
Book Reviews

Phony exposé of Diana's death sheds some light—despite authors' intentions

by Katharine Kanter

Enquête sur la mort de Diana (Inquiry into the Death of Diana)

by Jean-Marie Pontaut and Jérôme Dupuis
Paris: Editions Stock, 1998

One would have thought that the murder on Aug. 31, 1997 of one of the most beautiful and influential women of the century, and one of the most powerful figures in the British Empire, would have thrown the world's journalistic corps into investigative work at least as grimly intense as that devoted to President Clinton's tomfoolery. In fact, apart from Thomas Sancton and Scott MacLeod's *Death of a Princess—The Investigation*, a serious piece of work reviewed in *EIR* (March 13, 1998), and what *EIR* has put out, the entertainment megachains which control publishing today know from experience that you can sell a cheese roll so long as Diana's face is on it, so why look for the truth?

Pontaut and Dupuis are stringers, who have written a series of opuscles on security issues, some in collaboration with the famous journalist Jacques Dérogy. They have had access to the police file, and they have read it. Whether Pontaut and Dupuis themselves have also personally interviewed any of the individuals cited in the book, remains entirely unclear, as the thing is, perhaps deliberately, written in so slovenly a manner that the reader is not put in a position to distinguish between witness statements in the police file, and original interviews, assuming the latter exist.

The book cannot precisely be described as a cover-up, however, no matter what the the authors' intent may have been, because the facts themselves cry *murder*.

The devil's apprentices

From the police file, Pontaut has extracted a witness statement, heretofore unpublished, concerning the interchange be-

tween paparazzo Romuald Rat, who had terrorized Diana throughout the day of Aug. 30, and a North African youth who clashed with Rat at the crash scene:

Witness statement, Jacques M: There was a short, North African youth shouting down a big heavy guy [Romuald Rat], a photographer. I distinctly heard the little guy tell the big guy:

“Why did you do that?”

And the big guy said:

“We had to, we had no choice.”

And the little guy, horrified, said to the big one:

“Shit, shit, but why that?”

And the big guy said,

“I told you we had no choice.”

Then they started yelling at each other, and they started punching each other. Or rather, the little guy started trying to punch the big guy, who tried to defend himself behind his camera. Then people pulled them apart. Sébastien Dorzee and Lino Gaggiardone, the first policemen on the scene, saw them fighting, and one said: “There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that I heard one of the two say to the other: ‘It's your fault!’”

Now, we do not know exactly what it is that Romuald Rat did, which so horrified the North African youth, although Rat told Pontaut that he touched the Princess: “I lifted her up, to see if she were still alive.” He later claimed that he did so, because he has a first-aid certificate! We do not know who the North African youth is, because he is one of the few direct witnesses who seem to have never been interrogated. Nor do we know what he meant by the words “It's your fault.”

According to the tabloid weekly *Voici*, two eyewitnesses to the accident gave the police false names and addresses, because they were robbers. One at least has now been ar-



The inside security cameras show Princess Diana arriving at the Ritz Hotel on the evening of Aug. 30, 1997. Outside the hotel, closed-circuit surveillance cameras on the Place de Vendôme (inset) show two individuals, who were not among the paparazzi, who stayed outside the hotel for two hours after Dodi Fayed and Diana had entered.



rested for burglaries, and, says the tabloid, has been “helping police with their inquiries.”

‘Not dead yet? Then let her die!’

It will be recalled that a brawl broke out in the world medical community over the treatment, or non-treatment, given Diana. Great pressure was put upon the French government to make the details public. Whether or not they have truly done so, or whether what Pontaut serves up is yet another fairy tale, what is significant is that his version of the medical treatment Diana received differs in a number of respects from that issued by the authorities at the time.

First, Pontaut claims that the first ambulances arrived at 00:32 hours, in other words, between six and eight minutes after the accident. Initially this interval was given as 12 minutes, an almost incredible delay.

“Not yet dead? Then let her die!” That is how a leading political figure described the attitude of the French authorities on the night of the murder. And, struggle as he may, Pontaut does not succeed in proving otherwise.

He prints a report from Dr. Jean-Marc Martino, a “surgical-anesthetist,” in other words a person who must have realized on the spot that the woman had to have emergency surgery within the hour. Dr. Martino says he was told the victims’ identity “as soon as I arrived” and continues:

“[The Princess] was very agitated and was crying out. I told the team to take care of the passenger in front [bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones], who appeared to be the most seriously injured. . . . Then a firemen’s medical doctor appeared, and took charge of the passenger in front. . . . The Princess continued to be very agitated, moving her left arm and right leg, and speaking in a confused and incoherent way.”

Martino claims that whilst he was extracting her “with great difficulty” from the car with the help of the firemen, “her heart stopped, and I placed tubes, ventilated and massaged to resuscitate her. I placed her in my ambulance to carry out a further examination and continue resuscitation. Her condition was grave.”

These operations took until 1:30 in the morning. And while they were going on, we are to believe that, in Pontaut’s words, they “looked for the most suitable hospital.” This is nonsense: In France, as an ambulance drives to the scene of an accident, the rescue team is radioed a list of hospitals able to take them on the spot, and radios back which hospital they are heading for. No explanation whatsoever is given why La Pitié Salpêtrière, the farthest possible hospital, was chosen.

Now, according to Pontaut, it was Paris Prefect Philippe Massoni, about whom a number of extremely unflattering things have been written in relation to these events, who de-

cided to wake up Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement, and told him to go to La Pitié, which probably means that it was Massoni who decided on that hospital.

Chevènement, says Pontaut, got to La Pitié at 2 a.m., and was “very surprised” that the ambulance had not yet reached the hospital. And well he might be. The banks of the Seine were closed to all traffic, and the ambulance allegedly travelled at 40-50 kilometers per hour. Massoni reached La Pitié before the ambulance, which could not have been a difficult task. The story goes that Massoni called Marcel Vinzerich, the police commissioner in charge of the convoy. Vinzerich told him that the ambulance had stopped at the Austerlitz Bridge. Its driver, Masseur, told Pontaut that “the doctor told me, stop on the bridge for five minutes, because she had to receive treatment that required complete immobility.”

And, Dr. Martino says, “Her blood pressure suddenly fell on leaving the Austerlitz Bridge.”

Daniel Eyraud, chief of vascular surgery, received Diana at La Pitié, at 2 a.m.: “When she arrived, she was unconscious . . . she was in shock, but *she did have a cardiac rhythm*. In other words, her blood pressure was low, but her *heart was beating* nevertheless.”

Only at this point, were X-rays taken! She had a “very grave hemothorax,” i.e., an internal hemorrhage pressing upon both the right lung and heart. And so would anyone who had been left lying in the road like a dog for two hours. This type of injury is so frequent in automobile accidents, that the ambulance team could not but have known that the likeliest of all injuries, was *precisely* that which Diana had suffered. And they could not but have known that the wound had to be sutured immediately.

The blood was pumped out, and then reinjected massively. This was not enough. Cardiac arrest occurred between 2:10 and 2:15 a.m. Prof. Bruno Riou arrived, and called in Alain Pavie, expert in thoracic surgery.

Before Pavie got there—Riou decided to operate without Pavie, alongside Moncel Dahman, chief of general surgery. Daniel Eyraud says that Diana’s heart had stopped beating just before they tried that operation.

Dr. Pavie only arrived at around 2:30. Dr. Dahman, says Pavie, “had carried out a thoracotomy. . . . The origin of the bleeding was in the pericardial cavity, completely to the left and behind.”

Pavie says that he decided at 3 a.m. to make a larger incision. Diana was moved to the emergency operating block, the place she should have, and could have, reached exactly two hours earlier. According to Pavie, “The hemorrhage was due to the partial rupture of the upper left vein, in contact with the left auricle. This wound was sutured. The hemorrhage was controlled and we continued resuscitation.”

Readers of *EIR*’s earlier reports will recall that, contrary to everything that has been affirmed in the press, it is *not* French practice to have accident victims bleed quietly to death

on the road in a stalled ambulance. It is true that these van-sized vehicles, which are actually small operating theaters, are more fully equipped than is usual in many other countries, but there is a rigid protocol in terms of space and time for every injury, and French experts, like their colleagues elsewhere in the world, know full well that speed is of the essence. Had Diana been helicoptered to the military hospital at Val de Grâce, which takes less than five minutes from the Place de l’Alma, where the accident occurred, she would almost certainly be alive today.

Hunting the fox: a blood sport

Concerning the paparazzo Romuald Rat, the Procurator Fiscal for Paris, Gabriel Bestard, had originally not only issued an interim order jailing Rat and his colleague Martinez, on grounds of manslaughter and what is known in French law as “non-assistance to a man in danger,” but had ordered that they be prevented from any “contact with photographers who might have fled the scene.”

However, following a huge “freedom of the press” campaign in Rat’s favor, Instructing Magistrate Hervé Stephan released them shortly after, on 100,000 French francs bail.

That the fox hunt was on as of Aug. 30, and that Diana was the fox, is made plain by the description which their security agent Didier Gamblin gives of the moment at about 7 p.m., when the couple arrived at Dodi Fayed’s apartment on rue Arsene Houssaye: “When the Mercedes followed by the Range Rover arrived, at least ten photographers followed them, on motorbikes and scooters, but there was also a car, perhaps a white-colored Peugeot 205.”

Pontaut says that the paparazzi “team of Lazlo Veres and Serge Benamou, is especially notorious and feared.”

Gerald Gueheneux, the second Al Fayed security agent stationed in front of the apartment on the day of the murder says: “I concentrated on the one [Rat] who was trying to get as close as possible to the Princess. . . . He threatened me and told me to watch out, that I didn’t know what he had on him.”

Dodi’s usual driver, Philippe Dourneau, says he quarrelled in front of the apartment with paparazzo Serge Benamou, “a fat man on a Vespa Hexagon” and “he threatened us loud and clear, and told me to my face that it would all fall back in the lap of the Fayed, and that he would drag them through the mud.”

Also at rue Arsene Houssaye, Dodi’s bodyguard Kes Wingfield was “surprised,” says Pontaut, by the assault of the paparazzi, especially “two very bold ones, thrusting their faces right into those of [Diana and Dodi]. Physically, they were strapping big fellows.”

It will be recalled that Diana, according to one of her security people, was terrified by Romuald Rat.

Didier Gamblin, the second French security agent in front of the apartment, says that when the couple left the apartment, “the photographers acted like madmen.” They were glued to

the car. They mounted and rode along the pavement in their motorbikes forcing passersby up against buildings.”

Philippe Dourneau is quoted by Pontaut on the couple’s return to the Ritz after 9 p.m. as follows:

“I asked François Musa to put the Range Rover before the hotel entrance, to kind of shield it. As a result, the big guy with the beard in blue [Lazlo Veres] threatened to place himself between the vehicle and the hotel if we got in their way. . . . These people were not exactly a barrel of laughs; you sensed the latent threat. You knew those guys were not there for laughs, and if we got in their way, they’d react.”

The situation at the apartment on rue Arsene Houssaye was so bad, that the Fayeds’ security agent Gamblin called the Ritz and talked to driver Henri Paul, asking for instructions.

Here we come up against a central mystery in this business: the glaring, apparent absence of the French police. France is a country where you cannot hold up a sign in the street without running afoul of the police, as a man holding a sign denouncing Nazi Alois Brunner learned, during a visit by the President of Syria, where Brunner is in exile.

The bodyguards Wingfield and Rees-Jones could not have failed to realize that something big was up. They must have raised the need for police back-up. Indeed, in an interview with the tabloid *France-Dimanche* in late August 1998, Maître Christian Curtil, who is Rees-Jones’s attorney, told the tabloid that both Wingfield and his client had begun to fear for Diana’s safety during her trips with Dodi to St. Tropez and Sardinia, and that they both felt reinforcements were urgently needed.

Something odd was definitely going on in the Interior Ministry on the day of the murder. Pascal Winieski, the policeman on duty at Le Bourget Airport on Aug. 30 when Diana and Dodi arrived from Sardinia, told Pontaut: On the computer screen, “indications will normally appear: the word ‘State’ for political and diplomatic persons, and VIP for show business. There were no instructions at all on the daily registry for their flight. [When the passengers arrived], I then recognized the Princess, whose presence on the aircraft I was totally unaware of.”

An air and border police (PAF) telegram was only sent at 23:05 hrs., bearing the words: “15h20—private flight—coming from Olbia—high personality—Diana + 6 persons.”

Pontaut does not say to whom the telegram was sent; one is left to assume that it was to some service in the Interior Ministry.

Are we to believe that the first person to learn that Diana was in town was, neither the police, nor the official intelligence services, nor the Foreign Ministry, but Alain Guizard of the Angeli photo agency, who is quoted as saying: “Around half past noon, or perhaps at one, on Aug. 30, I received a telephone call from a friend who is a photographer in Corsica, and who, on information obtained by the Olbia control tower in Sardinia, had learned that Diana’s plane was

about to land at Le Bourget, one hour and forty minutes later.”

And the ubiquitous Romuald Rat, who had taken photographs of Diana in July at St. Tropez, says: “Saturday, Aug. 30, at half past one in the afternoon, I received a call from a colleague in Italy, who told me that the Princess would be taking a plane and arriving in Paris.”

When Diana and Dodi cancelled their reservations at Chez Benoit, and returned to the Ritz, 200 people had already gathered there. The Ritz is next door to the Justice Ministry on the Place Vendôme. Why did no one call the police for help?

When the couple tried to get out of the car and rush into the Ritz, again, says Wingfield, “We had to protect Diana physically from the paparazzi, who were coming right up too close, with their cameras next to her face.”

It should have become clear to the reader at this point, that one of the many roles the paparazzi played that night, was to throw Diana, and especially Dodi, off-balance, frighten them into making mistakes. And that is exactly what happened. The hotel’s night manager, Monsieur Rocher, is quoted: “I know Dodi well. That night, he was utterly exhausted. He was not in his normal state.”

So, the fox was driven to ground. Even assuming that Diana and Dodi had decided to leave by the front entrance of the Ritz, with their usual escort, there were, according to photographer David Ker, “so many people in front of the Ritz, that had they intended to go out the front entrance, their car would have been blocked by curious bystanders.”

In other words, they were trapped. They were given no option but to try a decoy and the back entrance, if they wished to leave the Ritz that night at all. Here, an odd sentence in Pontaut’s book, on page 48: “Given the great number of photographers and bystanders, who numbered by then more than 200 people, the Ritz’s management decided, as an exceptional measure, to close the outside gratings of the hotel. *The trap of the Ritz thus snapped shut on Diana and Dodi*” (emphasis added).

Another unidentified blip on the radar screen, is the following stray quote from the famous photographer Langevin, who was waiting for Diana and Dodi at the Ritz back entrance. He told Pontaut that Henri Paul wandered out onto rue Cambon, and that while Paul was still standing there, “a man came out, I suppose it was an [Ritz] employee who was leaving work. He made a sign to us that the couple was about to arrive. That struck me as odd, as there was no car waiting for them.”

The sign may not have been intended for Langevin. It may have been intended for the interesting individuals whose photograph appeared exclusively on the front cover of *EIR* on Dec. 19, 1997, taken by a closed-circuit camera—individuals who may well have been scouts involved in the murder.

Was Henri Paul blinded?

On Sept. 1, 1997, testimony was voluntarily given by one François L., who is apparently a petty crook. Understandably,

given his police record, he rang the head of the Ritz, Frank Klein, before calling the police. Pontaut pours scorn on his statement, describing it as “totally contradicting the others,” but he does quote it: “In my rear view mirror I see a car escorted on both sides by motorbikes. . . . There was a white car between me, and the [Mercedes carrying Diana and Dodi]. Then, as I was just leaving the tunnel, I distinctly saw a motorbike cut out in front of the [Mercedes] and there was a big white flash.”

Witness statement, Benoit B.:

Driving in the opposite direction to the Mercedes “I saw flashes before entering the tunnel. Having been an Army driver, I immediately thought they were radar flashes.”

Witness statement, Olivier P., chauffeur:

“It seems to me the flashes came from the motorbike which was just behind the Mercedes.”

Pontaut says there can have been no flashes from photography, because no film was seized relating to the stretch between the Ritz and the Alma tunnel. But why should that exclude lasers or some other kind of light used deliberately to blind driver Henri Paul?

Was there a set-up for a hit on Rees-Jones?

While Rees-Jones was in hospital after the crash, a man named Pascal Rostaing, from the Sphinx photographic agency, along with paparazzi Joel Dubois and Philippe Blet, also from Sphinx, got into the hospital. Philippe Manchon, a policeman on guard duty over Rees-Jones, found four hospital guards struggling with the photographers. The latter had offered the guards money “to get a picture” of Rees-Jones.

The next day, at 14:20 hrs., Joel Dubois reappeared amongst the families visiting their patients in that ward. The policeman grabbed him. In his bag, apart from camera equipment, there were complete plans of the hospital, including its basement levels.

Two days later, on Sept. 21 at 13:00 hrs., as the Rees-Jones family arrived, Blet and Dubois came up in the staff elevators, and again got through the security screen. The only reason they were stopped, is that the same policeman, Manchon, was on duty and recognized them. They told him that they had sneaked in through the emergency ward.

The mission described above may well have been to stake out the joint, probe the all-too-glaring weak points in Rees-Jones’s security, and then have somebody else move in and finish the job. Need one draw a parallel with the paparazzi’s behavior on Aug. 30-31, 1997?

In any event, from that day on, the police sealed off the ward.

Maître Curtil, in the August *France-Dimanche* referred to above, does say that the police file contains overt threats against Rees-Jones during the period he was hospitalized. Curtil himself has been threatened and physically assaulted by persons unknown. He also says that there is testimony from a Ritz driver, who had used the Mercedes earlier in the

day, and who says: “If you try it, you’ll get the fright of your life.”

‘It was all non-political’

In the world according to Pontaut, there was no “environment” other than that created by the photographers. Who really are those photographers? Can one doubt that some are intelligence operatives, and, it may be, not on the lowest rung of the ladder? And for whom? Pontaut is a prudent man, and the River Seine has cold, strong currents, even in summer.

He devotes but two lines to Diana’s clash with the House of Windsor, makes no mention of any political pressure, warnings or threats she might have received, her strained relations with the Duke of Edinburgh, and of course, there is no more than a line on the late Tiny Rowland, an asset of the British Crown and enemy of Dodi’s father, Mohammed Al Fayed. The sole exception is his note on Diana’s accepting the invitation from Al Fayed to visit him at St. Tropez: “Despite the reserves and warnings which reached her through English high society, she accepted.”

Pontaut makes no reference whatsoever to the counter-expertise on the autopsy carried out by Scottish forensic scientist Peter Vanezis, nor to the Swiss and English counter-expertise. Nor has he apparently spoken to experts competent to reconstruct the crash from a physical-materials standpoint. The fact that the Fiat Uno observed at the scene, which struck the Mercedes, was weighted down, is simply ignored. But this is of capital importance, since a Fiat which struck a two-ton Mercedes, unless heavily weighted, would have been smashed to smithereens.

According to the weekly magazine *Marianne* (June 29-July 5, 1998) the British Ambassador to Paris, Sir Michael Jay, has got the Presidential Palace, the Elysée, to put an embargo on publication of the following documents, now circulating in Paris, and known to be, among others, in the hands of the Sphinx agency: the autopsy report; a sketch of wounds on Diana’s body; a letter from the head of La Pitié to the Interior Minister; a report by Daimler Benz on the condition of the car; and a witness statement from the photographer, on a scooter, who reached the car one minute before it crashed.

A killer will kill again. No citizen on this planet is safe, if one may kill a personage of the importance of Diana, and get away with it. One may charitably suppose that, no matter the degree to which England and France are presently aligned in strategy, the French government was involved neither in choosing the victim, nor in planning her murder. But it has made itself to an active accomplice in the cover-up.

In reading Pontaut’s opusculé, it is manifest that a not-inconsiderable number of people have access to something approaching the truth, and that official circles in both France and England have an interest in making sure that it is kept well away from the inquiring public.

But, as Edgar Allan Poe has shown, murder will out. The perpetrators have already said, and done, too much.