

In Memoriam: Pierre Salinger and The Institution of the Presidency

by Nina Ogden

Pierre Salinger died in exile in France on Oct. 16 at the age of 79. Salinger, who was best known as President John F. Kennedy's Cabinet-level press secretary, died of a heart attack in Cavaillon Hospital in Provence. His wife, Nicole, said: "We left the United States several years ago, after the election of George W. Bush. Pierre will be buried in the Arlington military cemetery where John F. Kennedy rests."

Pierre Salinger led a remarkable life. From age 4 to 12, he studied to become a concert pianist. His father was an American Jewish mining engineer and his mother was a French Catholic. His maternal grandfather, Pierre Bietry, who served in the French Parliament from 1906 to 1910, was a vigorous defender of the legendary Captain Alfred Dreyfus. In San Francisco, where Salinger was born in 1925, he was considered a child prodigy. He gave frequent piano concerts, and also studied violin and composition.

He commanded a ship in the South Pacific in World War II at the age of 19, and won Navy and Marine Corps medals for heroic conduct. After the war, he became an award-winning investigative reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Colliers Magazine*. His reporting brought him to the attention of Bobby Kennedy, who hired him as an investigator on the Senate Racketeering Committee, where he met then Sen. John Kennedy. When JFK ran for President, he asked Salinger to run his press operations. And when Kennedy won the Presidency, the 35-year-old Salinger became his press secretary. Throughout the rest of his life as Senator from California, as ABC's Paris bureau chief, editor of the French weekly news magazine *L'Express*, businessman, lobbyist, and so on, he remained a leading member of that uniquely American institution, the institution of the Presidency.

Salinger and LaRouche

The way that Pierre Salinger came to consider Lyndon LaRouche a friend and colleague was typical of his stubborn sense of principle. I first called him in March 1995 to discuss the exoneration of LaRouche, who had been made a political prisoner by the George H.W. Bush Administration in 1989, on trumped-up charges (LaRouche was freed on parole in 1994). After this brief discussion, Salinger left for France to manage Jacques Chirac's successful campaign for President. He called me when he returned in May. He had col-

lected a pile of clippings while in France which vilified LaRouche's collaborator Jacques Cheminade, slandering him as "le candidat de Saddam." Salinger had published a book, *Secret Dossier: The Hidden Agenda Behind the Gulf War*, in 1991, which was an international best-seller, but was virtually suppressed in the United States. He lost his job with ABC for proving, as he said, that "the stupid policies of [the elder] George Bush had created the Gulf War." Salinger wrote in the epilogue to his book, "Defeating Iraq was rapid, but long-term peace may not be easy to achieve." The intensity of attacks on Cheminade in France, he told me, was so strong that this proved to him that "LaRouche was right."



White House Press Secretary Pierre Salinger (left), with President John F. Kennedy in the Oval Office, March 1961. Salinger will be buried in Arlington military cemetery, where Kennedy rests.

He decided that Bush had thrown LaRouche in jail to break up, once and for all, LaRouche's back-channel discussions with the Russians (which had been set up with the sanction of the Reagan Administration), to facilitate the "insanity of the so-called alliance around the Gulf War." So, he said, "LaRouche's enemies are my enemies—that makes us friends." The meetings that followed over the years, both in the United States with Lyndon and Helga LaRouche and their associates, and in France with Jacques Cheminade, reflected Salinger's role in the institution of the Presidency.

Two examples are strong memories. In 1997 he told me that George and Barbara Bush were competing with the Kennedy family and wanted to build a dynasty. He said that Bush had created a "slush fund" to make either Jeb or George W. the President in 2000. "Tell Lyn," he said. "He'll believe me." Knowing that I was going to cover the meeting of the Association of Former Members of Congress for this news service that weekend, he said, "Tell them too. They won't believe you, but they'll apologize later." He was right: Lyn did believe him and the former members of Congress didn't—and some of them did apologize later!

In 1999, driving from his home over the cobblestone streets of Georgetown, to a meeting with Mr. and Mrs. LaRouche, Salinger told me and another associate, "If George W. Bush is elected, there will be fascism and I will leave the country." In the meeting that followed, the discussion revolved around LaRouche's knowledge of the Synarchist International, especially its activities in France.

Pierre Salinger's experiences in the Kennedy Cabinet, especially during the Bay of Pigs crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis, made him especially aware of the Synarchists' betrayals of President Kennedy and the danger of asymmetric warfare. He was reviled throughout the press for claiming, in 1996, that "friendly fire" shot down a TWA airliner over Long Island Sound. He never backed down. He never backed down from his criticism of the Gulf War, even though he knew it meant losing his job as chief foreign correspondent for ABC. He had left his job at *L'Express* when, in 1975, its publisher, Sir James Goldsmith, said that if Teddy Kennedy ever became President of the United States, he, Goldsmith, would go to the United States and assassinate him. Salinger died in exile in his adopted country of France, because to him, George W. Bush's election was a signal for fascism.

For Lyndon LaRouche's 75th birthday, Salinger wrote a piano sonata in his honor, which he called the "Lyndon Sonata." The counterpoint, he said, reflected the two Lyndons he had known: Lyndon Johnson, for whom he also served briefly as Press Secretary, and "the more complex Lyndon," Lyndon LaRouche.

Upon learning of the death of Pierre Salinger, Jacques Cheminade said, "I regret that we did not see more of each other in France. It is rare to meet such a man of courage, who believes in what he understands."

Lyndon LaRouche said, "This man led a remarkable life."