

2/29/72

Dear Paul,

There is one big advantage to the drag of taking Bill to work early a.m.s and fetching her evenings: I get the mail at the post office and there is no added interruption of my work which, when I'm writing, usually begins at 5 a.m.; and the wait provides time I would otherwise not have for reading. Waiting for her last night was 2 hrs!

Now for the 's in w/let 24, which deals with areas in which I have considerable doubt:

I don't know the statute of limitations. I'll be in DC in the a.m. and if I have time will try and find out for you. The chief purpose is an ortho. consultation to see if the left thumb will require surgery. Thus I can't predict the kind of day it will be. However, you can find this out by a phone call to the USEmb. If nobody else can tell you, ask for the "legal attache", which means the FBI agent in residence. Fact is we have a rather large staff of drug people there and they's have little reluctance pulling the plug on the CIA, with which Hoover has had a feud for over a year. NOT encouragement to tell them what you seem to suspect and I don't.

"to prove" that someone is "allowing the syndicates ...to operate" you have to know that whoever it is has the evidence to get a conviction in open court. A different and I think sounder approach is who has not interfered with their operations, who has not gotten the evidence to end them? Two areas: organized crime: Dept. Justice and FBI; and drugs, Bureau Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, also under D.J. But, formerly under Treasury. As I remember the story, Robert Kennedy had great trouble getting Hoover to move against the Mafia, and nothing, really, has yet been done. For years Hoover persisted in the fiction that there was no such thing as organized crime. This is an area in which I am not expert. There are many groups, from what I hear, and they are called "families". So, what you are really talking about and would drive the Readers' Digest up the wall is the breakdown in law-enforcement activities while Hoover was chasing his red chimera. They think he is great. But he has run the FBI all its life.

3. I don't think you can prove "CIA and/or government involvement" within the U.S. I think the fact of CIA's activity in the east is not new. It has often been reported, even the use of CIA planes by SVN generals in the trade. But I doubt there is any CIA domestic activity of this sort.

4. Why doesn't anyone stop the syndicates? Lack of desire, fears, payoffs (political contributions) and infrequently someone does, but never anyone big. The last thing I think Nixon or Chou would have mentioned is opium. I can believe that having had it forced on them by war by the big-nosed white barbarians the Chinese may have had a part in the supplying of what corrupted so many US soldiers in SEAsia, although they were not necessary as a source, it being plentiful where our "friends" could profit, like the Thai dictators, as a general thing it is against their principles, and they are real strong for principle. Straightlaced as hell. Thus, while I've often heard the story you tell of a ~~similar~~ similar thing with Castro, I doubt it. Too much risk when easier channels were available. I think this is a kind of switch, for there is now abundant evidence that some of the families are farming out or subcontracting to the more daring of the largely criminal element of former Batista people who got here. Increasingly one finds Cuban names among those arrested for drug stuff. Recently I saw a story of a Paraguayan contrabandista picked up for it at Miami. But Cuba has been under tight observation for some years, and getting things out of there is harder than anywhere else. So, why run the risk? I don't see it and I think it is also against what to him is principle. I would suggest you have questions about the source of some of this stuff. Remember the Department of Disinformation.

When you talk of Cuban black-market money, what kind? Castro changed all his currency over to get control of the fortunes. Batista money is valueless. Before he did this, Castro sold lots of the old money at a discount to the Mafia and gambling interests still there, really screwed them. So, what black market money? I'm dubious.

So, going back to the beginning, I suspect Val. is not kidding you. And, except for the adventure, given the loss he began with, why should Joel run this great risk? Even

competitors then had ways of hurting him, getting him put away.

What you suspect may be the truth. I'm merely looking at the other side. Drugs is hot copy today, as you know. By the route you say K gave you, explain to me why it should have to run the extra risk and then have the extra trouble involved in going from Mexico to Cuba? It was, especially then, so much easier to get it into the US from Mexico.

Dictators get rich many ways, all crooked, but they also do not run needless risks. Trujillo had so many sources, I doubt he'd run any unnecessary risk with Uncle Sam. If he did, it would have been well masked, not traceable to him. Vidal Sr. was only one of Trujillo's lobbyists in Washington. I knew two who were lawyers.

Now, if Trujillo wanted to hurt any Vidal, his favorite assassin was one Johnny Abbas. Almost got caught in London. I've heard of none of his hits not political, but that need mean nothing. I heard Johnny is now dead. Johnny was a pro. Older diplomats could be a good source on this. But the weakness is, as I recall, that T was dead before V. If you ever get to Santo Domingo look up a colonel under T and his former military attaché in Washington, Samuel Fernando Castillo, known as Nando, married to T's niece or daughter, which ever she was she was also a puto. If you see him, make the rascal cough up with something nice for T for the \$18.00 he owed me when he left! He's a fun guy, a playboy, but with a good head and trusted with delicate mission, I am sure by our government, judging by that with which his absences from DC coincided.

However, if Joel had either involvement or knowledge, the syndicates could have put up the \$\$\$ to keep Joel hidden in jail. That would not account for his refusal to talk about it but it would account for his apparent fear of talking about some things. In

whatever he was doing, Joel may have stumbled onto something, and his connections with Peru make ~~this~~ this conjecture not unreasonable. But if one of these outfits meant to kill Vidal, they'd not have stopped with a beating. They are pros at that, too.

If you are looking for a CIA/US connection, I'd be more inclined to expect it on a quid pro quo basis, their working with mobs that work for them, titting for tat. Guessing only. It is the open record of the wartime past.

But what to do? Without time to give this much thought, two improbable ~~suggestions~~ suggestions: the US government is at least acting like it wants to stop enough of this. They have a heavy operation in Mexico. Perhaps you can get a lead on a concerned one through some reporter or other source. The second is less likely, an honest Mexican cop with knowledge in this field. Most of the work of which I know deals with grass. But if you get anything on horse, it could interest me for farout reasons. One of the possible leads to local fuzz might be a lawyer who deals with them, one not representing those involved, unless you could distinguish between competitors and get one who might have an interest in steering you the way he would like you to go.

This is a much more dangerous thing than fooling with an intelligence link per se. Careful. Pretty bones break just as easily. If they have any decent free clinics down there, you might find a knowledgeable source who treats victims. It is not necessary with any to disclose anything more than that you are writing a story, and I wouldn't. With this I don't see why you can't walk into the embassy and ask their p.r. man or others. We have a big thing going now about doing something about drugs, and they just might want to be helpful. I know they can tell you the federal statute of limitations. But if I can learn it by a question, not an investigation, for which I won't have time, I'll write you tomorrow night.

Good luck and GOOD HEALTH. Care, dear girl, CARE.

Alpes 966
Mexico, LC, DF

Feb. 24, 1972

Incidentally, Vel. steers me away from the drug idea saying it has nothing to do with this case, which only makes me think so even more.

Dear Harold:

Been running thru all the old newspaper clippings re the Kaplan case, plus Velasquez is letting me see what files he is letting me see. There used to be 14,000 pages - there are some 5,000 now. Nevertheless I have found info which bears out things I only "heard" - nothing really important, though, but which will enable me to hand in the Reader's Digest piece with an accurate source. What appears to be most outstanding about this whole case is cocaine. Peru, the largest growers of coca in the world is mentioned often in many places. Kaplan made a trip there a week after Vidal's disappearance. Kaplan's passport is said to have many entry visas to Peru. He always said he a business in Peru. Taking that into consideration, the route as Kaplan explained to me is Peru, Mexico, Cuba, the U. S., and perhaps some stops along the way like Santo Domingo (Trujillo). Kaplan often said this is why these dictators get so rich. Sugar diplomacy is drug diplomacy evidently. Vidal, Sr. was Trujillo's lobbyist in the sugar business in Wash. It is reported Trujillo owed Vidal, Sr. one million dollars when he was killed in May of 1961. Maybe Vidal Jr. had to disappear because his life was threatened if papa somehow knew how to collect. Cocaine, or drugs in general also was suggested to me by Ezra, Joel's brother who said did it ever occur to you that it's the syndicates that are keeping Joel in jail and not my uncle? Turner, please excuse the expression, after reading many of my notes years ago came to the conclusion the freelance narcotic trafficking of Vidal wasn't pleasing the syndicates at all and it was they who beat him as a warning, or perhaps, meant to kill him. Vidal never identified his assailants. Joel maintained he used to know a lot about the syndicates but it had been years since he was in touch. However, when I once mentioned they might have done Vidal in, he actually turned his back to me and could not control a rather violent shudder than ran up and down his spine. If this is the largest and most involved aspect of the case, it could really explain many things. The implication that it would affect people high in the Am. Govt. since who allows these syndicates to operate anyway. I have been told the CIA even gets a cut for allowing them to operate. Kaplan might know about this. So, what I would appreciate knowing is 1: Is there a statute of limitations about being prosecuted for drug trafficking? (This could explain why Kaplan appeared to be reluctant to leave prison at first). 2. How can I prove who is allowing the syndicates, I hear there are many of them, to operate. 3. How can I prove CIA and/or government involvement. 4. How is it no one stops the syndicates, who runs the government anyway - and was Bob Kennedy going to go after the syndicates. You know it wouldn't surprise me in the least if Nixon was making opium deals in China'. I found info to the effect Castro needed Am. dollars badly after he broke with the States and traded sugar for drugs with China, which he converted into dollars. By the way Cuban black market money is involved in this, too. Would appreciate whatever you can offer as quickly as possible. I'm on a RD deadline. Love to you and Lil, and thanks.

Paul