

John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Robert F. Kennedy. A Bizarre Kind of Executive Action: The Suppression of Epochal Documentaries. Edward Curtin

By [Edward Curtin](#)

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"The old lie: Dulce et decorum est /Pro patria mori (It is a sweet and fitting thing to die for one's country)" - Wilfred Owen

Yes, it seems fitting that I am writing these words on November 11, Veterans Day in the U.S. and Remembrance Day in Commonwealth countries, a day that began as Armistice Day to celebrate the ending of World War I, the "war to end all wars."

That phrase has become a sardonic joke in the century that has followed as wars have piled up upon wars to create a permanent condition, and the censorship and propaganda that became acute with WW I have been exacerbated a hundredfold today. The number of dead soldiers and civilians in the century since numbs a mind intent on counting numbers, as courage, love, and innocence wails from skeletons sleeping deep in dirt everywhere. The minds of the living are ravished at the thought of so much death.



Almost a year ago [I reviewed a film - Four Died Trying](#) - about four American men who were assassinated by the U.S. government because they opposed the wars upon which their

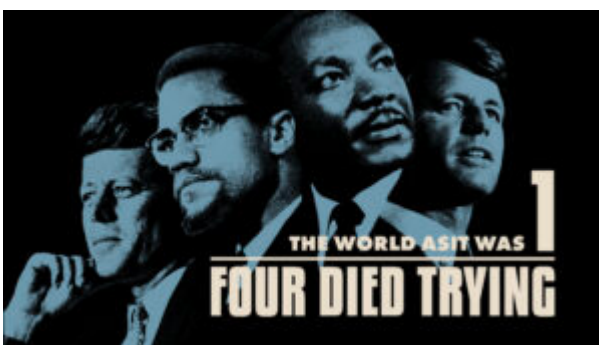
country had come to rely: **President John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Robert F. Kennedy.** I wrote of this documentary film, directed by John Kirby and produced by Libby Handros, that it was powerful, riveting, and masterful, the opening 58 minute prologue to a film series meant to be released at intervals over a few years. This prologue was released at the end of 2023 to great applause.

I wrote of it:

Today we are living the consequences of the CIA/national security state's 1960s takeover of the country. Their message then and now: We, the national security state, rule, we have the guns, the media, and the power to dominate you. We control the stories you are meant to hear. If you get uppity, well-known, and dare challenge us, we will buy you off, denigrate you, or, if neither works, we will kill you. You are helpless, they reiterate endlessly. Bang. Bang. Bang.

But they lie, and this series of films, beginning with its first installment, will tell you why. It will show why understanding the past is essential for transforming the present. It will profoundly inspire you to see and hear these four bold and courageous men refuse to back down to the evil forces that shot them down. It will open your eyes to the parallel spiritual paths they walked and the similarity of the messages they talked about – peace, justice, racism, colonialism, human rights, and the need for economic equality – not just in the U.S.A. but across the world, for the fate of all people was then, and is now, linked to the need to transform the U.S. warfare state into a country of peace and human reconciliation, just as these four men radically underwent deep transformations in the last year of their brief lives.

This 58 minute prologue touches on many of themes that will follow in the months ahead. Season One will be divided into chapters that cover the four assassinations together with background material covering “the world as it was” in the 1950s with its Cold War propaganda, McCarthyism, the rise of the military-industrial complex, the CIA, red-baiting, and the ever present fear of nuclear war. Season Two will be devoted to the government and media coverups, citizen investigations, and the intelligence agencies' and their media mouthpieces' mind control operations aimed at the American people that continue today.



Then in March of this year [I wrote](#) about the second film in the series, *The World As It Was*, that explores the very disturbing history of the 1950s in the U.S.A., a decade that lay the foundation of fear upon which the horrors of the 1960s were built, and from which we now are reaping the flowers of evil that have sprung up everywhere we look because the evils of those decades have never been adequately addressed.

But I was hopeful that if enough people got see to see these illuminating and brilliantly done films, built on more than 120 interviews over six years with key historical figures, including many family members of the four men, change was possible because more people would demand accountability. That the movies were also entertaining, despite their profoundly serious content, boded well for their reaching a wide audience.

Just recently, I was again asked by the filmmakers, as were others, to preview the third film, *Jack Joins the Revolution*, about John F. Kennedy, from his youth to the hope he inspired when he entered politics in 1947 until his death on November 22, 1963 and the shock and despair that overtook the nation and the world. This third film matched the brilliance of the first two, but I did wonder why there had been a lapse of more than six months between this one and the previous.

It seemed to me that this was the perfect time for these films to be released in quick succession to have a profound effect.

But having watched this third film, I discovered to my great surprise that it has not been released, nor, even more shockingly, has the second one that I previewed eight months ago. Why? I do not know, but it is very odd, to put it mildly. I do know that by not releasing them now a significant opportunity is being lost. These films would be of great help to the country, because they depict what a truly populist presidency looks like and the malign forces that oppose him. But alas, for reasons that are hard to fathom, the films are being suppressed by someone. We can only hope that the filmmakers will be successful in their efforts to free the films in time for them to be of value at this crucial moment in our history.

It is well known that JFK was a naval war hero in WW II, but less well known that his war experience turned him fiercely against war, that to end all wars was a fundamental theme of his for the rest of his life.

Image: United States Navy Lieutenant Junior Grade John F. Kennedy, 1942 (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum Photograph by Frank Turgeon Jr.)



Jack Joins the Revolution explores this and reminds the viewer that Kennedy was well acquainted with death, having almost died eight times before he was assassinated, something he knew was coming. He was courageous in the extreme. Thus my earlier reference to Veterans Day, for JFK was a veteran of exceptional courage who not only saved

his comrades when their PT boat was sunk by the Japanese in the south Pacific, but tried to the end to save his country and the world from the madness of the endless wars that have followed his death at the hands of the CIA and the U.S. warfare state.

This film clearly shows why he became such an obstacle to the imperial war machine and the CIA that to this very day have a huge stake in suppressing the truth about the man. If the film (and the others) is not released, these forces will have been successful. It will be another posthumous assassination.

For what is most striking about this episode is the light it sheds on John Kennedy's forceful, long-standing anti-colonial and anti-imperial convictions for which he was attacked by politicians of both parties. It is suggested, and I think rightly, that this grew out of his Irish roots, for Ireland's long fight for independence from British colonial occupation was dear to his heart and also a fundamental inspiration in the following decades for anti-colonial freedom fighters everywhere. It still is.

To listen to the film's clips of his speeches on these topics is a revelation for those unfamiliar, not only with his radical views for a politician, but to his passionate eloquence that is sorely missing today. Attacking the policies of support for dictators and the coups against foreign leaders under the Eisenhower administration and the CIA led by **Allen Dulles**, JFK called for freedom and independence for people's everywhere and the end of colonialism supported by the U.S. and other nations. Algeria, Iran, Cuba, Latin America, Africa – it's a long list.

Even before he became president, in 1957, then Senator Kennedy gave a speech in the U.S. Senate that sent shock waves throughout Washington, D.C. and around the world. He came out in support of Algerian independence from France and African liberation generally, and against colonial imperialism.

As chair of the Senate's African Subcommittee in 1959, he urged sympathy for African and Asian independence movements as part of American foreign policy. He believed that continued support of colonial policies would only end in more bloodshed because the voices of independence would not be denied, nor should they be.

That speech caused an international uproar, and in the U.S.A. Kennedy was harshly criticized by Eisenhower, Nixon, John Foster Dulles, and even members of the Democratic party, such as Adlai Stevenson and Dean Acheson. But it was applauded in Africa and the Third World.

Yet JFK continued throughout his 1960 presidential campaign to raise his voice against colonialism throughout the world and for free and independent African nations. Such views were anathema to the foreign policy establishment, including the CIA and the burgeoning military industrial complex that President Eisenhower belatedly warned against in his Farewell Address, delivered nine months after approving the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in March 1960; this juxtaposition revealed the hold the Pentagon and CIA had and has on sitting presidents, as the pressure for war became structurally systematized and Kennedy was removed through a public execution for all the world to see.

Many voices speak to this and other issues in the film: Oliver Stone, James W. Douglass, RFK, Jr., Robert Dallek, Monica Wiesak, his niece Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Peter Dale Scott, James Galbraith, his nephew Stephen Smith, David Talbot, Peter Janney, and others.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. speaks about the 1953 U.S. coup against the democratically elected **Prime Minister Mohammad Mossaddegh** of Iran and of the approximately 72 CIA-led known coups the United States engineered between 1947 and 1989; author Stephen Schlesinger of the Dulles brothers' work for the United Fruit Company and their subsequent involvement in the 1954 coup d'état against the democratically elected Guatemalan **President Jacobo Árbenz** who was instituting land reform that threatened United Fruit's hold on so much of the country. In both cases, and many others, the U.S. supported vicious dictators and decades of terrible bloodshed and civil wars. We see a clip of JFK himself condemning the U.S. support of the Cuban dictator Batista, who was finally overthrown by Fidel Castro and his rebel compatriots, the Cuban Revolution that Kennedy understood and sympathized with.

All this just leading up to Kennedy's presidency, which will be covered in the next film.

Watching this riveting documentary, one cannot but be deeply impressed with a side of John Kennedy few know - his hatred of oppression, colonialism, imperialism, war, and his love of freedom for all people. One comes away from the film knowing full well why the CIA had branded him an arch-enemy even before he took office, and then when in office he rattled their cage so much more in the cause of peace.

And one is left asking: why then has this film (and its predecessor about the right-wing witch hunt and crackdown on dissent in the 1950s) not been released to the public at a time when nothing could be more timely?

It is a very strange kind of executive action, considering the brilliance and importance of these films for today - this very moment in history.

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This article was originally published on the author's blog site, [Behind the Curtain](#).

Edward Curtin is a prominent author, researcher and sociologist based in Western Massachusetts. He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG).

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Articles by: **Edward Curtin**

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