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By Judd Legum

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Political disinformation existed long before the rise of Donald Trump and social media. In the 1990s, for example, right-wing operatives pushed the conspiracy theory that Vince Foster, who worked in the Clinton White House, was murdered by the Clintons. Multiple investigations found that Foster, who suffered from depression, committed suicide in July 1993.

But the effort to push the Foster conspiracy theory was slow, complicated, and expensive. It gained prominence with the release of a film, [The Clinton Chronicles](#), in June 1994. It featured the claims of Christopher Ruddy, who latched onto the Foster conspiracy and was hired to investigate it full time by the late Richard Mellon Scaife, a right-wing billionaire who owned the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. (Today, Ruddy is a friend and outside adviser to Trump.) The film was released on VHS tape, and 300,000 copies were distributed.

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