

(H-1)

Rt. 8, Frederick, Md. 21701
4/12/75

Mr. Tom Susman, Counsel
Administrative Practices Subcommittee
Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Tom,

Were I to write Mike Epstein directly he might, especially after his conversation with "in Cesar, misunderstand my motive. He might, for example, believe I am trying to pressure him in some way. I'm not.

Committees may read their mandates one way, laymen another. My interpretation of the charge of the Church committee is that it is to investigate the agencies. I do not, for example, believe it has the responsibility of making a separate investigation of assassinations. However, I also believe that the only safe way to investigate the assassinations, for which I am aware of the considerable pressure as well as more to come, is in terms of the investigation of these agencies and whatever connection, if only investigative, they had.

Not until this morning was I able to read the Anderson-Whitten column that appeared in the Post on the 7th. It reminded me of an interview of several former mercenaries in anti-Castro activity I taped as I now recall the end of October 1968. And what followed when finally the Department of Justice went through the motions of doing something about the almost endless violations of such laws as the neutrality act and made a few gestures about a Haitian invasion from the U.S.

On October 8, 1969, after some indictments in Miami, I phoned the Criminal Division which later called back and asked me to see a James C. Morris in the Internal Security Division on the fifth floor of the Federal Triangle Bldg. I went there. Morris was quite excited and said someone would be up to see me on Monday. What Monday he did not say. Whatever Monday, it has not yet come.

Aside from other information, I was present when all this planning of an invasion of Haiti was being discussed quite openly before me by these men. While the batteries went dead during the interview, the taping was not clandestine and some of the tape has to be good. But the Department and the FBI had no interest. The only thing that ever happened is that under date of October 13, 1969 I received a carbon copy of the indictment from J. Walter Yeagley by John H. Davitt.

The interview was in the home of a pathological liar, Gerald Patrick Hemming, in El Monte, California, with one Lawrence Howard, his associate then and earlier, also present. Both appear in the Warren Commission materials. The FBI attributed a forecast of the JFK assassination to three men, one of whom was Howard. I had three interviews with another man the FBI said was involved, another dubious character, Loran Eugene Hall. All spoke openly about illegal acts within the United States about which nothing happened for years apparently because these illegalities were consistent with CIA desires. Hall, already a suspect in an aspect of the JFK investigation, told me on tape of being offered a large sum to do that killing. It is not reflected in the FBI reports in the Archives. (In Whitewash II, "The Hoover Diversion.")

I know nothing about the Pritchard case reported in the column. Nor can I prove the truthfulness of what Hemming and Howard told me, that they were under CIA sponsorship. I merely report these matters in the event they may at some point be of some interest to some committee.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

Washington merry-go-round

Jack Anderson

WITH LES WHITTEN

WASHINGTON — A sworn deposition describes two unsuccessful assassination attempts against the late Haitian strongman, Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, in the late 1960s.

The deposition, given by Dr. Robert Pritchard to the special commission headed by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, alleges that the CIA first plotted to poison Duvalier in 1966.

When this failed, according to the deposition, the CIA tried to bomb the presidential palace in 1968. A lone B-25 bomber allegedly made two runs over the palace, dropping bombs and leaflets. But the bombs exploded harmlessly on the street outside.

Dr. Pritchard is a prominent American concert pianist, who had become a confidant of the Haitian dictator. But in 1966, Dr. Pritchard defied an order from Papa Doc and gave a forbidden public concert in Haiti.

This caused the pianist's fall from favor, which the CIA allegedly sought to exploit. As Dr. Pritchard has related it to the Rockefeller commission, the CIA first tried to recruit him to spy on Papa Doc and his palace advisers.

Subsequently, a CIA-paid agent posing as a photographer approached Dr. Pritchard about slipping a deadly poison into the dictator's food, the deposition alleges. The pianist relates that he saw the lethal poison immediately paralyze a small, mouse-like creature, which the agent carried in a cage.

Dr. Pritchard states that he not only refused to cooperate with the agent but reported the plot to a U.S. political officer in Haiti. According to Dr. Pritchard's testimony, the officer responded: "Wouldn't anything be better than this situation?" The pianist said he told Papa Doc about the assassination plot and that the dictator

was aware of the scheming against his life. Dr. Pritchard also tried again to notify the State Department of what the CIA was doing, according to the deposition.

Nevertheless, the CIA approached him again and tried unsuccessfully to bring pressure on him to work against Papa Doc. Dr. Pritchard alleges that in May, 1968, he learned about the bombing attack upon the presidential palace. He was told by Arthur Bonhomme, then the Haitian ambassador to Washington, that the attack had been carried out by the CIA.

Footnote: In early 1971, we described six CIA assassination attempts against Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. We reported names and details. The first attempt, interestingly, was a plot to slip poison pellets in Castro's food.

THIEU'S DEBACLE: In an earlier report, we cited secret military cables, which placed much of the blame for the South Vietnamese military debacle upon President Nguyen Van Thieu.

He issued conflicting orders which confused his commanders, according to one cable. He kept changing his mind, for example, whether to order a defense of Da Nang and Hue. In the end, these cities were lost without a battle.

A subsequent cable reports that the U.S. Army chief, Gen. Frederick Weyand, now on a fact-finding mission in South Vietnam, had appointments last week to see Thieu. The South Vietnamese president canceled the meetings literally at the last minute.

Apparently, Thieu didn't have the answers to Weyand's questions and didn't want to face him. The cables report that Weyand, meanwhile, was shocked over the South Vietnamese Army's pell-mell retreat. The North Vietnamese forces advanced southward so rapidly that our own

intelligence analysts occasionally lost track of them.

The speculation is that the Communists staged forced night marches to take advantage of the chaotic South Vietnamese retreat.

The intelligence reports warn that within days Hanoi's forces will have the capital city of Saigon under siege. American analysts have all but given up hope — because of the demoralization and disorganization of the South Vietnamese army — that Saigon can be successfully defended.

STRANGE ARREST: The story has been hushed up of a strange arrest in Athens. On Feb. 28, the Greek military authorities arrested Dennis Bassen, an American citizen employed by the multi-million-dollar Bendix Field Engineering Corporation.

This is the same firm that has been recruiting military specialists, putting them in civilian clothes and sending them to Saudi Arabia as advisers.

According to the Greek version, Bassen "was taking photos of military installations." His superiors describe him as a senior field engineer with an "impeccable record." He has been in Greece for several months, they say, working on the installation of a microwave station.

A source in the Greek embassy told us only that the Bassen case is "very strange."

EXTRA ENGINES: Several airlines have been saving transportation costs by flying spare engines on scheduled commercial flights. The extra engine simply is attached under one wing of the plane. Passengers have been alarmed over the lopsided dead weight caused by the extra load. They have expressed concern about potential safety hazards.

The Federal Aviation Administration has assured our office, however, that this practice is routine procedure and completely safe.