

## Did Bush Sr. Kill Kennedy and Frame Nixon?

Review of Russ Baker's new book

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Russ Baker's new book presents an account of the U.S. government that is both remarkably new and extensively documented. According to this account, George H. W. Bush, the father of the current president, devoted his career to secret intelligence work with the CIA many years before he became the CIA director, and the network of spies and petroleum plutocrats he began working with early on has played a powerful but hidden role in determining the direction of the U.S. government up to the current day.

New research and newly highlighted information assembled by Baker presents at least the strong possibility that Bush was involved in assassinating President Kennedy, and that Bush was involved in staging the Watergate break-in (and the break-in at Dan Ellsberg's psychiatrist's) with the purpose of having these break-ins exposed and the blame placed on President Nixon. In this account, those in on the get-Nixon plot included John Dean and Bob Woodward. While this retelling of history would make a certain Robert Redford movie look really, really silly, it would — on the other hand — make Woodward's performance during Watergate fit more coherently with everything he's known to have done before and since. It would also give new meaning to Dean's recent book title "Conservatives Without a Conscience." I would love to see either of these men's response to Baker's book.

Many readers of this review may now be rushing off to declare Baker either profoundly insane or (probably in fewer cases) indisputably correct in his views regarding the removal of Kennedy and Nixon from the White House, but I would strongly urge reading the book before doing so. It's called "Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, the Powerful Forces That Put It In The White House, And What Their Influence Means for America."

Those of us who have pushed for years now to have Bush Jr. impeached or prosecuted have heard all imaginable excuses and then some. One has been this: "Punishing the figurehead puppet president would amount to excusing the real powers behind the throne." And, of course, some of us have never doubted that such powers existed, but considered letting Bush and Cheney walk free as a surer way to protect other guilty parties than punishing them would be. There are guilty parties in Congress too, of course, but how the pervasiveness of guilt justifies letting everyone off the hook has always escaped me. The arrests have to begin somewhere. In any case, I bring up the image of presidents as puppets because Baker provides a new variation on that theme. In his account, Bush Jr. is indeed not the driving force, but a clique centered around his father is.

Baker does not focus on Bush Jr.'s grandfather, Prescott Bush, and does not even mention his role in the plot to overthrow President Roosevelt in 1933 (<http://davidswanson.org/node/1337> ). Baker's focus is on Poppy, although Prescott and his anger toward Kennedy are in the background. It is not a completely new idea to suppose

that Kennedy was killed because he angered the CIA and powerful Americans with business interests in Cuba. It is, as far as I know, new to show, as Baker extensively documents and then summarizes, that:

“Poppy Bush was closely tied to key members of the intelligence community including the deposed CIA head with a known grudge against JFK; he was also tied to Texas oligarchs who hated Kennedy’s politics and whose wealth was directly threatened by Kennedy; this network was part of the military/intelligence elite with a history of using assassination as an instrument of policy.

“Poppy Bush was in Dallas on November 21 and most likely the morning of November 22. He hid that fact, he lied about knowing where he was, then he created an alibi based on a lead he knew was false. And he never acknowledged the closeness of his relationship with Oswald’s handler George de Mohrenschildt.

“Poppy’s business partner Thomas Devine met with de Mohrenschildt during that period, on behalf of the CIA.

“Poppy’s eventual Texas running mate in the 1964 election, Jack Crichton, was connected to the military intelligence figures who led Kennedy’s motorcade.

“Crichton and D. Harold Byrd, owner of the Texas School Book Depository building, were both connected to de Mohrenschildt — and directly to each other through oil-business dealings.

“Byrd brought in the tenant that hired Oswald shortly before the assassination.

“Oswald got his job in the building through a friend of de Mohrenschildt’s with her own intelligence connections — including family ties to Allen Dulles.”

You start to get a taste of the sort of case Baker builds. It’s persuasive, but not conclusive. If you buy into the basic outlines of it, you come up against a history of American politics in which our top “elected” officials are not just chosen through a process openly corrupted by money and media and parties, but are also chosen through a process of covert ops. Kennedy was replaced by Johnson because he was more obedient to Texas oilmen. Nixon was replaced by Ford for similar reasons. Bush Sr. made a deal with Iran not to release American hostages until Reagan defeated Carter. (Baker recounts but adds nothing new to this story, already reported elsewhere.) Bush Sr. and Jr. ran election campaigns that employed CIA-like techniques. It’s a compelling narrative with probably a great deal of truth to it, and the viciousness of Republican attacks on President Clinton fits into it. So does the reluctance of Carter, Clinton, Obama, and others to stray too far from positions acceptable to those (like Robert Gates) with places in the more permanent power structure. So does the possibility that Michael Connell was murdered last week.

The interesting thing about Baker’s claims regarding Kennedy and Nixon is that they would suggest that the CIA actually succeeded at something, that — in fact — the CIA or members thereof managed to keep major secrets for decades. Of course, they were morally reprehensible secrets and provide further rationale for eliminating the CIA and all secret government agencies, not any sort of justification for keeping them going.

While Nixon and Kennedy appear in this account almost exclusively in the role of victims, we

should remember that their failures to please a certain powerful group do not absolve them of their own sins, even if that group may have done them in. While Kennedy may have courted the wrath of certain powers by refusing to do to Cuba what Dubya later did to Iraq, Nixon's failing was not any deficiency in the area of war criminality. While part of what Nixon was covering up may have been staged to frame him, his most serious offenses — those involving the mass slaughter of human beings — have been marginalized in all accounts, old and new, of our attempts to hold him accountable. And Nixon himself secretly derailed a possible peace agreement in order to get himself into the same White House that he was later chased out of in disgrace.

*David Swanson is the author of the upcoming book "Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union" by Seven Stories Press and of the introduction to "The 35 Articles of Impeachment and the Case for Prosecuting George W. Bush" published by Feral House and available at Amazon.com. Swanson holds a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Virginia. He has worked as a newspaper reporter and as a communications director, with jobs including press secretary for Dennis Kucinich's 2004 presidential campaign, media coordinator for the International Labor Communications Association, and three years as communications coordinator for ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. Swanson is Co-Founder of AfterDowningStreet.org, creator of ConvictBushCheney.org and Washington Director of Democrats.com, a board member of Progressive Democrats of America, the Backbone Campaign, and Voters for Peace, a member of the legislative working group of United for Peace and Justice, and convener of the accountability and prosecution working group of United for Peace and Justice.*

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