

## **From Truth to Justice: A Road Less Traveled**

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[Editor's note: *In this preface, Charles Drago, Associate Editor, who has frequently been referred to as "the conscience of the (JFK research) community", reflects upon the motto that defines the character of this journal as devoted to "advanced study" of the death of JFK, which implies a lack of willingness to indulge the lazy, the ignorant, and the corrupt.*]

When my colleague and friend Jim Fetzer chose my words to define both the governing editorial principle of *Assassination Research* and the point from which our shared journey from truth to justice in the unsolved, conspiratorial homicide of John Fitzgerald Kennedy begins, he showed himself to be as politic an editor as he is broad-minded a scholar.

Jim's version of my original expression, which I do not have the slightest difficulty embracing, is indeed a gauntlet dropped: *Anyone sincerely interested in this case who does not conclude that JFK was murdered as the result of a conspiracy is either unfamiliar with the evidence or cognitively impaired.*

What I said and wrote some years ago was a tad more bellicose: *Anyone with reasonable access to the evidence in the case of the assassination of JFK who does not conclude that the President was murdered as the result of a criminal conspiracy is cognitively impaired and/or complicit in the crime.*

And therein lies a tale.

Conspiracy in the death of JFK is as much an historical truth as is the Holocaust. I choose the analogy with sensitivity and care: it is just. Further, those scientists, politicians, attorneys, scholars and other researchers who should (and in many cases do) know better, yet who continue to deny the truth of conspiracy, are morally and intellectually akin to Holocaust deniers.

Accordingly, *Assassination Research* will not dignify the non-conspiracy theorists (hereinafter, and derisively, NCTs) as described above with collegiality—as though these charlatans approached us as honorable searchers for truth and justice! This journal will not bestow, overtly or implicitly, upon the waste products of NCTs the benefit of the doubt that is commonly afforded to scholarly presentations—as though these dark perversions deserved recognition as examples of serious, honest scholarship!

Some years ago, in an essay titled "In the Blossom of Our Sins", I wrote at length about the JFK assassination / Holocaust analogy. Allow me to revisit that work now, portions of which I offer in slightly updated form.

The historian Gordon Craig, in his *New York Review of Books* ("The Devil in the

Details”, 19 September 1996) analysis of David Irving’s controversial biography of Josef Goebbels, wrote:

It is always difficult for the non-historian to remember that there is nothing absolute about historical truth. What we consider as such is only an estimation, based upon what the best available evidence tells us. It must constantly be tested against new information and new interpretations that appear, however implausible they may be, or it will lose its vitality and degenerate into dogma and shibboleth. Such people as David Irving, then, have an indispensable part in the historical enterprise, and we dare not disregard their views.

Recently, when Christopher Hitchens talked with Raul Hilberg, author of the classic text, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1985), he found him unambiguous on this point. “If these people want to speak,” Hilberg said, “let them. It only leads those of us who do research to re-examine what we might have considered as obvious. And that’s useful for us. I have quoted Eichmann references that come from a neo-Nazi publishing house. I am not for taboos and I am not for repression.”

Nor am I. But would Hilberg participate in, or in any way dignify, an effort to “re-examine” the Holocaust if first he were asked to accept the “no Holocaust” position as sufficiently plausible to warrant serious evaluation and respect as a likely depiction of historical truth?

Could Messrs. Craig or Hilberg or any of us, in good conscience, have entertained the arguments of apologists for Goebbels and the rest of the Bunker Boys at a time when the gas yet hissed and the piano wire yet tightened?

Make no mistake: The conflict that claimed JFK as its most famous casualty continues. Think of the essays to be published in *Assassination Research*, then, as return fire in the Battle of Dealey Plaza, in a war for America’s soul.

As for there being “nothing absolute about the historical truth”, I humbly beg to differ with Mr. Craig. One is put in mind of Keats’ cyclically fashionable Negative Capability “of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without irritable reaching after fact or reason”. The usefulness of this quality as a medium for the refinement of our investigative focus—on those aspects of the crime yet unsolved—is defensible: so many possibilities, so little time.

Yet it is the very discomfort of which the poet speaks that gives birth to the resolve required to overcome the forces that would mire us in mystery. And since both “fact” and “reason” remain firmly within our reach, the adoption of Negative Capability as a defining principle for our research efforts would be at least stupid, if not immoral.

What right have we to the indulgence of not knowing?

As we progress from the established truth of conspiracy—the “how” of the hit, if you will—toward a greater understanding of the murder’s “who” and “why”, and ultimately to justice, we must be ever mindful of these distinct categories of inquiry.

When, for instance, Jim Fetzer offers his views “On the Origins of the Assassination of JFK”, the relative merits of the “who” and “why” hypotheses and conclusions offered therein have not the slightest bearing on the truth of “how” the President was killed.

Far too often we have allowed the NCTs to conclude their attacks on untenable “who” and/or “why” investigations with something along the lines of the following sophistry: “Mr. X’s *‘the Martians did it’* theory is hogwash and therefore the Warren Commission conclusions are correct.”

I most certainly do not mean to pass judgment on the aforementioned Fetzer essay; rather, I am attempting to provide the essential paradigm for contextualization and evaluation of all JFK assassination-related scholarship.

David Healy’s “Altering the Zapruder Film” likewise speaks not a word to the truth of conspiracy. Nor, by extension, can the larger Z-film alteration arguments, pro or con, impact, positively or negatively, upon our acceptance of that truth.

And Jim Fetzer’s “The ‘Lone-Nutter’ Refutation” should not be read as an effort to engage NCTs in colloquy, but rather as an expression of its author’s contempt (my word) for the Single Bullet Theory (SBT) and for those who, fully knowledgeable of its untenability, continue to champion it for their own dark purposes. The debate is long over. Jim’s intention is to educate readers new to the issue. George Michael Evica, our fellow editor, author of the seminal *And We Are All Mortal* (1978), my dear friend, summed it up best in the title (and concluding sentence) of his essential essay, “No More Magic Bullet”.

Discussion of Jim’s work brings us back to the Holocaust analogy. NCT scientists have attempted to establish the bona fides of the SBT by presenting favorable interpretations of neutron activation analysis and other investigative processes brought to bear on CE-399, which is Warren Commission-ese for the prestidigitators’ projectile itself. Their work, burdened by false premises, tainted evidence, faulty method and/or other fatal weaknesses with origins too odious to reiterate here, amounts, singularly and in the aggregate, to our own area of inquiry’s version of the Holocaust deniers’ sacred text, *The Leuchter Report* (1989).

Fred Leuchter, the self-hailed engineer and expert in the design and use of execution equipment, became the darling of the Holocaust deniers when, after collecting masonry from ruins at Auschwitz–Birkenau and Majdanek and subjecting it to “analysis”, declared that he had demonstrated by the scientific method that gas chambers did not exist at those sites. Leuchter and his work subsequently were discredited, yet unsurprisingly remain in great favor among the deniers. (For detailed discussion, see D. D. Guttenplan, *Holocaust On Trial*, 2001).

Like their Holocaust-denying brethren, NCTs are not disturbed by contemporary vilifications of “science” supporting their favored argument. Their shared goals are to wrap themselves in the cloak of scientific respectability, stake claim

to a share of the academic high ground, and target future generations of history- and science-challenged students and teachers by hopelessly complicating, and therefore prolonging, the conspiracy/no conspiracy debate that long ago—12:30 PM CST, 22 November 1963, to be precise—was settled.

*Assassination Research*, then, will make use of the weapon of truth to combat those who would pervert the truth. The journal's appeals will be to the minds and hearts of the assassins victims—and we are legion. We outnumber the bastards. Now we must outgun them. It is not too late. The war is not over.

Let us not be afraid to confront our feelings.

In his memoir, *A Drinking Life* (1994), Pet Hamill recalled the reactions of the Irish to the news of President Kennedy's death. Hamill was touring Ireland when the word came:

I let out a wail, a deep scary banshee wail, primitive and wounded, mariachi wail, Hank Williams wail, full of fury and pain—kids were wailing now—but I turned, ashamed of my pain and my weeping, and rushed into the night—I careened around dark streets, in the midst of the wailing, I saw a man punch at a tree, I saw a stout woman fall down in a sitting position on a doorstep, bawling—There was a documentary—about Kennedy's trip to Ireland in May, smiling and laughing and amused, promising at the airport to come back in the springtime and I thought of the line from Yeats, What made us think that he could comb gray Hair?

Indulge me. Imagine a 60-second television commercial opening with a view of names carved into dark stone. The camera begins to pan horizontally as the names start to fade and disappear. Pull back until we see that we are looking at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC. Section by section the stones are vanishing. Soft dissolve to an end table in a comfortable middle class home, on which a photo of a mother and two children is framed. Slowly, beside the woman, the image of an American military officer appears; clearly he is from the Vietnam era. The music, playing softly, is "The Battle Hymn of the Republic".

More photos are similarly treated, including some that depict contemporary military families.

Finally we see a photo of Jacqueline, Caroline and John Kennedy, Jr., taken when the children were in their teens. And we watch as an image of President John Kennedy materializes next to that of his wife.

The narrator says, softly and solemnly, "For all that was lost—for all that can and must be saved—Only truth can lead to justice—Who killed John Fitzgerald Kennedy?"

To be aired during the next Superbowl.

If Oliver Stone will direct, I'll write it.