennedy](#)," is a useful distillation of elements of his unique and vital 1996 book, *History Will Not Absolve Us: Orwellian Control, Public Denial, and the Murder of President Kennedy*. The center of the book is a [Letter to Vincent J. Salandria](#), dated April 5, 1995, that "belongs

to a process of investigation, study, and thought which now spans more than three decades.” This work is even more relevant today, now fifty years later.

Through the work of Vince Salandria, Marty Schotz, and Jim Douglass, a lucid and coherent account is available of why President Kennedy was assassinated and by whom. Marty Schotz sums up this understanding in the [Introduction](#) of *History Will Not Absolve Us*:

In our efforts to confront the truth of the assassination of President Kennedy we are at a very different point today than we were thirty years ago when the first critical analyses of the Warren Report were published. Dozens of books and thousands of magazine articles have been written about this case. Almost without exception, no matter what the author’s view concerning who killed President Kennedy or why, these works have directly or indirectly contributed to the public’s conviction that the murder of the President is a mystery. As a result, although a vast majority of our public believes that there was a conspiracy, most people do not know this as a fact and are convinced that they can never know for sure what happened.

On both points the public is mistaken. The murder of the President is not a mystery. The nature of the conspiracy that took President Kennedy’s life was from the outset quite obvious to anyone who knew how to look and was willing to do so. The same holds true today. Any citizen who is willing to look can see clearly who killed President Kennedy and why

Exploring the *why* of the President’s extra-constitutional firing goes to the heart of our country’s current darkness and offers us all unprecedented hope in transforming it. The future is up to each and every one of us. It is ours to create. As Carl Jung observed, “In the last analysis, the essential thing is the life of the individual. This alone makes history, here alone do the great transformations first take place, and the whole future, the whole history of the world, ultimately spring as a gigantic summation from these hidden sources in individuals. In our most private and more subjective lives we are not only the passive witnesses of our age, and its sufferers, but also its makers. We are our own epoch.” Similarly, Jim Douglass reminds us of an essential paradox calling out for more consciousness. “What I found remarkable was that the deeper the darkness, the greater the hope, because of his and their transforming witness to the truth. That leaves the question: Are we who hear their story prepared to carry on the peacemaking and truth-telling? Will we live out the truth as they did? It’s a hopeful, inviting question.”

—David Ratcliffe, 8 March 2013

John Kennedy was turning. The key to understanding Kennedy’s presidency, his assassination, and our survival as a species through the Cuban Missile Crisis is that Kennedy was turning toward peace. The signs of his turning are the seeds of his assassination.

Marcus Raskin worked in the Kennedy administration as an assistant to National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy. Not long after the Bay of Pigs, Raskin witnessed an incident in the Oval Office that tipped him off to Kennedy’s deep aversion to the use of nuclear weapons.

During the president’s meeting with a delegation of governors, New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, expressing his irritation at the guerrilla tactics of the Viet Cong, said, “Why don’t we use tactical nuclear weapons against them?”

Raskin, watching Kennedy closely, was in a position to see what happened next. The president’s hand began to shake uncontrollably.

JFK said simply, “You know we’re not going to do that.”⁶²²

But it was the sudden shaking hand that alerted Raskin to Kennedy's profound uneasiness with nuclear weapons, a mark of conscience that would turn later into a commitment to disarmament....

On the morning of May 1, 1962, President Kennedy met in the Oval Office with a delegation of Quakers dedicated to a process of total disarmament and world order. The six members of the Society of Friends who saw the president represented one thousand Friends who had been vigiling for peace and world order outside the White House and the State Department during the previous two days. . . .

The Friends were equally uncompromising with the president when it came to disarmament. While affirming Kennedy's support for the United Nations, they stressed the need for real steps toward general and complete disarmament. The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency,[A, B, C] they felt, was a disappointment. Its Advisory Board members lacked any past commitment to disarmament.

The president did not argue the point. He had not appointed any pacifists to the board. His appointments were in fact often more conservative than he himself was, as had been the case with Arms Control and Disarmament Agency director William C. Foster, a Republican.[A, B] But his reasoning was, as the Quakers stated in their confidential record of the meeting, "If skeptical people on the board become convinced of the necessity and feasibility of disarmament, you have a better chance [in Congress] than if the Board is made up of people known to have had long time convictions in favor of disarmament."⁶³⁵

Kennedy said with a smile, "You believe in redemption don't you?"

He added, "The Pentagon opposes every proposal for disarmament."⁶³⁶

David Hartsough, at the age of twenty-two the youngest Quaker in the group, said the essence of what Kennedy then told them was: "The military-industrial complex is very strong. If you folks are serious about trying to get our government to take these kinds of steps, you've got to get much more organized, to put pressure on the government to move in this direction."⁶³⁷

The members of the delegation agreed afterward on the striking fact that John Kennedy seemed to feel more boxed in by adversaries near at home than he did by enemies abroad. Henry Cadbury, the group's elder and a distinguished theologian, saw the president as "frustrated and trapped," especially by the power of the Pentagon.⁶³⁸

"He seemed to indicate," Dorothy Hutchinson thought, "that he had gone as far as he can alone."⁶³⁹ . . .

Kennedy's dialogue with the Quakers was a hopeful sign of what would come in the last year of his presidency, when he would make a crucial turn toward peace.

From a perspective in the administration working under McGeorge Bundy, Marcus Raskin saw the Cuban Missile Crisis as the event that was the catalyst in JFK's change. Reflecting decades later on the shift he had seen then in Kennedy's attitude, Raskin said:

"After the Cuban Missile Crisis, it became clear to him that there had to be a way out of the arms race. He really was frightened, truly frightened of it in ways he understood before, but not in an existential way. I would argue that it was at that moment when very serious discussions began going on internally within the administration."⁶⁴⁶

Raskin credits Jerome Wiesner, Kennedy's science advisor, with playing an important role in this dynamic. Five weeks after the Missile Crisis, on December 4, 1962, Wiesner sent Kennedy a memorandum stating that, as Raskin put it, "the McNamara defense build-up was an unmitigated disaster for the national security of the United States, that it forced the Soviets to follow the United States in the arms race, thereby making the United States less secure."⁶⁴⁷ Having been shaken by the October crisis into a deeper awareness of impending nuclear war, Kennedy realized Wiesner was right.

With the help of Marcus Raskin and JFK Library Archives Technician Sharon Kelly, I found Wiesner's December 4, 1962, memorandum in the JFK Library's National Security Files. Although much of the memorandum remains classified, we can see in its opening paragraphs why Wiesner's critique of McNamara would have convinced Kennedy, for Wiesner takes up McNamara's own argument on behalf of the president against the Joint Chiefs' first-strike policy. However, using McNamara's logic, Wiesner says that unfortunately the Defense Secretary's actual force recommendations end up playing into the Joint Chiefs' logic, thereby heightening Soviet fears of a first-strike—justifiably so. Wiesner writes:

“There is no question but that the recommended force levels are greatly in excess of those required to maintain a secure deterrent . . . Defense Secretary McNamara’s assertion, with which I am in full agreement, that a really acceptable first-strike posture cannot be achieved, the size and rate of build-up of the recommended force levels could easily be interpreted by the Soviets as an attempt on our part to achieve such a posture. The distinction between a ‘credible first strike’ capability and a strong second strike counterforce capability is very difficult for an enemy with inferior forces to judge . . . I believe that the net effect of the resulting build-up of Soviet missile forces will be an over-all reduction in this country’s security in the years to come.”⁶⁴⁸

Wiesner’s convincing critique of McNamara left the president significantly to the left of the Defense Secretary, the same man he was relying on to control the Joint Chiefs’ ambitions for a Cold War “victory” that could destroy the world. Kennedy felt he could not afford to veto his loyal but wrong Defense Secretary’s force recommendations simply on the basis of his science advisor’s more astute reading of nuclear strategy. JFK’s position was becoming increasingly untenable. Yet with an insight that went to the heart of the symptoms plaguing his presidency in Cuba, Vietnam, and on every Cold War front, Kennedy decided to transform the context of spreading global illness by ending the Cold War itself.

I know of no evidence that the president ever even referred again to the radical counsel he received from his six Quaker critics, who pushed him to act consistently with his own underlying vision of world order. Yet he in effect adopted the Quaker’s recommendations as a strategy for his goal of ending the Cold War.

To work his way out of the arms race (and free from the kind of dilemma that arose from his science advisor knowing more about nuclear war, even its strategy, than his Defense Secretary), Kennedy decided to create a series of peace initiatives. He began with the [American University address](#), the [Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty](#), [National Security Action Memorandum 263](#) withdrawing U.S. troops from Vietnam, and [a covert dialogue with Fidel Castro](#).

During his final months in office, he went further. Compelled by the near-holocaust of the Missile Crisis, he tried to transcend the government’s (and his own) disastrous Cold War assumptions by taking a visionary stand for general and complete disarmament.

On May 6, 1963, President Kennedy issued [National Security Action Memorandum Number 239](#), ordering his principal national security advisers to pursue both a nuclear test ban and a policy of general and complete disarmament. . . .

Marcus Raskin has commented on the meaning of this document: “The President said, ‘Look we’ve really got to figure out how to get out of this arms race. This is just impossible. Give me a plan, the first stage at least of how we’re going to get out of the arms race.’

“This would be a 30% cut of arms. Then move from that stage to the next stage. He was into that. There’s no question about it.”⁶⁵¹

In the three paragraphs of NSAM 239, Kennedy uses the phrase “general and complete disarmament” four times—twice in the opening paragraph, once each in the final two paragraphs. It is clearly the central focus of the order he is issuing.

The president’s accompanying, secondary emphasis is on “a nuclear test ban treaty,” which he mentions three times. It is his secondary focus that shows just how strongly he is committed to NSAM 239’s higher priority, general and complete disarmament. For we know that in the three months after NSAM 239 was issued, JFK concentrated his energy on negotiating a nuclear test ban agreement with Khrushchev, a goal he accomplished.

General and complete disarmament is the more ambitious project in which he says he wants immediate steps to be taken: “an urgent re-examination of the possibilities of new approaches to significant measures short of general and complete disarmament,” such as the 30 percent cut in arms mentioned by Raskin.

In his American University address the following month, he reiterates: “Our primary long-range interest [in the Geneva talks] is general and complete disarmament—designed to take place by stages, permitting parallel political developments to build the new institutions of peace which would take the place of arms.”⁶⁵²

The American University address and the test ban treaty opened the door to the long-range project that was necessary for the survival of humanity in the nuclear age. The test ban treaty was JFK’s critically important way to initiate with Khrushchev the end of the Cold War and their joint leadership in the United Nations for the redemptive process of general and complete disarmament.

In NSAM 239, Kennedy said why he was prepared to pursue such a radical program: “the events of the last two years have increased my concerns for the consequences of an un-checked continuation of the arms race between ourselves and the Soviet bloc.”

Having been shaken and enlightened by the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy had the courage to recognize, as head of the most disastrously armed nation in history, that humanity could not survive the nuclear age unless the United States was willing to lead the world to general and complete disarmament.

“You believe in redemption don’t you?” Kennedy said to his Quaker visitors. As usual, his irony told the truth and doubled back on himself. Ted Sorenson observed that when it came to disarmament, “The President underwent a degree of redemption himself.”⁶⁵³

622. Author’s interview of Marcus Raskin, January 28, 2006.

635. “Visit of Six Friends to President John F. Kennedy on behalf of Friends Witness for World Order, May 1, 1962,” p. 3, [The Quaker Collection, Haverford College](#).

636. Ibid.

637. Author’s interview of David Hartsough, January 18, 2006.

638. Henry J. Cadbury, “Friends with Kennedy in the White House,” p. 278, [Friendly Heritage: Letters from the Quaker Past](#) (Norwalk, Conn.: Silvermine Publishers, 1972)

639. “Quakers Appeal to Kennedy,” [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) (May 2, 1962). [Swarthmore Peace Collection](#).

646. Author’s interview of Marcus Raskin, January 28, 2006.

647. Marcus Raskin, “JFK and the Culture of Violence,” [American Historical Review](#) (April 1992), p. 497.

648. Jerome B. Wiesner, Memorandum for the President, December 4, 1962. Papers of President Kennedy, National Security Files, JFK Library.

651. Author’s interview of Marcus Raskin, February 15, 2006.

652. [Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1963](#) “Commencement Address at American University in Washington,” June 10, 1963, p. 463.

653. Theodore C. Sorenson, [Kennedy](#) (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1965), p. 518.

—[JFK and the Unspeakable](#), pp. 320, 321, 323-24, 325-26, 327-28.

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