
Book Reviews

The murder of a princess

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Death of a Princess—The Investigation

by Thomas Sancton and Scott MacLeod
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It should come as no surprise that the first comprehensive reviews of the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Diana, Princess of Wales, and her friend Dodi Fayed, come from American journalists. Both the British and French ruling establishments have distinct, but equally powerful vested interests in covering up the growing evidence that Diana, Dodi, their chauffeur Henri Paul, and Dodi's bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones, were the victims of a premeditated murder plot—not a simple traffic accident.

The Arabic media, particularly the Egyptian press, which had a particularly strong interest in the tragedy, given the Egyptian roots of the Al-Fayed family, were so quick to judge the deaths a murder plot, ordered by the House of Windsor and executed by the British Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, or the Israeli Mossad, that they collectively failed to seriously investigate or report the details that emerged, gradually, over the weeks and months after the crash.

The French, for their part, have a great deal of explaining to do: for starters, regarding the two-hour delay in getting Princess Diana to a hospital, where life-saving emergency surgery could have been performed. The entire conduct of the police forensic probe can only be described as shameless bungling or outright sabotage. However, the police forensic and investigative work must be carefully distinguished from the judicious handling of the case to date, by the lead investigating magistrate, Hervé Stephan, who first received the full report from the Paris Police Criminal Brigade only at the end of 1997. Judge Stephan is now in the process of reviewing the “raw” police reports, meeting with the civil parties to the case, including Mohamed Al Fayed, and assessing where the probe should now proceed. It is premature to judge his handling of the highly controversial case, whereas the police bungling or

worse, has been evident from day one.

For the House of Windsor, the suppression of all evidence that would point to a murder conspiracy, remains, to this day, a matter of its existential survival. The majority of the 10 million Britons who turned out for Princess Diana's funeral have their suspicions that the royal family may have played a role in the death of the “People's Princess.” Were investigating magistrate Stephan to announce that he was formally opening a murder investigation, the closest thing to a revolution against the House of Windsor since 1776, would likely erupt on English soil.

The majority of British and French media have toed the establishment line, conduiting every bit of disinformation foisted off by the French police and the British monarchy, and slandering Mohamed Al Fayed, the father of Dodi Fayed and the most outspoken critic of the official investigation into the Aug. 31, 1997 Paris crash. In February 1998, in an exclusive three-part interview with the London *Mirror*, Al Fayed stated that he was “99.9% certain” that Diana and Dodi were the victims of a murder conspiracy. He vowed not to rest until the truth is made public.

Diana's American cousins

Another little-mentioned, but significant factor needs to be noted at the outset of this review. Although Princess Diana was from one of the oldest and most established English families, the Spencers, descended from three English kings, and although she and Dodi Fayed were reportedly planning to reside in Paris (if the accounts of their planned marriage are accurate), Princess Diana had her own “special relationship” to the United States—especially since Bill and Hillary Rodham Clinton moved into the White House. The Princess enjoyed more freedom from the otherwise constant paparazzi harassment while visiting with friends in America, than anywhere else. She vacationed with President Clinton and the First Lady on Martha's Vineyard. She frequently visited her close friend, the wife of the Brazilian ambassador in Washington. By some accounts, Princess Diana was even considering moving to the United States, just prior to the start of her love affair with Dodi Fayed.

Sources in Washington have told *EIR* that there is still very serious, albeit low-key interest in the probe by investigating magistrate Stephan, from the U.S. government. Reportedly, U.S. agencies have “informally” interviewed all of the American eyewitnesses to the crash, and this has helped shape a widespread view that the French are running a cover-up—probably in league with British intelligence and the Crown. At one point in the days immediately after the Aug. 31, 1997 crash in the Place de l'Alma tunnel, two U.S. Congressional committees were seeking some justification for holding public hearings into the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed, sources in Washington have reported.

Even in the United States, only two media organizations



Princess Diana arrives at the Ritz Hotel in Paris on Aug. 30, 1997, the day before her death. Sancton and MacLeod's book is a taboo-buster: It doesn't tell the whole truth, but it raises important questions that certain people do not want raised.

stand out for having mounted a sustained probe into the Aug. 31 crash: *EIR* and *Time* magazine. (Among the television news teams, only Geraldo Rivera's Investigative Report and Larry King Live have provided sustained coverage.) Even though *EIR*'s ongoing coverage of the crash and its aftermath distinguished itself from the *Time* magazine team's book-length account, by asserting that the preponderance of evidence points to premediated vehicular homicide by a professional team of assassins, the *Time* authors, Paris bureau chief Thomas Sancton and Middle East correspondent Scott MacLeod, single out *EIR* for providing the most well-documented case for the murder conspiracy.

In the final chapter of their book, titled "Was it Murder?" Sancton and MacLeod write: "There have been some attempts to document the conspiracy case more thoroughly. A publication called the *Executive Intelligence Review*, for example, has published a long investigation by Jeffrey Steinberg. He has also discussed his theories on a U.S. television program hosted by Geraldo Rivera, pointing to the inconsistencies of what, he argues, should have been conducted from the beginning as a murder investigation by French authorities."

At this point, in a typical case of after-the-fact editing by some publishing house attorney or editor, a sentence was added, aimed at undermining the previous, brief, accurate summary of *EIR*'s view of the case by Sancton and MacLeod. The fact that the outlandish sentence makes the authors of the book appear foolish, lends further credence to this reviewer's suspicion that the sentence was added after the final manuscript was submitted for editing. "Steinberg's reasonable-sounding arguments are somewhat undermined," the sen-

tence read, "by the fact that they appeared in a review associated with Lyndon LaRouche, a marginal ex-Presidential candidate and convicted felon who also reportedly believed that the Grateful Dead were a British intelligence plant to corrupt American youth."

Ironically, just a few paragraphs after this gratuitous, all-too-familiar "mainstream" news media attack upon LaRouche, the author noted that Mohamed Al Fayed, from the outset, shared virtually all of the concerns highlighted in the *EIR* investigation, about the contradictions and unanswered questions in the French police probe. "Persons close to Mohammed Al Fayed with knowledge of the official investigation have warned him that a variety of problems make it as yet impossible to conclude that Diana and Dodi died in an ordinary traffic accident," the authors write. "They claim that the crime scene was not properly preserved, that the Mercedes was removed from the tunnel with 'indecent haste,' and that initially the French police either were ignorant or lied about a collision with a second car, the mysterious Fiat Uno. They continue to insist, though without concrete evidence, that the post-mortem on Henri Paul was botched and thus led too easily to the drunk-driver conclusion."

The authors continued: "Serious unanswered questions, they say, include why it took medical rescuers nearly two hours to get the Princess to a hospital; why French authorities have not made available tapes from surveillance cameras outside the Ministry of Justice (just next to the Ritz) and along the Mercedes' itinerary; and why MI6, which would have been alerted to Diana's presence in Paris that evening, has failed to come forth with what they know about the crash.

Investigators, they add, are closely examining enlarged stills taken from the Ritz security videotapes to identify suspicious men in the crowd outside the hotel, apparently neither photographers nor tourists, shortly before Dodi and Diana fled from the rear.”

Anyone familiar with the *EIR* coverage of the probe since the Aug. 31, 1997 events, will recognize immediately that the Al Fayed concerns about contradictory evidence, unanswered questions, and other anomalies, are very much in line with the *EIR* findings.

One obvious point of departure of the *EIR* probe from the *Time* correspondents’ book is over the nature and role of the British monarchy in the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Diana and Dodi. Yet, even here, while dismissing the idea that the royals could have ordered the murders of Diana and Dodi, Sancton and MacLeod provide tantalizing hints about the power of the monarchy and its possible role in the deaths. In the same, concluding chapter, “Was it Murder?” they report having received a letter from a retired British barrister, who accurately noted:

“It doesn’t need Queen Elizabeth to order a murder, it merely needs an agent or officer from one of the 16 [Commonwealth] countries to *think* she ordered it. If, for example, someone disaffected about landmines should arrange for a sworn servant of QE II to believe that she ordered Di’s demise, the said sworn servant would believe that it was a lawful order carrying total immunity from prosecution or guilt.”¹

In a fallacy of composition that recurs throughout the book, Sancton and MacLeod argue that the idea of MI6 involvement in an assassination of Diana and Dodi, was discredited by the fact that Diana and Dodi first became romantically involved in July 1997, and the crash occurred on Aug. 31. “A murder,” they say, “would probably be less hastily arranged. The news that Diana and Dodi were dating did not break until Aug. 7. There is no evidence that they informed anyone else of their marriage plans before the morning of Aug. 30, and they died less than 24 hours later. Certainly a well-trained and experienced special forces squad could, with little advance notification, carry out an assassination against a target that had only light bodyguard protection, but the decision process preceding such a mission would, one surmises, have taken far longer.”

The problem with Sancton and MacLeod’s formulation is that it presumes that the only motive that the British royals might have for murdering Princess Diana was their fear that she might marry a Muslim, and, perhaps, even convert to

Islam. What about Princess Diana’s seven-year running war with the Windsors, a battle for the hearts and minds of the British people that she was winning hands down?

As *EIR* had reported, long before the crash, Princess Diana had first thrown down the gauntlet against the British royal family in 1991, when she began working, albeit secretly, with author Andrew Morton, on a book-length account of life inside the world’s most wealthy and powerful dysfunctional family. In November 1995, when Princess Diana gave her famous TV interview to BBC Panorama, in which she declared her then-estranged, later divorced husband, Prince Charles, unfit to be king, she made her war with the Windsors a matter of public record. British sources have reported that her BBC appearance triggered a far-reaching public debate over the future of the House of Windsor.

Her public campaign against the Windsors continued right up to the moment of her death. On Aug. 27, 1997, the French daily *Le Monde* had published an interview with the Princess, in which she reiterated even more forcefully, that Prince Charles was incapable of ruling. At the time of her 1995 BBC interview, there had been open calls in such monarchy-linked news organs as Rupert Murdoch’s London *Times* and the Hollinger Corp.’s *Telegraph*, for the Princess to be eliminated. Ironically, on the day of the fatal crash, the *Mirror* carried a story that Prince Philip had ordered MI6 to launch a campaign to break up Diana’s relationship with the Al Fayed family. A special MI6 briefing for the inner circle of royal advisers, the Way Ahead Group, had been scheduled for Sept. 2, 1997.

So, there was no lack of time to prepare and dispatch multiple teams of highly trained killers to wait for the appropriate “target of opportunity” moment to strike.

The useful contributions

It is also appropriate to identify some of the *Death of a Princess*’s important contributions to the probe of the deaths of Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed, and to recommend that anyone interested in seriously following the twists and turns in the case, read this book.

If anything, Sancton and MacLeod were as thorough as time would permit, in meticulously tracing the events leading up to the fatal crash, and in detailing the French investigation. Their work drew upon a large, and diverse range of official and unofficial sources, from French investigators, to the paparazzi and their attorneys, to people associated with Mohamed Al Fayed. One gets the distinct impression that the authors themselves have serious reservations about the rush to declare the Aug. 31 crash an open and shut case of drunk driving. Rather than openly state their views, the authors chose instead to present a vast array of well-documented facts, then present every contradictory possible interpretation of the most important facts, and leave the cognitive process to their readers. Presuming that they relish the idea of continuing their employment with *Time*, this is not surprising. Given the stakes,

1. For accuracy, it should be noted that the barrister’s reference to “the 16 countries” does not refer to the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, which currently has 54 members, but to the states where Queen Elizabeth II is still the sovereign. In addition to the United Kingdom, this group includes some large countries, like Canada and Australia, in addition to many of the Caribbean offshore money-laundering havens. See, for example, *EIR*’s *Special Report*, “The True Story Behind the Fall of the House of Windsor,” September 1997.

any open assertion of murder would have brought on a torrent of attacks. (*EIR* has been informed by well-placed U.S. government sources that the British royals and MI6 have filed formal and informal protests over the continuing *EIR* coverage of the deaths of Diana and Dodi, including charges that the couple were assassinated.)

Clearly, the *Time* authors were in a rush to go to press, given the flood of books on the death of Diana that will appear in bookstores in the immediate months ahead. The haste was most evident in the fact that the first edition did not include an index, an aggravation for researchers who will use this book as an early encyclopedic reference file on the case.

A few of the findings of Sancton and MacLeod stand out. In the book's second chapter, titled "Fighting for Life," the authors thoroughly document the abject failure of the French emergency rescue team to provide competent medical attention to Princess Diana, who probably could have survived the crash, had she been gotten into surgery in time to stop the internal bleeding. The authors interviewed Dr. John Ochsner, the chairman emeritus of the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, and one of the world's leading cardiovascular surgeons (due to France's strict privacy laws, no French doctor would comment specifically on the Diana case). Asked whether someone in Diana's state had a chance of surviving, Dr. Ochsner stated, "Sure, depending on the size of the rent, or tear. If it wasn't too big, they could put the patient on a heart-lung machine and just go in and do [the repair to the pulmonary vein] electively. It's pretty obvious: with that lesion, if you can get them in the hospital and on a heart-lung machine early enough you can save them. But time is of the essence."

But, as the authors point out, it took an hour and 45 minutes from the time the first emergency vehicles arrived on the scene to get Diana to the hospital! Dr. Ochsner told Sancton and MacLeod: "Given that she was still alive after nearly two hours, if they'd have gotten her there in an hour, they might have saved her."

Sancton and MacLeod also corroborate another important piece of what happened in the tunnel. Paris Police Chief Philippe Massoni was notified of the crash moments after the first call came in to the emergency number. Within 45 minutes, he was at the tunnel, taking charge of the rescue effort and the preliminary investigation. He dissuaded Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement from coming to the Place de l'Alma tunnel. Instead, Chevènement went directly to La Pitié Salpêtrière Hospital, where Diana was to be brought. Chevènement was at the hospital for nearly an hour before Diana arrived. It took one hour before the ambulance left the tunnel, and another 43 minutes to drive 3.8 miles to La Pitié Salpêtrière.

As *EIR* emphasized in our Nov. 21, 1997 issue, Massoni and Chevènement bear personal responsibility for the death of Princess Diana. They were on the scene, in charge of the rescue effort. As we noted, in the United States, the two top government officials would have likely been indicted for manslaughter, for their role in depriving Princess Diana of

the life-saving emergency room care.

Another useful contribution to the Diana-Dodi probe by Sancton and MacLeod involves a forensic analysis of the crash site. The two authors hired a military engineer with years of professional experience in the automobile industry, to carefully analyze the crash site, interview key witnesses, and prepare a report on what the evidence showed about the events in the Place de l'Alma tunnel on Aug. 31. The expert, Jean Pietri, developed a detailed analysis of the collision between the Mercedes carrying Diana and Dodi, and the mysterious Fiat Uno. His findings buttressed *EIR*'s assessments in several significant ways. He concluded, in stark contrast to the disinformation put out by the French police, that the Mercedes was travelling at approximately 60 miles per hour at the time of the crash—not 120 mph. He also marvelled at the control that Henri Paul appeared to have over the car, at the point of the initial collision with the Fiat Uno, especially given that the Mercedes was being chased by several other vehicles. Hardly the sharp reflexes of someone high on alcohol and prescription drugs.

Ultimately, Pietri was working in the realm of hypothesis, since the only people who know, precisely, what happened are the sole survivor of the Mercedes crash, Trevor Rees-Jones, who still suffers partial amnesia, and the driver and any passengers of the Fiat Uno—who disappeared from the face of the earth, along with the car.

Some of the most tantalizing details in the Sancton and MacLeod book appear in footnotes, or passing references in the text. For example, in a footnote on page 51, the authors report, "Another troubling fact that emerged from Henri Paul's post-mortem: his blood was found to contain an abnormally high level of carbon monoxide. One possible explanation, though purely speculative in the absence of supporting evidence: exhaust fumes may have been leaking into the interior of the Mercedes."

Sources close to the probe have told *EIR* that the levels of carbon monoxide in Paul's bloodstream were high enough to seriously disrupt his performance behind the wheel. How might such a carbon monoxide concentration have gotten into the passenger compartment of the car? Might it have been sabotage? Sancton and MacLeod raise the question, but never pursue it, a mistake that one would hope is not being repeated by magistrate Stephan.

In the weeks since *Death of a Princess* was released simultaneously in France, Britain, and the United States, the book has been the subject of a drumbeat of criticism—not because the authors held back from the conclusion that a preponderance of evidence suggests murder. On the contrary, the book and the authors have been assailed for daring to raise as many questions as they have. In that sense, the book is a taboobuster, which deserves to be read—not because it tells the full, unexpurgated truth, but because it gives the reader a well-documented foundation for drawing the appropriate conclusions.