

Mr. Les Payne
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Dear Les,

Today I got from the CIA a record I believe is of considerable importance. I should have gotten it from the CIA years ago and didn't. I got it this time because the Department of Justice referred it and that required a decision. Quiet disclosure probably appeared to be the safest course to the CIA. Jim hasn't even seen it yet. I have in fact given it to nobody because I want to have it used effectively or not at all.

So, I write to get your reaction and if it appeals to you what you think you can do with it.

There has been a considerable campaign, rising and falling in intensity over the years and rising again now with crummy TV specials and lousy but well-publicized books plus newspaper and magazine comment to make it appear that the JFK assassination was a kickback from the CIA's mafia scheme, attributed to John and Robert Kennedy, to off Fidel Castro. If I remember correctly, the House Assassins Committee puffed this and its staff director's book blames the assassination on the mafia in this sense.

Helms testified before the House Assassins that the CIA was doing only what the President wanted done. He lied, SOP for him, especially under oath.

The record I just got was written by the CIA's Sheffield Edwards at Bobby Kennedy's request as a report on his briefing of Robert Kennedy in 1962 on the mafia scheme. Only two copies were made. I now have the DJ's copy from the CIA but not the CIA's copy. It is written with the usual CIA deference for obfuscation and under-information.

It is now without any possibility of question that the plot was not hatched by the Kennedys or the CIA under the Kennedy administration. It was hatched by Bissell in August 1960, which was before JFK was elected. It was cancelled by the Kennedys in May of 1961, which I believe was at the time, without public attention, the plot came to some restricted but official attention.

Only six men knew of the plot and all were senior CIA officials. I presume he meant it to be understood that some of those involved in it also knew, like the mobsters. However, with only six knowing and all of them top CIA people, it is obvious that neither the President nor the attorney general knew a thing about it.

Bearing on this the memo makes no claim to any authorization for the scheme. It in fact never even says what that was, referring to it only as the project and in the sense of being an intelligence function. If it had been authorized by a president he would have been Eisenhower because he then was the only president.

Bissell's concept was given to Edwards who got Maheu in it. He fails to really identify Maheu, saying he was connected with a couple of large organizations, meaning corporations. In fact he was a former FBI agent and former CIA contract employee and one of those big outfits for which Maheu worked was the Hughes combine - a CIA asset.

Maheu got John Roselli to handle the mafia end when they met in Florida. In the Edwards memo Sam Giancana did not attend all their meetings and seems to have had a smaller role. Both mobsters insisted they wanted no money for their part in the project. Some of Maheu's Florida expenses were paid by the CIA. It also authorized a payment of \$150,000 to the person or persons who did it, quite a bit more than that sums appears to be today.

What leaves identification of the project without doubt is Edwards' reference to a bugging operation in which a bugger named Bellotti was apprehended. The memo is deliberately hazy on the whole business. Some of it has been published. I have the FBI's files that have not been used.

Sam Giancana, who was busy two-timing his wife with, among others, Phyllis McGuire, of the then popular McGuire sisters, ~~he~~ suspected she was two-timing him with Dan Martin of the Rowan and Martin show. So, he asked the CIA, through Maheu, to check it out for him. Maheu it appears got a Florida outfit to do this. The memo is so vague on this it does not even connect Bellotti with that outfit which it gives the name of the top guy in that outfit.

Edwards told Bobby that ^{of} Bellotti was caught while installing the bug and no more on that. My recollection is that he had bugged the bed and did it so amateurishly that the bugging was detected. I guess he wanted sound effects. I ~~may~~ not be exactly precise in my recollection but I think a maid discovered it while making the bed and got the manager and he got the sheriff and that put the fat in the fire. One way or another when he was picked up Bellotti gave everybody to understand that if anything happened to him he'd sing real loud. So, nothing happened to him.

There is a Byzantine twist to this, naturally, with the FBI involved from the time Bellotti was apprehended. It got to know everything and generated a fairly large file that is entirely incomplete. Remember, that was in ~~1962~~ 1962.

Jack Anderson was impressed with the line Jim Garrison gave him almost exactly seven years later. He went to the FBI with it, saw DeLoach and at the end of his memo on ^{it} he mentions that he'd been called the night before by Marvin Watson, LBJ's honcho, and told by Watson that as a result of some information the FBI had given him, this CIA/mafia deal, believed that the assassination of JFK was the end product of a conspiracy and that the CIA was part of it. Not quite the government's official conclusion, is it?

The FBI sat on that stuff for about five years and ^{then} that passed it on to LBJ when it wanted to divert attention from itself and toward the CIA, when Garrison was making noises about both of the agencies.

It is easy to lie about the dead when they are dead and can't contradict and it was relatively easier to lie about the Kennedys. From Helms down they have all lied about the CIA's mafia plot to assassinate Castro to make it appear that Bobby and JFK were responsible when Helms and the CIA knew other and better: it was their own scheme of five months before JFK became President and both Kennedys didn't know a blessed thing about that deal.

My recollection of the Edwards memo on his briefing of Bobby is that he did not go into all of this in the record with which he covered his own and the CIA's asses but he did say that Bobby seemed to be surprised or shocked and that one way or another Bobby said no more. The copy I had appears to be mislaid. I've asked the CIA, which did disclose it to me, to give me a duplicate.

From this record, the DJ's file copy, I've gotten the identification of that DJ file and have already appealed its withholding from me. It should hold more about that business. If I do not have a response by the middle of March I can go to court then. But I'm not up to much and Jim stays too busy. I think that if your people go for this if I've not gotten that file by the 20 days they might want to consider joining in the litigation so they would have first crack at what is ultimately disclosed. The memo I got is the fifth record in that DJ file so it is not large.

I haven't spoken to any about this because I want to be certain that it is not misused by the revisionists. A BBC team is to be here Wednesday on something else and I may make a confidential inquiry. The Brits ought not have the hangups of our media.

If you phone me, remember that I have a primitive form of physical therapy every early morning but am usually home by 10 a.m.

Best to you all,

*Or, do you know anyone else
who might be interested?*

