

Dear Kevin,

4/18/92

"Image " magazine of the San Francisco Examiner, 3/29/92 says this, apparently by Tony Summers, about David Phillips:

"Phillips told private detective Kevin Walsh, who had worked as an investigator for the House assassinations Committee, 'My private opinion is that JFK was done in by a conspriacy, likely including rogue American intelligence people'."

It this true?

Quite remarkable if it is.

If it is true and you can tell me any more about it I'd sure like to know!

I hope against hope that there is some progress in opening the House files up but I fear that if this remains attached to the bills supposedly to bring "all" to light they will all be long delayed and if any one is passed will be vetoed by Bush if it does promise more disclosure, and that as a result what could have been accomplished by a simple resolution will remain undone.

Or is this part of the reason for the all-encompassing bills?

Hope you are all well and that sometime you bet up here when you are not here because you are going past.

Best to everyone,

Herold

and godson, charges that the gangster organized JFK's assassination at the behest of his CIA handlers. But the book's credibility has been questioned by organized crime experts. The question of Giancana's involvement in the murder remains unresolved.) After Giancana was hit, an FBI bug on Trafficante picked up a remarkable piece of conversation. "Now only two people are alive who know who killed Kennedy," Trafficante was heard to say. "And they aren't talking."

While the consensus among credible assassination researchers is that the Mafia probably played a key role in the murder of JFK, there is still lively debate over whether the mobsters were joined in their plot by CIA agents and paramilitary Cuban exiles — specifically, some of the same men with whom they had conspired

against Castro. Anthony Summers sees the hand of U.S. intelligence at work, particularly in Oswald's trips to the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Mexico City, which Summers suggests may have been faked to further implicate him. Summers finds a statement made by David Phillips, who was the CIA's chief of Cuban operations in Mexico City at the time of the Kennedy assassination, particularly eye-opening. Not long before his death of cancer in 1988, Phillips told private detective Kevin Walsh, who had worked as an investigator for the House Assassinations Committee, "My private opinion is that JFK was done in by a conspiracy, likely including rogue American intelligence people." In Summers' view, "this is a remarkable statement — I mean, this was not some conspiracy nut, or someone trying to sell a book. This was a man who, before he retired, rose to become the chief of the CIA's Western Hemisphere division."

Summers is no Oliver Stone — he keeps his imagination firmly in check. He does not think the conspiracy reached to the top levels of the CIA, much less to the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex. "There is as much evidence that JFK was shot because of his Vietnam policy as that he was done in by a jealous mistress with a bow and arrow," says Summers. "In fact, I would be rather more inclined to the jealous mistress theory." But his suspicions do fall heavily on a few individual agents, in particular, William King Harvey, the man in charge of the CIA-Mafia operation.

Harvey was not the Ivy League type that filled the top ranks of the CIA, but rather a beefy, hard-drinking man known to pack a loaded pistol in his office, and even to cradle it in his lap to make the proper impression on a visitor. His derring-do was legendary in the agency, and when he was placed in charge of the anti-Castro operation, he predictably took it over the edge. In the midst of the Cuba missile crisis in 1962, while the world held its breath as Kennedy and Khrushchev fingered their nuclear triggers, Harvey took it upon himself to dispatch several secret raids on Cuba — an insanely provocative act under the circumstances. Here was a man who seemed to be capable of anything. Robert Kennedy, whom he despised ("with a purple passion," according to a CIA colleague) along with the president for not going all the way against Castro, banished Harvey to the CIA's Rome station after this mad stunt. But he was spotted in the summer of 1963, back in the Florida Everglades, with his Cuban comrades-in-arms and his Mafia co-conspirators. Harvey, who died of a heart attack in 1976, is beyond the reach of investigators, but Summers feels that the actions of this man, who epitomizes the term "rogue agent," bear historical scrutiny.

Robert Blakey, however, dismisses talk of possible CIA involvement as groundless speculation. "There's no proof," he says. "William Harvey? Where's the times, dates and places where he did anything wrong?" As for the Oswald sightings in Mexico City, "Yes, there was more than one person down there, but Oswald was one of them. He filled out the visa application in the Cuban embassy. I

think the purpose of the trip was to incriminate the Castro government, but that's consistent with the mob's goals."

As Blakey suggests, the Mafia longed to reclaim the extremely lucrative gambling and narcotics interests that it lost after the Cuban revolution. In fact, so great was its desire to reconquer Havana that when JFK began to de-escalate his war against Castro after the harrowing missile crisis, the mob had one more compelling reason to murder the president. "The SOB is dead," Trafficante said to have rejoiced while dining with his lawyer, Ragano, on the evening of Nov. 22, 1963. "We'll get back into Cuba now."

Blakey contends that the CIA, as an institution, was friendly to Jack Kennedy. "Institutions are made up of individuals," he says, "and most of the CIA were Irish Catholics. The same was true of the ranks of the FBI. They may have been conservative, but they loved Jack Kennedy. Now, you can theorize about a few rogue elephants like William Harvey, but if they were up to something, it would have become known to the people above them, and then you're talking about the institution as a whole being involved, and that's preposterous."

Journalist Dan Moldea, who has investigated organized crime for nearly 20 years, agrees with Blakey. He rejects Oliver Stone's contention that the Mafia could not have pulled off a hit this ambitious. In fact, he argues, organized crime would have been more adept at this sort of crime than U.S. intelligence. "It came off so well to be an intelligence operation," he says. "No one talked. If it had been a government plot, it would have leaked."

Perhaps there was no CIA participation in the plot to kill Kennedy, even on the wild fringe of the agency. There is certainly less evidence of it than there is of Mafia culpability. But at the very least, the spy agency's Murder Inc.-type partnership with the mob to kill Castro might have emboldened the underworld to carry out its domestic assassination plan. Furthermore, this criminal and clandestine pact would come back to haunt the agency when it was later called upon to help solve the president's murder.

John Kennedy endorsed this deal with the devil. Trained by his father to win at all costs, he crawled into the underworld to accomplish a nasty piece of business, to eliminate the bearded irritant in the south. But in doing so, Kennedy again became one of them. And, as Blakey has noted, the Mafia traditionally kills only its own

It is easy to understand why the CIA and FBI failed to cooperate with the Warren Commission, and indeed did everything in their power to narrow the commission's focus to Oswald. The CIA was undoubtedly panic-stricken at the prospect of having its underworld dealings exposed, particularly since this scheming might have backfired at the president. Years later, J. Lee Rankin, the Warren Commission's chief counsel, would acknowledge

that if the commission had known about the unholy alliance between the CIA and the Mafia, "I am sure there would have been quite a serious upheaval." In all likelihood, the uproar would have echoed throughout the grieving nation. As historian Michael Beschloss has observed, if the American people had learned of the secret operation in the final weeks of 1963, when their emotions were still raw, "there would have been serious demands, Kennedy had threatened after the Bay of Pigs, to shatter the agency into a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds." Then, too, the fact that Oswald apparently had a background in U.S. intelligence would not have helped the agency's reputation. "Imagine the public's reaction if they had learned that American intelligence had very likely recruited this guy into their top-secret program to infiltrate the Soviet Union — a guy who later turned out to be loony enough to shoot the president," says Jonathan Kwitny, a former investigative journalist for the *Wall Street Journal* whose 1989 PBS documentary on the assassination remains the best TV report on the subject.