

Rt. 8, Frederick, Md. 21701
6/4/75

Mr. Philip Geyelin
Editorial Page Editor
Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Geyelin,

My initial reaction to your excellent editorial, "Assassination as a Weapon of Diplomacy," is emotional and strong. I have been aching for a major paper to say something like this for 11 years!

It is close to the thrust of my own work, which I prefer to regard as an inquiry into the integrity of our society, broader than the editorial.

At long last, too, a major paper has come to recognize that JFK changed.

Had it not been for the absolute refusal of all the major media to give any serious consideration to the still completely accurate and undeniable proofs of my first book and the evil doctrine of those first books that followed mine, Lane's and Epsteins, this is the path my writing would have taken. That book was completely researched by them.

If this editorial is not a one-shot the re-examination can be more healthy for the country than anything I can think of.

Why else do you think I have lived without regular income and done such things as file five FOIA suits and then give the results away?

(If you are doing any soul-searching, please get from your files the Warren Commission executive session transcript of 1/22/64, read it and ask yourself how the Post could refuse to do a story on this when I gave it to Bill Flaiborne 4/25 and AP had it on the wire for Sunday 5/18? In what I regard as suppression the Post was joined by the Times and Star. I take this to mean that those papers read by most Members of Congress denied them this information.)

Can there be anything more subversive in a representative society than assassination? Is it not, no matter what lies behind it, was I called it in a 1968 book I could not get printed an Ameriform coup d'etat?

This, by the way, is the only theorizing I have ever done. I am not a "conspiracy theorist" and I do oppose them. This leaves me alone among those who write and virtually alone among those called "critics" of the Warren Commission. But to date fact is unwelcome to the major media.

Were this not the case, for example, the bureaucrats who regardless of party require secrecy, could not have rewritten the original FOI law in the courts. If you read the affidavit I filed yesterday mentioned briefly on page 4 today you will find my charge that this is being attempted again and that the judge is party to it.

When I read Lawrence Mayer's 5/29 story early that morning I dashed off a 1,200-1,500 bit that could serve as notes and might have made an editorial article. It represents what to me is another part of this anti-democratic campaign by those who require secrecy.

Because the Post's attitude has been clear I phoned your office to ask if you would please be asked if you would consider this article. Not a letter to the editor but an article submission. I said I did not want to take the time I do not have to have it retyped if you had no interest in the subject. I was told what we know is a practical impossibility, that you give serious consideration to everything. Aside from policy considerations you just don't have the space.

The contrast between that attitude and today's editorial is one from which I can see hope.

There would be more basis for this hope if you and others in the major media would apply domestic considerations to the penultimate graf of this really fine editorial expression.

With authoritarianism in mind too.

Was the JFK assassination followed by more authoritarianism? Does assassination permit future authoritarianism? Did our institutions function other than in an authoritarian manner when JFK was killed and since?

Are not these considerations for the major press?

The political assassinations are to me major subversions not whodunits. It is this belief that has me investigating the investigations rather than the crimes.

In a paraphrase of your words, "There is not even the basis for a useful public debate over whether" the institutions that failed when JFK was assassinated and thereafter are essential to the country. They are.

"The real policy question is ... has to do with the preservation of traditional ideals and principles..." Can representative society survive this kind of continuing malfunction, regardless of its cause.

This editorial addresses these ideals and principles as they relate to foreign affairs. I long for the day when this kind of thought and the magnificent expression of it is applied to domestic matters in more depth than has been given to some manifestations like data banks.

(On this one of those supposedly destroyed Army files is on the JFK assassination. It dates to long after the assassination, coinciding in time with books critical of the official solution. If this kind of file had been of historical or other proper content can you imagine its being destroyed or the claim to destruction being made? The Army also denies having either the reports or pictures turned in by an Army intelligence agent who was at the scene of the crime. When I can get to it I'll be filing an FOIA suit on this too. My proofs of fact are FBI files I have. I would be happy to turn this and much else over to others who would persevere in bringing whatever the information is to light and publishing it. Another possibly newsworthy file part of which is still withheld deals with what Nosenko told the FBI and the CIA. In three weeks the Archives has not answered my inquiries on this and the available reports, ~~not~~ released and declassified under unusual circumstances and timing leave little doubt that what is withheld can be significant. The Post is welcome to what I have. The newest member of the cabinet is one of those who put a TOP SECRET classification on what had never been classified and what had been classified only confidential. I also have a provocative letter he wrote his associate dealing with the CIA's possible involvement.)

My sincere thanks for and appreciation of this editorial. I hope it is only the beginning of your thinking and writing on the subject in its broadest concept.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

Assassination as a Weapon of Diplomacy

Post 6/4/75

IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR that in the late Eisenhower years and the early Kennedy years, American officials contemplated measures to bring about the assassination of Fidel Castro of Cuba, a country with which the United States had sharp political differences but not one with which we were at war. President Kennedy, in particular, appears to have been prepared to consider this last resort after the fiasco at the Bay of Pigs when the United States failed miserably in its efforts to overthrow Castro by sponsoring an invasion of Cuban exiles in 1961. In view of that plain evidence that Washington felt threatened enough by the Castro regime to use covert violence against it, the allegations that the CIA was subsequently ordered to study a remedy as drastic as assassination should come as no great surprise.

In the current passion for scrutiny of the cold war, however, attention has been turned to new suggestions that the CIA conducted, or encouraged, or at least knew of other political murder plots, including some that actually took place, such as the killings of the Dominican Republic's Trujillo and the Congo's Lumumba. The degree and kind of CIA participation in these cases, if any, should become better known as the several investigations of the agency roll on; the President's own study, done by the Rockefeller commission, is to be made public on Sunday. In the meantime, there are several things to be said.

To play a part in the murder of a leader of a state with which our country is not at war is an abject confession of both moral and political bankruptcy. Far from being the mark of a great power, such acts are a demonstration of impotency, the more so when they are directed, as they apparently were, against the leaders of small, weak nations. It would be interesting and no doubt sobering to know whether the availability of murder as a feasible tactic for easing a particular foreign-policy problem has made our political leaders less ready to explore alternate diplomatic or legal approaches to it. In any case, it is significant that the resort to murder inevitably followed humiliating failure in the exercise of conventional political and economic efforts to influence the course of events.

All the same, no one trying to understand these allegations can ignore the political context of the times. In the case of Castro, the cold war was raging. Virtually no one in the political community was concerned that war had not been formally declared. The public quite fully shared the government's alarms over the new "Communist" regime "90 miles from Florida." The Bay

of Pigs invasion, for instance, was widely thought to be a tolerable, perhaps even valiant, enterprise mounted by patriots seeking liberty of their land. The chief criticism of it was that it was badly botched. The Latin countries which were the targets, real or imagined, of Cuban subversion were then linking themselves with Washington in what was purported to be a glorious new "Alliance For Progress." The details of assassination maneuvers now coming into public view convey a sense of the frustration and weakness of the plotters. But what is overlooked is that the plotters were not only carrying out presidential policy but were acting in furtherance of objectives which were widely perceived by the public to be very much in the national interest at the time.

The question for public consideration then, is not whether the United States should engage directly or indirectly in assassinations. There is not even the basis for a useful public debate over whether murder is a proper tool of public policy in a democracy. To that question the answer is relatively easy and not very meaningful—the answer, in short, is No. The real policy question is more difficult: How can the United States define its legitimate security interests in a way which does not even raise the question of resort to assassination and to a larger bagful of undercover activities. This is a problem which has to do with the preservation of traditional ideals and principles and one, we suspect, which no amount of scrutiny of the CIA alone will resolve.

A large part of the answer surely lies, however, precisely in that redefinition of American objectives and capabilities which began when John Kennedy passed through the crucible of the Cuban missile crisis and other international adventures and emerged with a new understanding of the need to tolerate diversity in the world. It has taken a decade and more of overly ambitious undertakings—notably in Indochina—to demonstrate by tragic failure that a world "made safe for diversity" may be as much as even a super-powerful United States can hope to attain. It cannot be said that this concept of a more limited and selective U.S. role in the world is widely understood or shared among the public or within the government. What does seem clear to us, however, is that a willingness to temper the objectives and moderate the ambitions of foreign policy offers the best assurance that the United States will not again be tempted to turn to assassination as a means of achieving its purposes and safeguarding its interests around the world.