

Mr. Harold Weisberg  
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April 8, 1997.

Dear Harold,

There are several reasons for cluttering your files with another letter, and the first is to wish you well on your birthday. May you have many happy returns.

The second is to alert you to our plans. Gary and I are again intending to go to the Archive, and if circumstances allow, we would hope to be able to visit again, hopefully around the end of the month. Gary will call you with more information once we know what we are doing. The third reason has to do with your manuscript.

Thank you for sharing that with us. I read it with great interest. By the way, did you get it back safely? If not, please call me at 905-459-5002 and let me know. It went out by courier right after our return, and if you didn't get it, I can have it traced.

Your comments about the military are well founded, and for what it is worth, I couldn't agree with you more. The military is the only order of society endowed with sufficient power to betray that fragile constitutional trust with impunity. Simply put, the power of the military delivered the assassins cabal to safety. As you have turned your attention to the military, I have to ask you again to look at what we left you before—at least, the two chapters entitled "The Fourth Branch" and "Hail To The Chief", which also deals with these themes. If you just read them, I think you will be struck by the similarity in our views on the military. The many parallels in the thinking are interesting. You are right about the conspiracy and I think you are right about the military, and when you put the two together, you have a very tricky situation. Who do you send to arrest the army in revolt?

That seems to me to be the question that confronted the successor government, and I think that this must be what RFK meant when he talked about wanting to know "Who had been responsible". Interestingly, Manchester's last word on the subject was to ask "who had been to blame". I don't suppose you think too much of his work, but actually he had some interesting things to say about the military situation that weekend. He describes the Military District of Washington "seized by a strange inertia" and relates that "orders were issued but not obeyed. The whole well oiled military machinery had mysteriously clanked to a halt". If the military was not responding, that tells us a lot.

As you have proved, Oswald was presented as a communist when he was not, and that was no accident. Remembering the climate of the times, could not the passions of your

people have been aroused to greater heights against the "kremlin killer", set to return to the communist enemy via. Cuba? What further manipulation of Oswald was available to them if the government had attempted to retaliate? After you kill your President, there can be no turning back, and the thing about the chain of command is how easily it can be abused by a few at the top. You identify SIOP, lacking only a gross provocation, and if "certain rumours" were not squelched, this could have been it. I don't suggest that the assassination was intended for that purpose—only that it could have been so manipulated had there been a counter measure. After all, it happened in a communist fearing time. So I don't think LBJ was kidding when he pressed Warren into service with talk of 40 million lives at stake.

I was 10 years old in 1963, in grade five, and one thing I will always remember is the air raid siren. The Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) used to set the damn thing off every 6 or 8 weeks or so, and rather like a fire drill, we had to evacuate the school and await further instructions. We were told to watch skyward for big planes, which I now understand would have been Soviet bombers en-route to the USA after having beat NORAD and penetrated Canadian airspace. Our teacher used to reassure us that they probably wouldn't bomb us, on their way to bigger things. How naive we were. It was a scary time. I remember something else.

I recall being in front of the TV. with my parents during the missile crisis, and how relieved everybody was that your President kept his cool and avoided war. There was a real feeling of joy when the announcement came that the Russians had turned back, and Kennedy was very popular for having preserved the peace. We had the Vaughn Meader record of the First Family satire. Then, when we got the news of his death, I thought it strange that the funeral involved so much of the military. It seemed so at odds with what everybody had said Kennedy stood for. The thing of it is, I still feel that way. Why was a man of peace buried with all that military ceremony? Why Arlington, a military ground for fallen soldiers? It is an anomalous picture, this vision of a peaceful man whose pall bearers were not any of his loving family or friends, but instead the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Years later it occurs to me that she made the bastards walk in the street with his body and carry him to his grave, so they could see what they have done. Like wearing those bloodstained clothes that long day. You might be interested in some of the words of Mike Mansfield's eulogy. He said it was "the bigotry, the hatred, the prejudice, and the arrogance which converged in that moment of horror to strike him down". According to Manchester, Mrs Kennedy thought "it was the one thing that said what happened". I can not reconcile those words and those funeral images with a man of peace felled by a lone malcontent. She made her son salute.

I think a few people know what happened, Harold, and that was why they never really investigated the crime, as you have so painstakingly proved. Maybe they should not have lied to you, but now that you investigate the military mind displayed by SIOP, maybe we can see why. The stakes were very high. The Watchman says it was worse than I thought—100 million lives. And I think the Watchman was right about the motive, as you will see if you look at the two chapters I mentioned. Some soldiers conspired to kill their chief, and

sadly, not for the first time. They seized the file of an unsuspecting junior operative as the means to engineer the frame, and no doubt that was why you had such trouble with the Navy. Their fingerprints are all over this thing. It is there files that have gone missing.

May I say that you write with real feeling, Harold, and I know this has made you sad, but may I also say that I applaud your work in the meticulous documentatuion of the lies and the silence. I say the Watchman is right and so I say well-done. The hard part is accepting that the relative calm that followed the stormy death had its cost in those lies and that silence. The only speculative question is what might have happened had they done differently than they did, and struck back.

At pg. 253 of the copy you gave me, The Wathman refers to an "EYES ONLY" memo regarding Lemnitzer, and the thing that is of interest to me is to see that it was found in the LBJ library, safely preserved. Like the tape of the Dallas newsconference that said the first shot hit in the front of the throat. I think Johnson suspected a lot more than he ever let on- he may even have known.

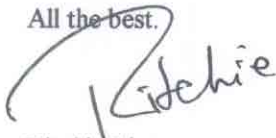
There is something else you may wish to consider regarding motive, and it has to do with McNamara. Are you familiar with a book by Deborah Shapley called "Promise and Power"? It is a biography of McNamara, and one thing it makes clear is how much he pissed them off, too. It was McNamara who ordered a review of the policy evidenced by SIOP, with a view to moving toward developing a flexible and limited response option, something the Brass scowled at. Then there was the wrangle with the Navy over the development of the TFX fighter. Alan Enthoven, one of the "whizz kids", said "the whole McNamara thing was starting to worry people". He was Kennedy's man, and there had even been some talk of replacing LBJ with him on the 64 ticket. I suspect McNamara has had some sleepless nights at the dawning of his being a part of the motive. I have often wondered if that was why he stayed with LBJ, the longest serving Secretary of Defence ever.

Please excuse me continuing a letter that has probably gone on too long already, but I want to comment a little on the policy question. The Watchman is right again about the Gulf of Tonkin being a fraud, but you know, LBJ had it checked out twice, by different channels, and they lied to him anyway. He was clearly suspicious, and I think so was McNamara, and that was why they went in slowly, in tragic increments of escalation. Your country never did fight a real and full war there, something that they could have done with victory. Your nation would have crushed the Vietnamese if it had wanted to, and I think it should be remembered that the Pentagon had recommended that the only way to stabilize the South was to defeat the North by going there militarily, something that was never done. McNamara thought it reckless, believing the Chinese would respond, something that the military planners did not believe. They were once again prepared to use the nukes. I am sure that Johnson and McNamara did not trust the bastards, knowing what they knew about JFK. I interepret LBJ's remark about getting re-elected in this context- if they had to have a war, at least he would be in charge of it. They died the agony of a thousand slow deaths, holding them back. Thus did it become a quagmire.

Also you may have seen Noam Chomsky's short book, "Rethinking Camelot", which challenges the conventional wisdom that holds JFK was killed to clear the way to Vietnam. I have exchanged some letters with him, and I should say that he is a pinko, and so it seems in some ways with him that, if the ruling class is killing its own, so much the better. Anyway, he points out that the western capitalist model of democracy and economy was the policy objective in Vietnam, and that such a policy did not change either before or after JFK, although the nature of the war did. In recent years, McNamara has admitted this and acknowledged that he never questioned those fundamental assumptions. About the assassination Chomsky is subject matter ignorant, but it is an interesting short read.

Thank-you again for all your kindness, for sharing the Watchman, for allowing us access to your collection of records, and for putting up with this rather long letter. I agree with the Watchman, and the only thing that I have trouble understanding is why your people would be so long in realizing that soldiers will kill their chief if they feel threatened by him. Although that is not new, the equation changes when you calculate the nuclear risk, and that may explain what you have so carefully documented.

All the best.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ritchie". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

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