

# The Unz Review: An Alternative Media Selection

*A Collection of Interesting, Important, and Controversial Perspectives Largely Excluded from the American Mainstream Media*

## American Pravda: the JFK Assassination, Part II – Who Did It?

RON UNZ • JUNE 25, 2018 • 8,000 WORDS • 1,004 COMMENTS



A strong dam may hold back an immense quantity of water, but once it breaks the resulting flood may sweep aside everything in its path. I had spent nearly my entire life never doubting that a lone gunman named Lee Harvey Oswald killed President John F. Kennedy nor that a different lone gunman took the life of his younger brother Robert a few years later. Once I came to accept[1] that these were merely fairy tales widely disbelieved by many of the same political elites who publicly maintained them, I began considering other aspects of this important history, the most obvious being who was behind the conspiracy and what were their motives.

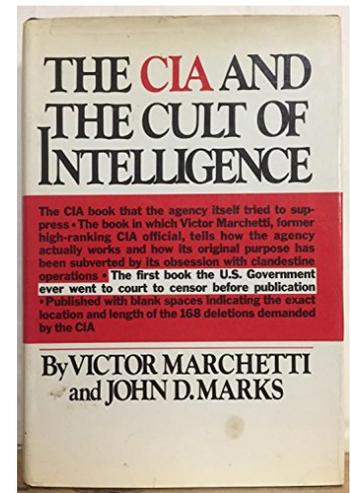


On these questions, the passage of a half-century and the deaths, natural or otherwise, of nearly all the contemporary witnesses drastically reduces any hope of coming to a firm conclusion. At best, we can evaluate possibilities and plausibilities rather than high likelihoods let alone near certainties. And given the total absence of any hard evidence, our exploration of the origins of the assassination must necessarily rely upon cautious speculation.

From such a considerable distance in time, a bird's-eye view may be a reasonable starting point, allowing us to focus on the few elements of the apparent conspiracy that seem reasonably well established. The most basic of these is the background of the individuals who appear to have been associated with the assassination, and the recent books by David Talbot and James W. Douglass effectively summarize much of the evidence accumulated over the decades by an army of diligent assassination researchers. Most of the apparent conspirators seem to have had strong ties to organized crime, the CIA, or various anti-Castro activist groups, with considerable overlap across these categories. Oswald himself certainly fit this same profile although he was very likely the mere "patsy" that he claimed to be, as did Jack Ruby, the man who quickly silenced him and whose ties to the criminal underworld were long and extensive.

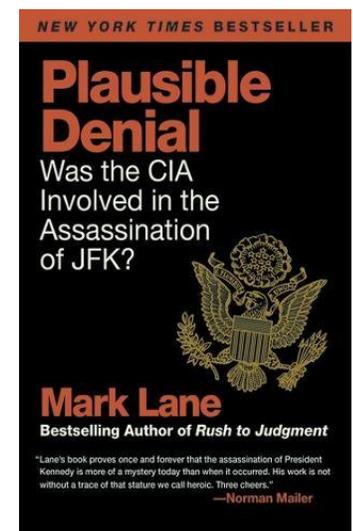
An unusual chain of events provided some of the strongest evidence of CIA involvement. Victor Marchetti, a career CIA officer, had risen to become Special Assistant to the Deputy Director, a position of some importance, before resigning in 1969 over policy differences. Although he fought a long battle with government censors over his book, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, he retained close ties with many former agency colleagues.

During the 1970s, the revelations of the Senate Church Committee and the House Select Committee on Assassinations had subjected the CIA to a great deal of negative public scrutiny, and there were growing suspicions of possible CIA links to JFK's assassination. In 1978 longtime CIA Counter-intelligence chief James Angleton and a colleague provided Marchetti with an explosive leak, stating that the agency might be planning to admit a connection to the assassination, which had involved three shooters, but place the blame upon E. Howard Hunt, a former CIA officer who had become notorious during Watergate, and scapegoat him as a rogue agent, along with a few other equally tarnished colleagues. Marchetti published the resulting story in *The Spotlight*, a weekly national tabloid newspaper operated by Liberty Lobby, a rightwing populist organization based in DC. Although almost totally shunned by the mainstream media, *The Spotlight* was then at the peak of its influence, having almost 400,000 subscribers, as large a readership as the combined total of *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and *National Review*.



Marchetti's article suggested that Hunt had actually been in Dallas during the assassination, resulting in a libel lawsuit with potential damages large enough to bankrupt the publication. Longtime JFK assassination researcher Mark Lane became aware of the situation and volunteered his services to Liberty Lobby, hoping to use the legal proceedings, including the discovery process and subpoena power, as a means of securing additional evidence on the assassination, and after various court rulings and appeals, the case finally came to trial in 1985.

As Lane recounted in his 1991 bestseller, *Plausible Denial*, his strategy generally proved quite successful, not only allowing him to win the jury verdict against Hunt, but also eliciting sworn testimony from a former CIA operative of her personal involvement in the conspiracy along with the names of several other participants, though she claimed that her role had been strictly peripheral. And although Hunt continued for decades to totally deny any connection with the assassination, near the end of his life he made a series of video-taped interviews in which he admitted that he had indeed been involved in the JFK assassination and named several of the other conspirators, while also maintaining that his own role had been merely peripheral. Hunt's explosive death-bed confession was recounted in a major 2007 *Rolling Stone* [article](#) [2] and also heavily analyzed in Talbot's books, especially his second one, but otherwise largely ignored by the media.



Many of these same apparent conspirators, drawn from the same loose alliance of groups, had previously been involved in the various U.S. government-backed attempts to assassinate Castro or overthrow his Communist government, and they had developed a bitter hostility towards President Kennedy for what they considered his betrayal during the Bay of Pigs fiasco and afterward. Therefore, there is a natural tendency to regard such animosity as the central factor behind the assassination, a

perspective generally followed by Talbot, Douglass, and numerous other writers. They conclude that Kennedy died at the hands of harder-line anti-Communists, outraged over his perceived weakness regarding Cuba, Russia, and Vietnam, sentiments that were certainly widespread within right-wing political circles at the height of the Cold War.

While this framework for the assassination is certainly possible, it is far from certain. One may easily imagine that most of the lower-level participants in the Dallas events were driven by such considerations but that the central figures who organized the plot and set matters into motion had different motives. So long as all the conspirators were agreed on Kennedy's elimination, there was no need for an absolute uniformity of motive. Indeed, men who had long been involved in organized crime or clandestine intelligence operations were surely experienced in operational secrecy, and many of them may not have expected to know the identities, let alone the precise motives, of the men at the very top of the remarkable operation they were undertaking.

We must also sharply distinguish between the involvement of particular individuals and the involvement of an organization as an organization. For example, CIA Director John McCone was a Kennedy loyalist who had been appointed to clean house a couple of years before the assassination, and he surely was innocent of his patron's death. On the other hand, the very considerable evidence that numerous individual CIA intelligence officers and operatives participated in the action has naturally raised suspicions that some among their highest-ranking superiors were involved as well, perhaps even as the principal organizers of the conspiracy.

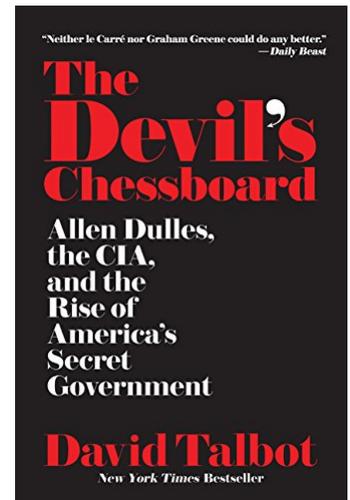
These reasonable speculations may have been magnified by elements of personal bias. Many of the prominent authors who have investigated the JFK assassination in recent years have been staunch liberals, and may have allowed their ideology to cloud their judgment. They often seek to locate the organizers of Kennedy's elimination among those rightwing figures whom they most dislike, even when the case is far from entirely plausible.

But consider the supposed motives of hard-line anti-Communists near the top of the national security hierarchy who supposedly may have organized Kennedy's elimination because he backed away from a full military solution in the Bay of Pigs and Cuban Missile Crisis incidents. Were they really so absolutely sure that a President Johnson would be such an enormous improvement as to risk their lives and public standing to organize a full conspiracy to assassinate an American president?

A new presidential election was less than a year away, and Kennedy's shifting stance on Civil Rights seemed likely to cost him nearly all the Southern states that had provided his margin of electoral victory in 1960. A series of public declarations or embarrassing leaks might have helped remove him from office by traditional political means, possibly replacing him with a Cold War hard-liner such as Barry Goldwater or some other Republican. Would the militarists or business tycoons often implicated by liberal JFK researchers have really been so desperate as to not wait those extra few months and see what happened?

Based on extremely circumstantial evidence, Talbot's 2015 book *The Devil's Chessboard*, something of a sequel to *Brothers*, suggests that former longtime CIA Director Allan Dulles may have been the likely mastermind, with his motive being a mixture of his extreme Cold Warrior views and his personal anger at his 1961 dismissal from his position.

While his involvement is certainly possible, obvious questions arise. Dulles was a seventy-year-old retiree, with a very long and distinguished career of public service and a brother who had served as Eisenhower's secretary of state. He had just published *The Craft of Intelligence*, which was receiving very favorable treatment in the establishment media, and he was embarked on a major book tour. Would he really have risked everything—including his family's reputation in the history books—to organize the murder of America's duly-elected president, an unprecedented act utterly different in nature than trying to unseat a Guatemalan leader on behalf of supposed American national interests? Surely, using his extensive media and intelligence contacts to leak embarrassing disclosures about JFK's notorious sexual escapades during the forthcoming presidential campaign would have been a much safer means of attempting to achieve an equivalent result. And the same is true for J. Edgar Hoover and many of the other powerful Washington figures who hated Kennedy for similar reasons.



On the other hand, it is very easy to imagine that such individuals had some awareness of the emerging plot or may even have facilitated it or participated to a limited extent. And once it succeeded, and their personal enemy had been replaced, they surely would have been extremely willing to assist in the cover-up and protect the reputation of the new regime, a role that Dulles may have played as the most influential member of the Warren Commission. But such activities are different than acting as the central organizer of a presidential assassination.

Just as with the hard-line national security establishment, many organized crime leaders had grown outraged over the actions of the Kennedy Administration. During the late 1950s, Robert Kennedy had intensely targeted the mob for prosecution as chief counsel to the Senate Labor Rackets Committee. But during the 1960 election, family patriarch Joseph Kennedy used his own longstanding mafia connections to enlist their support for his older son's presidential campaign, and by all accounts the votes stolen by the corrupt mob-dominated political machines in Chicago and elsewhere helped put JFK in the White House, along with Robert Kennedy as his Attorney General. Frank Sinatra, an enthusiastic Kennedy supporter, had also helped facilitate this arrangement by using his influence with skeptical mob leaders.

However, instead of repaying such crucial election support with political favors, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, perhaps ignorant of any bargain, soon unleashed an all-out war against organized crime, far more serious than anything previously mounted at the federal level, and the crime bosses regarded this as a back-stabbing betrayal by the new administration. Once Joseph Kennedy was felled by an incapacitating stroke in late 1961, they also lost any hope that he would use his influence to enforce the deals he had struck the previous year. FBI wiretaps reveal that mafia leader Sam Giancana decided to have Sinatra killed for his role in this failed bargain, only sparing the singer's life when he considered how much he personally loved the voice of one of the most famous Italian-Americans of the 20th century.

These organized crime leaders and some of their close associates such as Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa certainly developed a bitter hatred toward the Kennedys, and this has naturally led some authors to point to the mafia as the likely organizers of the assassination, but I find this quite unlikely. For many decades, American crime bosses had had a complex and varied relationship with political figures, who

might sometimes be their allies and at other times their persecutors, and surely there must have been many betrayals over the years. However, I am not aware of a single case in which any even moderately prominent political figure on the national stage was ever targeted for assassination, and it seems quite unlikely that the sole exception would be a popular president, whom they would have likely regarded as being completely out of their league. On the other hand, if individuals who ranked high in Kennedy's own DC political sphere set in motion a plot to eliminate him, they might have found it easy to enlist the enthusiastic cooperation of various mafia leaders.

Furthermore, the strong evidence that many CIA operatives were involved in the conspiracy very much suggests that they were recruited and organized by some figure high in their own hierarchy of the intelligence or political worlds rather than the less likely possibility that they were brought in solely by leaders of the parallel domain of organized crime. And while crime bosses might possibly have organized the assassination itself, they surely had no means of orchestrating the subsequent cover-up by the Warren Commission, nor would there have been any willingness by America's political leadership to protect mafia leaders from investigation and proper punishment for such a heinous act.

If a husband or wife is found murdered, with no obvious suspect or motive at hand, the normal response of the police is to carefully investigate the surviving spouse, and quite often this suspicion proves correct. Similarly, if you read in your newspapers that in some obscure Third World country two bitterly hostile leaders, both having unpronounceable names, had been sharing supreme political power until one was suddenly struck down in a mysterious assassination by unknown conspirators, your thoughts would certainly move in an obvious direction. Most Americans in the early 1960s did not perceive their own country's politics in such a light, but perhaps they were mistaken. As a total newcomer to the enormous, hidden world of JFK conspiracy analysis, I was immediately surprised by the mere sliver of suspicion directed towards Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, the slain leader's immediate successor and the most obvious beneficiary.

The two Talbot books and the one by Douglass, totaling some 1500 pages, devote merely a few paragraphs to any suspicions of Johnson's involvement. Talbot's first book reports that immediately after the assassination, the vice president had expressed a frantic concern to his personal aides that a military coup might be in progress or a world war breaking out, and suggests that these few casual words demonstrate his obvious innocence, although a more cynical observer might wonder if those remarks had been uttered for exactly that reason. Talbot's second book actually quotes an apparent low-level conspirator as claiming that Johnson had personally signed off on the plot and admits that Hunt believed the same thing, but treats such unsubstantiated accusations with considerable skepticism, before adding a single sentence acknowledging that Johnson may indeed have been a passive supporter or even an accomplice. Douglass and Peter Dale Scott, author of the influential 1993 book *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, apparently seem never to have even entertained the possibility.

Ideological considerations are probably an important reason for such remarkable reticence. Although liberals had grown to revile LBJ by the late 1960s for his escalation of the unpopular Vietnam War, over the decades those sentiments have faded, while warm memories of his passage of the landmark Civil Rights legislation and his creation of the Great Society programs have elevated his stature in that ideological camp. Furthermore, such legislation had long been blockaded in Congress and only became law because of the 1964 Democratic Congressional landslide following JFK's martyrdom, and

it might be difficult for liberals to admit that their fondest dreams were only realized by an act of political parricide.

Kennedy and Johnson may have been intensively hostile personal rivals, but there seem to have been few deep ideological differences between the two men, and most of the leading figures in JFK's government continued to serve under his successor, surely another source of enormous embarrassment to any ardent liberals who came to suspect that the former had been murdered by a conspiracy involving the latter. Talbot, Douglass, and many other left-leaning advocates for an assassination conspiracy prefer to point the finger of blame towards far more congenial villains such as hard-line, anti-Communist Cold Warriors and right-wing elements, notably including top CIA officials, such as former director Allan Dulles.

An additional factor helping to explain the extreme unwillingness of Talbot, Douglass, and others to consider Johnson as an obvious suspect may be the realities of the book publishing industry. By the 2000s, JFK assassination conspiracies had long become passé and were treated with disdain in mainstream circles. Talbot's strong reputation, his 150 original interviews, and the quality of his manuscript broke that barrier, and attracted *The Free Press* as his very respectable publisher, while later drawing a strongly positive review by a leading academic scholar in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review* and an hour long television segment broadcast on *C-Span Booknotes*. But if he had devoted any space to voicing suspicions that our 35th president had been murdered by our 36th, surely the weight of that extra element of "outrageous conspiracy theory" would have ensured that his book sank without a trace.

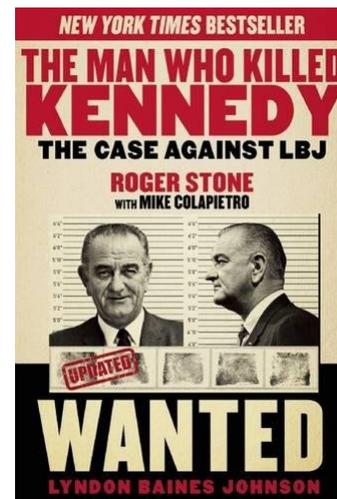
However, if we cast off these distorting ideological blinders and the practical considerations of American publishing, the *prima facie* case for Johnson's involvement seems quite compelling.

Consider a very simple point. If a president is struck down by an unknown group of conspirators, his successor would normally have had the strongest possible incentive to track them down lest he might become their next victim. Yet Johnson did nothing, appointing the Warren Commission that covered up the entire matter, laying the blame upon an erratic "lone gunman" conveniently dead. This would seem remarkably odd behavior for an innocent LBJ. This conclusion does not demand that Johnson was the mastermind, nor even an active participant, but it raises a very strong suspicion that he at least had had some awareness of the plot, and enjoyed a good personal relationship with some of the principals.

A similar conclusion is supported by a converse analysis. If the plot succeeded and Johnson became president, the conspirators must surely have felt reasonably confident that they would be protected rather than tracked down and punished as traitors by the new president. Even a fully successful assassination would entail enormous risks unless the organizers believed that Johnson would do exactly what he did, and the only means of ensuring this would be to sound him out about the plan, at least in some vague manner, and obtain his passive acquiesce.

Based on these considerations, it seems extremely difficult to believe that any JFK assassination conspiracy took place entirely without Johnson's foreknowledge, or that he was not a central figure in the subsequent cover-up.

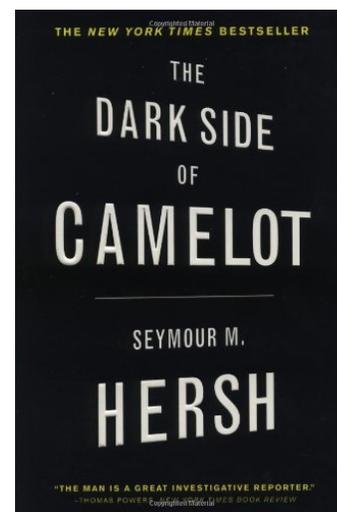
But the specific details of Johnson's career and his political situation in late 1963 greatly strengthen these entirely generic arguments. A very useful corrective to the "See No Evil" approach to Johnson from liberal JFK writers is Roger Stone's *The Man Who Killed Kennedy: The Case Against LBJ*, published in 2013. Stone, a longtime Republican political operative who got his start under Richard Nixon, presents a powerful case that Johnson was the sort of individual who might easily have lent his hand to political murder, and also that he had strong reasons to do so.



Among other things, Stone gathers together an enormous wealth of persuasive information regarding Johnson's decades of extremely corrupt and criminal practices in Texas, including fairly plausible claims that these may have included several murders. In one bizarre 1961 incident that strangely foreshadows the Warren Commission's "lone gunman" finding, a federal government inspector investigating a major Texas corruption scheme involving a close LBJ ally was found dead, shot five times in the chest and abdomen by a rifle, but the death was officially ruled a "suicide" by the local authorities, and that conclusion was reported with a straight face in the pages of the *Washington Post*.

Certainly one remarkable aspect of Johnson's career is that he was born dirt-poor, held low-paying government jobs throughout his entire life, yet took the oath of office as the wealthiest president in modern American history[3], having accumulated a personal fortune of over \$100 million in present-day dollars, with the financial payoffs from his corporate benefactors having been laundered through his wife's business. This odd anomaly is so little remembered these days that a prominent political journalist expressed total disbelief when I mentioned it to him a decade ago.

Stone also effectively sketches out the very difficult political situation Johnson faced in late 1963. He had originally entered the 1960 presidential race as one of the most powerful Democrats in the country and the obvious front-runner for his party's nomination, certainly compared to the much younger Kennedy, whom he greatly outranked in political stature and also somewhat despised. His defeat, involving a great deal of underhanded dealings on both sides, came as a huge personal blow. The means by which he somehow managed to get himself placed on the ticket are not entirely clear, but both Stone and Seymour Hersh in *The Dark Side of Camelot* strongly suggest that personal blackmail was a greater factor than geographical ticket-balancing. In any event, Kennedy's paper-thin 1960 victory would have been far more difficult without Texas narrowly falling into the Democratic column, and election fraud there by Johnson's powerful political machine seems almost certainly to have been an important factor.



Under such circumstances, Johnson naturally expected to play a major role in the new administration, and he even issued grandiose demands for a huge political portfolio, but instead he found himself immediately sidelined and treated with complete disdain, soon becoming a forlorn figure with no authority or influence. As time went by, the Kennedys made plans to get rid of him, and just a few days before the assassination, they were already discussing whom to place on the reelection ticket in his stead. Much of Johnson's long record of extreme corruption both in Texas and in DC was coming to light following the fall of Bobby Baker, his key political henchman, and with

strong Kennedy encouragement, *Life Magazine* was preparing a huge expose of his sordid and often criminal history, laying the basis for his prosecution and perhaps a lengthy prison sentence. By mid-November 1963, Johnson seemed a desperate political figure at the absolute end of his rope, but a week later he was the president of the United States, and all those swirling scandals were suddenly forgotten. Stone even claims that the huge block of magazine space reserved for the Johnson expose was instead filled by the JFK assassination story.

Aside from effectively documenting Johnson's sordid personal history and the looming destruction he faced at the hands of the Kennedys in late 1963, Stone also adds numerous fascinating pieces of personal testimony, which may or may not be reliable. According to him, as his mentor Nixon was watching the scene at the Dallas police station where Jack Ruby shot Oswald, Nixon immediately turned as white as a ghost, explaining that he had personally known the gunman under his birth-name of Rubenstein. While working on a House Committee in 1947, Nixon had been advised by a close ally and prominent mob-lawyer to hire Ruby as an investigator, being told that "he was one of Lyndon Johnson's boys." Stone also claims that Nixon once emphasized that although he had long sought the presidency, unlike Johnson "I wasn't willing to kill for it." He further reports that Vietnam Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and numerous other prominent political figures in DC were absolutely convinced of Johnson's direct involvement in the assassination.

Stone has spent more than a half-century as a ruthless political operative, a position that provided him with unique personal access to individuals who participated in the great events of the past, but one that also carries the less than totally candid reputation of that profession, and individuals must carefully weigh these conflicting factors against each other. Personally, I tend to credit most of the eyewitness stories he provides. But even readers who remain entirely skeptical should find useful the large collection of secondary source references to the sordid details of LBJ's history that the book provides.

Finally, a seemingly unrelated historical incident had originally raised my own suspicions of Johnson's involvement.

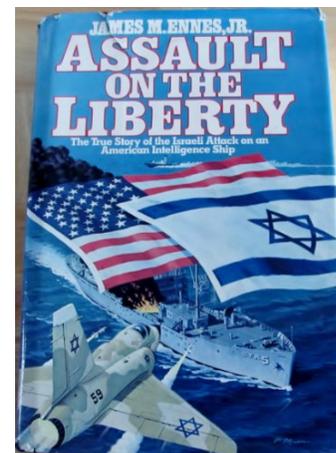
Just prior to the outbreak of the Six Day War in 1967, Johnson had dispatched the *U.S.S. Liberty*, our most advanced intelligence-gathering ship, to remain offshore in international waters and closely monitor the military situation. There have been published claims that he had granted Israel a green-light for its preemptive attack, but fearful of risking a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet patrons of Syria and Egypt, had strictly circumscribed the limits of the military operation, sending the *Liberty* to keep an eye on developments and perhaps also to "show Israel who was boss."

Whether or not this reconstruction is correct, the Israelis soon launched an all-out attack on the nearly defenseless ship despite the large American flag it was flying, deploying attack jets and torpedo boats to sink the vessel during an assault that lasted several hours, while machine-gunning the lifeboats to ensure that there would be no survivors. The first stage of the attack had targeted the main communications antenna, and its destruction together with heavy Israeli jamming prevented any communications with other U.S. naval forces in the region.

Despite these very difficult conditions, a member of the crew heroically managed to jerry-rig a replacement antenna during the attack, and by trying numerous different frequencies was able to evade the jamming and contact the U.S. Sixth Fleet, informing them of the desperate situation. Yet

although carrier jets were twice dispatched to rescue the *Liberty* and drive off the attackers, each time they were recalled, apparently upon direct orders from the highest authorities of the U.S. government. Once the Israelis learned that word of the situation had reached other U.S. forces, they soon discontinued their attack, and the heavily-damaged *Liberty* eventually limped into port, with over 200 dead and wounded sailors and NSA signal operators, representing the greatest loss of American servicemen in any naval incident since World War II.

Although numerous medals were issued to the survivors, word of the incident was totally suppressed by a complete blanket of secrecy, and in an unprecedented step, even a Congressional Medal of Honor was awarded only in a private ceremony. The survivors were also harshly threatened with immediate court martial if they discussed what had transpired with the press or anyone else. Despite the overwhelming evidence that the attack had been intentional, a naval court of inquiry presided over by Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., father of the current senator, whitewashed the incident as a tragic accident, and a complete media blackout suppressed the facts. The true story only began to come out years later, when James M. Ennes, Jr., a *Liberty* survivor, risked severe legal consequences and published *Assault on the Liberty* in 1979 .



As it happened, NSA intercepts of Israeli communications between the attacking jets and Tel Aviv, translated from the Hebrew, fully confirmed that the attack had been entirely deliberate, and since many of the dead and wounded were NSA employees, the suppression of these facts greatly rankled their colleagues. My old friend Bill Odom, the three-star general who ran the NSA for Ronald Reagan, later shrewdly circumvented the restrictions of his political masters by making those incriminating intercepts part of the standard curriculum of the Sigint training program required for all intelligence officers.

In 2007 an unusual set of circumstances finally broke the thirty year blackout in the mainstream media. Real estate investor Sam Zell, a Jewish billionaire extremely devoted to Israel, had orchestrated [a leveraged-buyout of the Tribune Company](#)[4], parent of the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, investing merely a sliver of his own money, with the bulk of the financing coming from the pension funds of the company he was acquiring. Widely heralded as “the grave dancer” for his shrewd financial investments, Zell publicly boasted that the deal gave him nearly all of the upside potential of the company, while he bore relatively little of the risk. Such an approach proved wise since the complex deal quickly collapsed into bankruptcy, and although Zell emerged almost unscathed, the editors and journalists lost decades of their accumulated pension dollars, while massive layoffs soon devastated the newsrooms of what had been two of the country’s largest and most prestigious newspapers. Perhaps coincidentally, just as this business turmoil hit in late 2007, the *Tribune* ran [a massive 5,500 word story](#)[5] on the *Liberty* attack, representing the first and only time such a comprehensive account of the true facts has ever appeared in the mainstream media.

By all accounts, Johnson was an individual of towering personal ego, and when I read the article, I was struck by the extent of his astonishing subservience to the Jewish state. The influence of campaign donations and favorable media coverage seemed completely insufficient to explain his reaction to an incident that had cost the lives of so many American servicemen. I began to wonder if Israel might have played an extraordinarily powerful political trump-card, thereby showing LBJ “who was really boss,” and once I discovered the reality of the JFK assassination conspiracy a year or two later, I suspected I knew what that trump-card might have been. Over the years, I had become quite

friendly with the late Alexander Cockburn, and the next time we had lunch I outlined my ideas. Although he had always casually dismissed JFK conspiracy theories as total nonsense, he found my hypothesis quite intriguing.

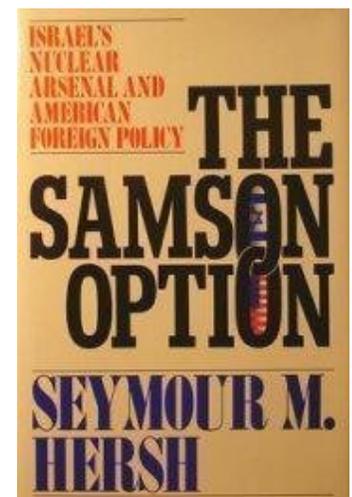
Regardless of such speculation, the strange circumstances of the *Liberty* incident certainly demonstrated the exceptionally close relationship between President Johnson and the government of Israel, as well as the willingness of the mainstream media to spend decades hiding events of the most remarkable nature if they might tread on particular toes.

These important considerations should be kept in mind as we begin exploring the most explosive yet under-reported theory of the JFK assassination. Almost twenty-five years ago the late Michael Collins Piper published *Final Judgment* presenting a very large body of circumstantial evidence that Israel and its Mossad secret intelligence service, together with their American collaborators, probably played a central role in the conspiracy.

For decades following the 1963 assassination, virtually no suspicions had ever been directed towards Israel, and as a consequence none of the hundreds or thousands of assassination conspiracy books that appeared during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s had hinted at any role for the Mossad, though nearly every other possible culprit, ranging from the Vatican to the Illuminati, came under scrutiny. Kennedy had received over 80% of the Jewish vote in his 1960 election, American Jews featured very prominently in his White House, and he was greatly lionized by Jewish media figures, celebrities, and intellectuals ranging from New York City to Hollywood to the Ivy League. Moreover, individuals with a Jewish background such as Mark Lane and Edward Epstein had been among the leading early proponents of an assassination conspiracy, with their controversial theories championed by influential Jewish cultural celebrities such as Mort Sahl and Norman Mailer. Given that the Kennedy Administration was widely perceived as pro-Israel, there seemed no possible motive for any Mossad involvement, and bizarre, totally unsubstantiated accusations of such a monumental nature directed against the Jewish state were hardly likely to gain much traction in an overwhelmingly pro-Israel publishing industry.

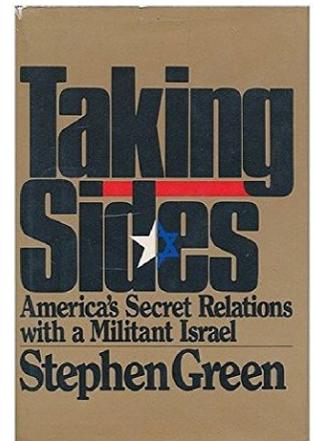
However, in the early 1990s highly-regarded journalists and researchers began exposing the circumstances surrounding the development of Israel's nuclear weapons arsenal. Seymour Hersh's 1991 book *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy* described the extreme efforts of the Kennedy Administration to force Israel to allow international inspections of its allegedly non-military nuclear reactor at Dimona, and thereby prevent its use in producing nuclear weapons. *Dangerous Liaisons: The Inside Story of the U.S.-Israeli Covert Relationship* by Andrew and Leslie Cockburn appeared in the same year, and covered similar ground.

Although entirely hidden from public awareness at the time, the early 1960s political conflict between the American and Israeli governments over nuclear weapons development had represented a top foreign policy priority of the Kennedy Administration, which had made nuclear non-proliferation one of its central international initiatives. It is notable that John McCone, Kennedy's choice as CIA Director, had previously served on the Atomic Energy Commission under Eisenhower, being the individual who leaked the fact that Israel



was building a nuclear reactor to produce plutonium.

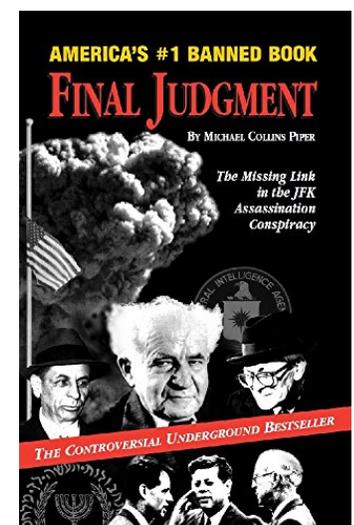
The pressure and financial aid threats secretly applied to Israel by the Kennedy Administration eventually became so severe that they led to the resignation of Israel's founding Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in June 1963. But all these efforts were almost entirely halted or reversed once Kennedy was replaced by Johnson in November of that same year. Piper notes that Stephen Green's 1984 book *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations With a Militant Israel* had previously documented that U.S. Middle East Policy completely reversed itself following Kennedy's assassination, but this important finding had attracted little attention at the time.



Skeptics of a plausible institutional basis for a JFK assassination conspiracy have often noted the extreme continuity in both foreign and domestic policies between the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, arguing that this casts severe doubt on any such possible motive. Although this analysis seems largely correct, America's behavior towards Israel and its nuclear weapons program stands as a very notable exception to this pattern.

An additional major area of concern for Israeli officials may have involved the efforts of the Kennedy Administration to sharply restrict the activities of pro-Israel political lobbies. During his 1960 presidential campaign, Kennedy had met in New York City with a group of wealthy Israel advocates, led by financier Abraham Feinberg, and they had offered enormous financial support in exchange for a controlling influence in Middle Eastern policy. Kennedy managed to fob them off with vague assurances, but he considered the incident so troubling that the next morning he sought out journalist Charles Bartlett, one of his closest friends, and expressed his outrage that American foreign policy might fall under the control of partisans of a foreign power, promising that if he became president, he would rectify that situation. And indeed, once he had installed his brother Robert as Attorney General, the latter initiated a major legal effort to force pro-Israel groups to register themselves as foreign agents, which would have drastically reduced their power and influence. But after JFK's death, this project was quickly abandoned, and as part of the settlement, the leading pro-Israel lobby merely agreed to reconstitute itself as AIPAC.

*Final Judgment* went through a number of reprintings following its original 1994 appearance, and by the sixth edition released in 2004, had grown to over 650 pages, including numerous long appendices and over 1100 footnotes, the overwhelming majority of these referencing fully mainstream sources. The body of the text was merely serviceable in organization and polish, reflecting the total boycott by all publishers, mainstream or alternative, but I found the contents themselves remarkable and generally quite compelling. Despite the most extreme blackout by all media outlets, the book sold more than 40,000 copies over the years, making it something of an underground bestseller, and surely bringing it to the attention of everyone in the JFK assassination research community, though apparently almost none of them were willing to mention its existence. I suspect these other writers realized that even any mere acknowledgement of the existence of the book, if only to ridicule or dismiss



it, might prove fatal to their media and publishing career. Piper himself died in 2015, aged 54, suffering from the health problems and heavy-drinking often associated with grim poverty, and other journalists may have been reluctant to risk that same dismal fate.

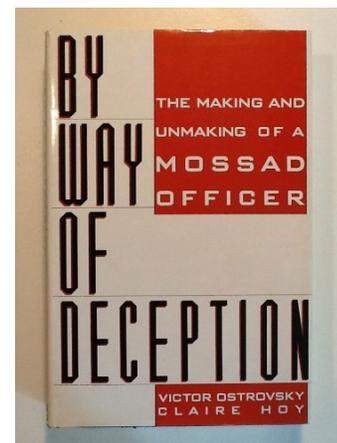
As an example of this strange situation, the bibliography of Talbot's 2005 book contains almost 140 entries, some rather obscure, but has no space for *Final Judgment*, nor does his very comprehensive index include any entry for "Jews" or "Israel." Indeed, at one point he very delicately characterizes Sen. Robert Kennedy's entirely Jewish senior staff by stating "There was not a Catholic among them." His 2015 sequel is equally circumspect, and although the index does contain numerous entries pertaining to Jews, all these references are in regards to World War II and the Nazis, including his discussion of the alleged Nazi ties of Allen Dulles, his principal *bête noire*. Stone's book, while fearlessly convicting President Lyndon Johnson of the JFK assassination, also strangely excludes "Jews" and "Israel" from the long index and *Final Judgment* from the bibliography, and Douglass's book follows this same pattern.

Furthermore, the extreme concerns that the Piper Hypothesis seems to have provoked among JFK assassination researchers may explain a strange anomaly. Although Mark Lane was himself of Jewish origins and left-wing roots, after his victory for Liberty Lobby in the Hunt libel trial, he spent many years associated with that organization in a legal capacity, and apparently became quite friendly with Piper, one of its leading writers. According to Piper, Lane told him that *Final Judgment* made "a solid case" for a major Mossad role in the assassination, and he viewed the theory as fully complementary to his own focus on CIA involvement. I suspect that concerns about these associations may explain why Lane was almost completely airbrushed out of the Douglass and 2007 Talbot books, and discussed in the second Talbot book only when his work was absolutely essential to Talbot's own analysis. By contrast, *New York Times* staff writers are hardly likely to be as versed in the lesser-known aspects of the JFK assassination research community, and being ignorant of this hidden controversy, they gave Lane [the long and glowing obituary](#)[6] that his career fully warranted.

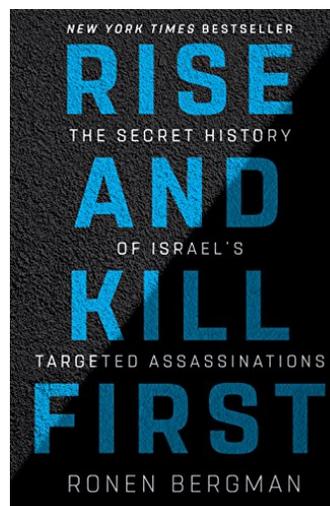
When weighing the possible suspects for a given crime, considering their past pattern of behavior is often a helpful approach. As discussed above, I can think of no historical example in which organized crime initiated a serious assassination attempt against any American political figure even moderately prominent on the national stage. And despite a few suspicions here and there, the same applies to the CIA.

By contrast, the Israeli Mossad and the Zionist groups that preceded the establishment of the Jewish state seem to have had a very long track record of assassinations, including those of high-ranking political figures who might normally be regarded as inviolate. Lord Moyne, the British Minister of State for the Middle East, was assassinated in 1944 and Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN Peace Negotiator sent to help resolve the first Arab-Israel war, suffered the same fate in September 1948. Not even an American president was entirely free of such risks, and Piper notes that the memoirs of Harry Truman's daughter Margaret reveal that Zionist militants had tried to assassinate her father using a letter laced with toxic chemicals in 1947 when they believed he was dragging his heels in supporting Israel, although that failed attempt was never made public. The Zionist faction responsible for all of these incidents was led by Yitzhak Shamir, who later became a leader of Mossad and director of its assassination program during the 1960s, before eventually becoming Prime Minister of Israel in 1986.

If the claims in the 1990s tell-all bestsellers of Mossad defector Victor Ostrovsky can be credited, Israel even considered the assassination of President George H.W. Bush in 1992 for his threats to cut off financial aid to Israel during a conflict over West Bank settlement policies, and I have been informed that the Bush Administration took those reports seriously at the time. And although I have not yet read it, the recent, widely-praised book *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations* by journalist Ronen Bergman suggests that no other country in the world may have so regularly employed assassination as a standard tool of state policy.



There are other notable elements that tend to support the Piper Hypothesis. Once we accept the existence of a JFK assassination conspiracy, the one individual who is virtually certain to have been a participant was Jack Ruby, and his organized crime ties were almost entirely to the huge but rarely-mentioned Jewish wing of that enterprise, presided over by Meyer Lansky, an extremely fervent supporter of Israel. Ruby himself had particularly strong connections with Lansky lieutenant Mickey Cohen, who dominated the Los Angeles underworld and had been personally involved in gun-running to Israel prior to the 1948 war. Indeed, according to Dallas rabbi Hillel Silverman[7], Ruby had privately explained his killing of Oswald by saying “I did it for the Jewish people.”



An intriguing aspect to Oliver Stone's landmark *JFK* film should also be mentioned. Arnon Milchan, the wealthy Hollywood producer who backed the project, was not only an Israeli citizen, but had also reportedly played a central role in the enormous espionage project[8] to divert American technology and materials to Israel's nuclear weapons project, the exact undertaking that the Kennedy Administration had made such efforts to block. Milchan has even sometimes been described as “the Israeli James Bond.”[9] And although the film ran a full three hours in length, *JFK* scrupulously avoided presenting any of the details that Piper later regarded as initial clues to an Israeli dimension, instead seeming to finger America's fanatic home-grown anti-Communist movement and the Cold War leadership of the military-industrial complex as the guilty parties.

Summarizing over 300,000 words of Piper's history and analysis in just a few paragraphs is obviously an impossible undertaking, but the above discussion provides a reasonable taste of the enormous mass of circumstantial evidence mustered in favor of the Piper Hypothesis.

In many respects, JFK Assassination Studies has become its own academic discipline, and my credentials are quite limited. I have read perhaps a dozen books in the subject, and have also tried to approach the issues with the clean slate and fresh eyes of an outsider, but any serious expert would surely have digested scores or even hundreds of the volumes in the field. While the overall analysis of *Final Judgment* struck me as quite persuasive, a good fraction of the names and references were

unfamiliar, and I simply do not have the background to assess their credibility, nor whether the description of the material presented is accurate.

Under normal circumstances, I would turn to the reviews or critiques produced by other authors, and comparing them against Piper's claims, then decide which argument seemed the stronger. But although *Final Judgment* was published a quarter-century ago, the near-absolute blanket of silence surrounding the Piper Hypothesis, especially from the more influential and credible researchers, renders this impossible.

However, Piper's inability to secure any regular publisher and the widespread efforts to smother his theory out of existence, have had an ironic consequence. Since the book went out of print years ago, I had a relatively easy time securing the rights to include it in my collection of controversial HTML Books, and I have now done so, thereby allowing everyone on the Internet to conveniently read the entire text and decide for themselves, while easily checking the multitude of references or searching for particular words or phrases.

#### [Final Judgment](#)[10]

*The Missing Link in the JFK Assassination Conspiracy*

[MICHAEL COLLINS PIPER](#)[11] • 2005 • 310,000 WORDS

This edition actually incorporates several much shorter works, originally published separately. One of these, consisting of an extended Q&A, describes the genesis of the idea and answers numerous questions surrounding it, and for some readers might represent a better starting point.

#### [Default Judgment](#)[12]

*Questions, Answers & Reflections About the Crime of the Century*

[MICHAEL COLLINS PIPER](#)[11] • 2005 • 48,000 WORDS

There are also numerous extended Piper interviews or presentations easily available on YouTube, and when I watched two or three of them a couple of years ago, I thought he effectively summarized many of his main arguments, but I cannot remember which ones they were.

The Kennedy assassination surely ranks as one of the most dramatic and heavily reported events of the twentieth century, yet the overwhelming evidence that our president died at the hands of a conspiracy rather than an eccentric "lone gunman" was almost entirely suppressed by our mainstream media during the decades that followed, with endless ridicule and opprobrium heaped on many of the stubborn truth-tellers. Indeed, the very term "conspiracy theory" soon became a standard slur aimed against all those who sharply questioned establishmentarian narratives, and there is strong evidence that such pejorative use was deliberately promoted[13] by government agencies concerned that so much of the American citizenry was growing skeptical of the implausible cover story presented by the Warren Commission. But despite all these efforts, the period may mark the inflection point at which public trust in our national media began its precipitous decline. Once an individual concludes that the media lied about something as monumental as the JFK assassination, he naturally begins to wonder what other lies may be out there.

Although I now consider the case for an assassination conspiracy overwhelming, I think that the passage of so many decades has removed any real hope of reaching a firm conclusion about the

identities of the main organizers or their motives. Those who disagree with this negative assessment are free to continue sifting the enormous mountain of complex historical evidence and debating their conclusions with others having similar interests.

However, among the cast of major suspects, I think that the most likely participant by far was Lyndon Johnson, based on any reasonable assessment of means, motive, and opportunity, as well as the enormous role he obviously must have played in facilitating the subsequent Warren Commission cover-up. Yet although such an obvious suspect must surely have been immediately apparent to any observer, Johnson seems to have received only a rather thin slice of the attention that books regularly directed to other, far less plausible suspects. So the clear dishonesty of the mainstream media in avoiding any recognition of a conspiracy seems matched by a second layer of dishonesty in the alternative media, which has done its best to avoid recognizing the most likely perpetrator.

And the third layer of media dishonesty is the the most extreme of all. A quarter century ago, *Final Judgment* provided an enormous mass of circumstantial evidence suggesting a major, even dominant, role for the Israeli Mossad in organizing the elimination of both our 35rd president and also his younger brother, a scenario that seems second in likelihood only to that of Johnson's involvement. Yet Piper's hundreds of thousands of words of analysis have seemingly vanished into the ether, with very few of the major conspiracy researchers even willing to admit their awareness of a shocking book that sold over 40,000 copies, almost entirely by underground word-of-mouth.

So although committed partisans can continue endless, largely fruitless debates over "Who Killed JFK," I think that the one firm conclusion we can draw from the remarkable history of this pivotal event of the twentieth century is that all of us have lived for many decades within the synthetic reality of "Our American Pravda."[14]

### Related Reading:

- [American Pravda: The JFK Assassination, Part I – What Happened?](#)[15]
- [Final Judgment](#)[16] by Michael Collins Piper
- [Did Israel Kill the Kennedys?](#)[17] by Laurent Guyénot
- [Our American Pravda](#)[18]

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[11] Michael Collins Piper => /book/author/michael\_collins\_piper/

[12] Default Judgment => [http://www.unz.com/book/michael\\_collins\\_piper\\_\\_final-judgment/#default-judgment](http://www.unz.com/book/michael_collins_piper__final-judgment/#default-judgment)

[13] deliberately promoted => <http://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-how-the-cia-invented-conspiracy-theories/>

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[15] American Pravda: The JFK Assassination, Part I – What Happened? => <http://www.unz.com/runz/american-pravda-the-jfk-assassination-part-i-what-happened/>

[16] *Final Judgment* => [http://www.unz.com/book/michael\\_collins\\_piper\\_\\_final-judgment/](http://www.unz.com/book/michael_collins_piper__final-judgment/)

[17] Did Israel Kill the Kennedys? => <http://www.unz.com/article/did-israel-kill-the-kennedies/>

[18] Our American Pravda => <http://www.unz.com/runz/our-american-pravda/>