7/27/75

Mr. Les Whitten
c/o Jack Anderson
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Wash., D.C. 20036

Dear Les,

You ought have no trouble understanding that I wonder why you called me last week now that I have read today's column.

Because there is nothing new in this column, I do find myself wondering why it was written at all - more at this particular time.

And about the factual error that is consistent with an intended purpose, whether or not there was an intended purpose or there is significance in the timing.

If my recollection is correct, 1971 is not the first time the column had this particular story, now repeated for the perhaps sixth time if not more.

When there were so many authenticated plots against Castro and over so long a period of time, can one but wonder why in this particular column repeated at this particular time there is reference to only "the" (repeated) "US plot" against Castro?

Aside from factual inaccuracy, in the context of the column this is propaganda.

It also is both factually inaccurate and propaganda to write that "Lee Harvey Oswald had been active in the pro-Castro movement." Despite its over-writing on this and its misuse of what it said was false, the Commission itself acknowledged that Oswald was not part of any pro-Castro movement, particularly not part of the FPFC, that there was no chapter of it in New Orleans, and that of the phoney one he pretended existed he was the only member.

Recollection is a fragile thing but I believe it does not fail me in telling you, I think not for the first time, that the "splinter the CIA" JFK line was not related to the Bay of Pigs. I do believe it was the result of another incident of which I reminded you when you called.

Even the Gilpatric quote is made to mean what it does not say. This is plain and not accidental dishonesty. Or, more propaganda.

What the column also does not inform the reader is that each of the identified sources was parti pris. My personal opinion, with which you and others may disagree, is that this also is not honest writing. That your unidentified sources have to remain unidentified now makes them suspect.

I know nothing about what started the column off on this kick. Again you may not agree with the way I think of situations like this but as my writing and speaking show, I use the traditional lawyer's approach and ask "cui bono?" There is at least one obvious possibility of the who to whom there is benefit. More today than ever.

Perfection is not a state of man nor is any writer, no matter how hard he tries, immune to error. In this instance, however, when you called me to get the other side and when you then told me that your checking had confirmed it - even that after I mentioned some you remembered it - and there is no suggestion of any of it, questions of intent and the column's integrity do exist.

These are matters for your conscience, not mine. I sorrow for you, whatever accounts for this. Long ago I learned that for me at least making a confortable living - even not making a living - is less important than being able to live at peace with myself and my own conscience. With sincere regrets,

Harold Weisberg

Jack Anderson

Post 7/27/75

Did the Castro Plot Backfire?

The late Robert Kennedy was tormented by the terrible thought, according to intimates, that he may have helped trigger the assassination of his brother.

We raised this possibility in January 1971, when we first revealed that the CIA had plotted to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. It has taken us 4½ years to get the rest of the story.

Loyal associates of Robert Kennedy, rushing to defend his memory, have sworn that he knew nothing about the assassination attempts and, contradictorily, that he put a stop to them. Both accounts are incorrect, according to sources with an intimate knowledge of the events.

Not only was he fully aware of the CIA's attempts to kill Castro, but after President Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas, Robert was devastated by the possibility that the CIA plot may have backfired against his brother.

The preparations to knock off Castro began during the last months of the Eisenhower administration as part of the Bay of Pigs planning. President Kennedy, who inherited the fiasco, swore to friends afterward that he would like "to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."

Instead, he appointed his brother, Robert, to oversee the CIA, with instructions to shake it up. Characteristically, Robert began investigating the undercover operations from top to bottom. His purpose was to prevent another Bay of Pigs.

He became fascinated, say our sources, with the CIA's covert activities. Eagerly, he pursued the details down through the lower levels. As one source put it, "He was like a wide-eyed schoolboy."

In the process, he learned about the continuing effort to eliminate Castro, an operation known inside the CIA as the "executive action plan." In fact, Robert took a special interest in the activities against Castro. One insider, former Deputy Defense Secretary Roswell Gilpatric, told us the focus "on the Cuban situation" was intensified in 1961 at Robert Kennedy's "insistence."

"Not only was he fully aware of the CIA's attempts to kill Castro, but after President Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas, Robert Kennedy was devastated by the possibility that the CIA plot may have backfired against his brother."

The President eventually put Robert in charge of a counter-insurgency committee, called the Special Group, which concentrated upon harassing Castro. One member, former CIA chief John McCone, acknowledged that the group had "directed mischievous things against Castro like infiltrating saboteurs, blowing up bridges and carrying on general confusion."

McCone insisted, however, that "the group at no time gave any consideration to any assassination plot." We have established that the "executive action plan" was directed by William Harvey, the CIA operative whom we linked to the assassination plot in our original 1971 story. We have also learned that he reported to the late Desmond Fitzgerald in CIA headquarters. We have been unable, however, to identify the next link in the chain of command.

Nevertheless, wholly reliable sources insist that Robert Kennedy knew about the plot against Castro and did nothing to stop it. The intended target, Fidel Castro, also knew about it. One assassination squad reportedly was apprehended on a Havana roof top within range of Castro's movements, about March 1, 1963.

The Cuban premier, in an interview with Associated Press correspondent Daniel Harker the following September, warned that U.S. leaders would find themselves in danger if they attempted to do away with Cuban leaders.

"United States leaders should think that if they are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe," Castro told Harker.

Two months later, President Kennedy was shot down in the streets of Dallas. The accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, had been active in the pro-Castro movement and had traveled to Mexico to visit the Cuban embassy a few weeks earlier.

The first person to reach Robert Kennedy's side after the shooting was CIA director John McCone, who remained alone with Robert at his McLean, Va., home for nearly three hours. All others, including Robert's priest, were turned away. But McCone swore to us that Castro's name was never mentioned during the agonizing three hours.

Other sources say that Robert, deeply despondent, went into semi-seclusion for the next few days. Although he bottled up his feelings, they knew him and understood the circumstances well enough to realize he blamed himself for his brother's death. There was little doubt, they say, that he believed the CIA's attempts against Castro put into motion the forces that brought about his brother's martyrdom.

On January 18, 1971, we reported: "Among those privy to the CIA conspiracy, there is still a nagging suspicion—unsupported by the Warren Commission's findings—that Castro became aware of the U.S. plot upon his life and somehow recruited Oswald to retaliate against President Kennedy."

It has now been disclosed that the Warren Commission was told nothing about the CIA's plot to kill Castro even though the late Allen Dulles, the CIA chief who initiated the plot, sat on the commission.

According to the final report, the commission investigated "literally dozens of allegations of a conspiratorial contact between Oswald and the Cuban government" but found no substance to any of them.

The Cuban premier himself, in an interview with Frank Mankiewicz and Kirby Jones, emphatically denied having anything to do with the Kennedy assassination.

"It is . . . very interesting that this man Oswald, who was involved in the assassination, traveled to Mexico a few months prior to the assassination and applied for a permit at the Cuban embassy to travel to Cuba, and he was not given the permit," said Castro.

"But I ask myself why would a man who commits such an act try to come here. Sometimes we ask ourselves if someone did not wish to involve Cuba in this, because I am under the impression that Kennedy's assassination was organized by reactionaries in the United States and that it was all a result of a conspiracy . . . We have never believed in carrying out this type of activity of assassination of adversaries."

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