

Postscript

All experts serve the state and the media and only in that way do they achieve their status. Every expert follows his master, for all former possibilities for independence have been gradually reduced to nil by present society's mode of organization. The most useful expert, of course, is the one who can lie. With their different motives, those who need experts are falsifiers and fools. Whenever individuals lose the capacity to see things for themselves, the expert is there to offer an absolute reassurance....

Such a perfect democracy constructs its own inconceivable foe, terrorism. Its wish is to be judged by its enemies rather than by its results. The story of terrorism is written by the state and it is therefore highly instructive. The spectators must certainly never know everything about terrorism, but they must always know enough to convince them that, compared with terrorism, everything else must be acceptable, or in any case more rational and democratic.

—Guy Debord, [Comments on the Society of the Spectacle](#) (1988)

A striking feature of our culture includes the specific set of illusions presented by commercial print and broadcast media which promote a representation of reality through omission, distortion, lack of contextual analysis, and disinforming opinion stated as obvious, incontestable fact. It is always our choice what lens we adopt to view the world and our place in it. And there are those who possess the antidote to this chimerical representation of reality.



PHOTO: GENE SMIRNOV

Vincent Salandria's immunity to such programming, while minimized by his own self-effacement, provides an extraordinary tonic to the world of U.S. fantasy culture. Truly we find ourselves living in the time of [Koyaanisqatsi](#), the Hopi word meaning "crazy life," "life out of balance," "life disintegrating," and "[a state of life that calls for another way of living.](#)"

In the [Introduction](#), Christopher Sharrett expresses his keen appreciation for Mr. Salandria's "enormous humanity and generosity." For myself, I only began corresponding with Vince in early 2013. I had been thinking in 2012 about the pending 50 year mark of 2013 approaching and began working with Jim Douglass the previous summer. I met Marty Schotz for the first time at [a workshop](#) Jim ran in December with Paul Schrade. Along with [presenting works of Jim's on ratical.org](#), I asked Marty for permission to make an online copy of *History Will Not Absolve Us* for which he enthusiastically consented. Corresponding electronically, I decided in February 2013 I was ready to introduce myself to Vince as I wanted to make an annotated version of [his 1998 COPA address](#).

On February 26 Vince, Marty and I were engaged in an e-mail back-and-forth that touched upon modesty. At one point Vince responded with:

[O]n the assassination I have every reason to be immensely modest. My parents were immigrants who emigrated from the southern instep of Italy. They understood power and its abuses. So, just after the smoke from the assassins' guns lifted from Dealey Place into my head tumbled a peasant's view of the meaning of the assassination. When scholars, employing scientific methodology, logical thinking and hard work arrive at a conclusion about why JFK was killed that supports my intuitions, I am most grateful and appropriately humbled. This recognition on my part is not a function of excessive and false modesty. Rather, it is a simple statement of fact.



Vincent Salandria in *EPOCA Magazine*, 1966

This caused Marty to qualify an essential ingredient:

While it may be true that it was Vincent's Italian anarchist peasant intuition which led him to why JFK was killed, it was his acutely critical faculties and a remarkable ability to analyze a huge amount of material in an incredibly short time that was responsible for the articles he produced first on the *Warren Report* and then on [the 26 volumes](#). You should know that he literally went through the 26 volumes in one weekend and wrote the [third [March 1965](#)] article.

Marty has described many times how, when something new came out about the

assassination, he would first go to the index and see what, if any, attributions were made to Vince. If nothing was there, he concluded nothing constructive was being proffered; just “more mystery.” There is no mystery of who killed the 35th President and why.

Many people think the assassination of the 35th president as something that happened so long ago, it really does not have any bearing on or relevance to today’s mad mad world. The opening of the dust jacket of *History Will Not Absolve Us* leads off with:

On February 14, 1895 Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jew, was deported to Devil’s Island as a result of a frame-up by the French military command. His conviction fanned anti-Semitism and weakened the French Republic. Not until 1906 was he exonerated.

On June 11, 1924 in Italy, Giacomo Matteotti, a valiant and handsome anti-Fascist Socialist Parliamentarian of a well-to-do family, was killed by followers of Mussolini. Because of the lack of effective response to this attack, Mussolini was able to consolidate his totalitarian grip on Italy, leading to a militarization of Italian society and the disastrous Italian alliance with Hitler.

On December 1, 1934 Sergei Mironovich Kirov, Leningrad’s First Secretary, was assassinated in a plot traced to Stalin. The failure of the Russian people to respond adequately to this murder led to the crushing of all political opposition and to Stalin’s reign of terror.

On November 22, 1963 President Kennedy was assassinated in a conspiracy organized at the highest echelons of power in Washington. Lee Harvey Oswald, a low-level CIA agent, was immediately labeled the lone assassin by the U.S. government, and then murdered. The failure of the American people to face the truth of the Kennedy Assassination and deal effectively with it, is our Dreyfus case, our Matteotti case, our Kirov case.

Crimes of the state are always presented as justified and necessary in order to protect the common good. On February 7, 1968, Peter Arnett wrote of the Vietnamese provincial capital Bến Tre:

‘It became necessary to destroy the town to save it,’ a United States major said today. He was talking about the decision by allied commanders to bomb and shell the town regardless of civilian casualties, to rout the Vietcong.

U.S. policy in Vietnam began to change significantly just days after the assassination of President Kennedy. The beginning of the reversal of JFK’s October 11, 1963 [National Security Action Memorandum 263](#)—calling for a staged withdrawal—was [NSAM 273](#) signed by Lyndon Johnson just 4 days after the assassination which for the first time stated “1. It remains the central object of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country *to win* their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy.” (emphasis added). JFK had consistently vetoed

any such commitment by the U.S. to *win* the war. [See James K. Galbraith, film: [James Galbraith-Kennedy was pulling out of Vietnam](#), *Nightly News with Vincent Browne*, TV3 Ireland, “[Exit Strategy - In 1963, JFK ordered a complete withdrawal from Vietnam](#),” *Boston Review*, October/November 2003, and “[JFK’ s Vietnam Withdrawal Plan Is a Fact, Not Speculation](#),” *The Nation*, November 22, 2013.

In addition, speaking in 1992 at American University on C-SPAN’s “JFK: Cinema as History,” [John Judge](#) shared what his mother told him years after retiring from her position as a civilian employee in the Pentagon:

My mother worked for 30 years altogether, but 25 years for the deputy chief of staff in the personnel office of the U.S. Army, directly under the Joint Chiefs of Staff. She was the highest-paid woman employee of the Pentagon; she was five levels above top security. I mentioned to Fletcher Prouty the other day I worked from the bottom up and he worked from the top down, and we met at the Joint Chiefs. My mother’s job was to project overall national draft call figures five years in advance. She had to project an annual national Selective Service call that was right within a hundred people either way five years ahead. She knew from those projections and from the information she got that they were withdrawing from Vietnam.

If you want to get hold of the papers that prove Prouty’s point, I just got this today at the Government Printing Office—*Foreign Relations in the United States, 1961-1963*. The State Department papers are released in [Volume 4 of the Vietnam series](#). This is August to December, 1963, and the security memoranda are in there that talk about Kennedy’s plan. It’s been backed up by Arthur Schlesinger and more recently—yesterday, I believe, or the day before—in the *New York Times* by [Roger Hilsman](#).

He was pulling out. My mother knew that because she had to project those kind of figures. I asked her after she retired, “When did they tell you they would escalate in Vietnam?” because she had to be among the first to know. She said, “Late November of ’63.” I said, “The last week in November?” She said, “Yes, the Monday following the assassination.” I said, “Was this a few more advisers, a change in policy?” She said, “I couldn’t believe the figures. I took them back to the Joint Chiefs in what must have been the first protest by the civilian community to the war in Vietnam and said, ‘These can’t be right,’ and they said, ‘You’ll use them.’” They told her November 25, 1963 that the war in Vietnam would last for 10 years and that 57,000 Americans would die and to figure that in.

As Marty Schotz [describes in his 1998 COPA address](#):

So we have to ask ourselves, “Who can murder the President, frame a CIA agent, and command this kind of cover?” I am not going to reiterate what Vince Salandria has presented to you. As we knew at the time, Kennedy had begun a process of rapprochement with the USSR and had been making clear moves away from the Cold War. The very simple and obvious question is, Who had the means and motive to organize a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy, frame in advance a CIA agent for the murder, use immediately all media channels to spill the frame-up of Oswald to

the world, have the White House radioing Air Force One on the way back from Dallas that Oswald was it before the Dallas police had anything on him? Who can do all this and command a complete cover-up by all our society's institutions? Only one institution had the means and motive to accomplish all this, an element of the United States government that is so necessary to the "defense" of the nation that to expose it would be unthinkable—the answer is obvious—high US military intelligence.

John Judge also described his own research interviewing Strategic Air Command bomber pilots who were on duty, in the air, on November 22, 1963:

I also talked to SAC bomber pilots. Strategic Air Command bomber pilots, who have the responsibility of nuclear and emergency response, who are in the air on regular shifts 24 hours a day. These were in the air over Wright-Patterson Air Force Base when they heard the news that Kennedy had been shot. They ran to open lockers that contain a cryptograph code book that allows them to tell whether the president is calling them and to take orders that go all the way out to fail-safe and nuclear war. There was not a pilot in the air that hour—over Wright-Pat anyway—and I would contend this is the case everywhere else; no reason to isolate it—that had a code book in that locker. We know from [Pierre Salinger's book](#) that there was no code book aboard Air Force Two bringing the entire cabinet back from important meetings that changed the course in Vietnam in the next few days. They were in the air and had no way to communicate with the White House or the president. There's nobody that can touch those books besides the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the highest levels of defense intelligence.

The practiced deception by federal government intelligence officials—both civilian as well as military personnel—is something most people in the U.S. have become inured to over more than two generations. Author Doug Valentine [has researched the CIA for 30 years](#), interviewing over 100 CIA officers. His breadth and depth of knowledge and perspective is informed by a philosophy of life based on the study of language and literary criticism. In his most recent book, [The CIA As Organized Crime - How Covert Operations Corrupt America and the World](#), he explains how the Department of Homeland Security, instituted after the September 11th attacks, is a direct descendant of the CIA's "silver lining" from the Vietnam War: The Phoenix Program.

... the Homeland Security Enterprise exists primarily to protect critical infrastructure assets in the private sector from disenfranchised citizens seeking justice and accountability from government and corporations.... Indeed, the stated goal of the Homeland Security Enterprise is the protection of critical infrastructure assets in the public and private sectors. Not the protection of people. (p. 302)

Valentine's research for his matchless [The Phoenix Program: America's Use of Terror in Vietnam](#), comprised many interviews with CIA officers including Robert "Rob" Simmons who ran for and was elected to Congress in 2000. Valentine focuses on an area of fundamental import: truth and deception. As he explains,

In 2000, in my article in *Counterpunch*, I asked if voters could be certain Simmons would tell them everything they needed to know in order to govern themselves. How could anyone know for sure he wasn't playing a double game or hiding secrets, consistently promoting militarism and war, no matter its necessity or cost? As Simmons once said, "In intelligence you have to lie, cheat, and steal to get the truth. The reason for it is for your national security." (p.270)

In its most basic form, the implicit meaning of "national security" boils down to the relentless pursuit of control and exploitation of global resources by U.S. corporate governing interests. In other words, transnational crime gets to wear the cloak of national security. The goal of such interests are corporate and personal aggrandizement, and consolidation founded on lies, omission, obfuscation, distortion, and deception. The paramount religion of this society is capitalism. In over two hundred years of constitutionally-sanctioned laws, property rights have always trumped human rights as well as the rights of all we share this planet with.

Increasingly, the belief in the necessity to lie, cheat, and steal has become more brazen and codified as the technology of war and surveillance has increased along with the complexity of mechanical and electronic systems that make business run. In his book, Valentine addresses the issue of mass delusion and conscience:

It's easy to put on an act. The best politicians, criminals and CIA officers do it naturally. The problem for the rest of us is that, over time, the actors come to believe it. The myths they internalize are the fatal "lie in the soul" Plato warned about....

Not everyone is a victim of this mass delusion. Warren Milberg, a CIA officer I interviewed for *The Phoenix Program*, told me how, in 1967, the Pentagon invited him and two other Air Force officers to join a secret CIA counterinsurgency program in Vietnam....

Milberg, who identified himself as one of the "Protected Few," joined the program. But the other two officers withdrew, one "as a matter of conscience." Jacques Klein withdrew because "he felt the means and methods that he thought were going to be used in [Phoenix] were similar to the means and methods used by the Nazis in World War Two."

Klein took individual responsibility. Simmons sacrificed his and is forever corrupted. It's that simple. (p.242)

As Jacques Klein observed, the CIA was an occupation force that functioned systematically like the Gestapo and SS Einsatzgruppen in France. (p.259)

It is frightening and deeply disturbing to confront the fact of CIA and U.S. military forces torturing and murdering untold numbers of Vietnamese people—resulting in over three million deaths—akin to what the dreaded and highly organized "murder squads" of

Einsatzgruppen methodically carried out in Europe and Western Asia during World War II. The Nazis have been thoroughly vilified and condemned for what they did. It remains for the equivalent crimes against humanity and crimes against peace, perpetrated by the United States, to be likewise acknowledged and judged. These same forces directed death squads in Latin and Central America and beyond. Sanctioned with the knowledge and direction of high-level U.S. government officials, these actions are a direct result of the extra-constitutional firing of the 35th President. The conspirators sought—and gained—the very “acquisition of unwarranted influence” Eisenhower cogently warned of.

In e-mail Vince shared with me his recollection of the June 9, 1968 rally [in which he spoke](#) in Central Park:

One of the speakers in the Central Park episode was Gloria Steinem. My recollection is that it was not designed as a meeting to discuss the assassinations but rather a peace movement gathering. So far as I remember, I was the only speaker who addressed the assassinations. I also recall that there was not much response from the audience to my address. There was no interest from anyone there in questioning me or engaging me in a conversation on what I had said. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why I was ignored by the audience. I was probably viewed by the people in the audience as off the subject and speaking irrelevantly. Not only did I not connect with the audience, but, as I remember, not one of the speakers addressed a single word to me.

Four days after Robert Kennedy was executed, Vince spoke to an assemblage of people who, along with all the other speakers, could or would not employ critical analysis to make the logical connections of one, two, three, four enemies of our military taken out by.... “lone nuts”:

People, how can it be that diverse madmen, such as the candidates we are asked to accept as the murderers of the four martyrs whom we honor today, are so focused in their madness that they shoot only those great men who are joined with one common thread—dedication to sparing mankind from the oppression and violence visited upon it by our warlords? One would expect madmen—if they are the random products of a generally sick society—to be more diversified in their choice of targets. Friends, human affairs are not guided by ravaging streams of diverse and melancholy madness such as serve the unvarying purpose of killing the most important enemies of our military. If the motivation be madness, then it is the madness of our military.

The “truth” Robert Simmons refers to above is a strange truth in deed for it to require lying, cheating, and stealing in order to get to. Marty Schotz addresses the issue of mass denial in the assassination of JFK both in [his book](#) and [at COPA in 1998](#):

Think of this for a moment. The *Warren Report* is an obvious criminal act of fraud and no history department in any college or university is willing to say so. What does such silence mean?

It means that we are dealing with something that has affected every history department of every college and university in our society, every major newspaper and magazine, and all means of mass communication. It has affected virtually every “loyal American.” This phenomenon is what George Orwell in his novel *1984* called “[crimestop](#)” or “protective stupidity.”

According to Orwell, “crimestop” is really a form of self mind control in which we find the affected individual “stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thought ... not grasping analogies ... failing to perceive logical errors ... misunderstanding the simplest arguments ... and ... being bored or repelled by any train of thought” if such is inimical to the powers that be.

As a clinician, I look at “crimestop” as a mass psychological illness, an involuntary intellectual, emotional and spiritual illness, part of the psychology of war which has pervaded our society....

What does all this tell us about ourselves? Well, one of the implications is that we have a very strange sort of democracy. It is a democracy in which the press is so free that the President can’t have sex with a White House intern without being hauled before the court of public opinion, but the military intelligence establishment can openly assassinate the President and escape without any serious effort by that press to call it to account. The President lying in a civil deposition, and supposedly obstructing justice over something that is totally meaningless, gets infinite attention from our media. This, while clear obstruction of justice in the murder of a President passes in silence.

To see such a thing is to realize when we call ourselves “free” and “democratic”, we are wrapping ourselves in the window dressing of a modern militarist empire—an empire of which we are but subjects. Granted, ladies and gentlemen, some of us in this country may be *privileged* subjects, maybe even the majority of us are privileged subjects, but when the day is done, that is what we are—subjects. We are not citizens of a free democratic society, but subjects of a modern version of the Roman Empire. I suggest to you that this is a truth about ourselves which most Americans would rather not hear, because we Americans love to bask in the illusion that we are a beacon to the world, that we are freer and more democratic than the poor of the world whom our tax dollars have so effectively helped to murder and suppress.

This is the truth which the powers that be have no interest in the American people knowing and which the American people are more than happy to be protected from. Under such conditions it isn’t hard to motivate people to avoid the truth.

What this treasury of Vincent Salandria’s critical analysis provides is the means to shed the blinders we have learned to wear that promote the belief system, explicitly and implicitly asserted every day and amplified through print and broadcast media, that waging war is necessary and justified. That there is no alternative to ever-increasing levels of escalating violence to maintain “national security.” As Vince relates in the [statement he made in 2016](#),

As a consequence of the Kennedy assassination, the national security state which killed Kennedy, is now in substantial control of both our military budget and our foreign policy. Our warfare budget supports perpetual war and causes the consequent depletion of our social welfare and grossly increases the suffering incurred by those in the lower economic brackets. Our efforts to maintain our military global hegemony excites increasing levels of retaliatory terroristic activity. This terroristic activity is further exacerbated by the covert actions of our intelligence services which have little or no respect for national boundaries and sovereignty. Our perpetual wars take a horrible toll on the lives of innocent civilians. The militarism that grew out of the Kennedy assassination is making a future more peaceful nation and world impossible.

In his [2009 COPA Keynote Address](#), Jim Douglass expresses how seeing the truth of the assassination of John Kennedy is enormously liberating in both the spiritual and psychic realms.

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.](#)

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.

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.

Concerning Jim's landmark book, *JFK and the Unspeakable - Why He Died and Why It Matters*, Marty has observed: "What Jim did was to resurrect the JFK in each of us, and thus to set before us the task of carrying on the work he was doing. Jim was able to do this because he saw and was able to [render JFK's story as a gospel tale.](#)"

Vincent Salandria's dedication of bearing witness to and following the polestar of historical truth emits a light we can all likewise be guided by. And in doing so, we can join in the sacred work of supporting the exquisite eons of Life exploring itself on Earth for the seventh generation yet unborn and beyond.

Historical truth is the polestar which guides humankind when we grope for direction to help guide us through the thick morass of current crises. Without historical truth we are denied the guidance and wisdom required to solve the afflictions which now threaten the very existence of the family of man.

— Vincent Salandria, [2016](#)

David Ratcliffe
May, 2017