

Dear Fletch,

6/25/91

Your letter of the 22d got me to reminiscing. This is a good day for it because I'll be interrupted soon by visitors and because I'm tired, more than usually, from a trip to Johns Hopkins yesterday. It always happens. Didn't know you'd had surgery. What was it? I'm hopeful that yesterday's trip results in the elimination of surgery I'd expected. *To need*

You refer to my birds as though I were still farming. I started to liquidate the farm under an amicable agreement with the Pentagon and was mostly done with it 11/22/63. I've not farmed since. That in turn reminds me, it was a precedent case that last I'd heard, now quite a few years ago, your flyboys and the Congress had not been able to resolve.

Mostly it was chopped <sup>up</sup>, most of them from Davison, Belvoir, but quite a few whitetops and some sonic booms. The Army backed out of the deal and I had to sue again and that time they settled out of court. The first suit established the property-owner's rights under the Constitution to the air space over his <sup>property</sup> to the height required to be able to "enjoy" his property.

All those I dealt with except some of the operational people were fine. The Secretary spoke to his general counsel, who spoke to an assistant, something like Niederlehner, and he appointed a fine fellow on his staff, Walter Morse, later head of Selective Service or its general counsel, to look out for <sup>my</sup> ~~Bill's~~ <sup>and</sup> interest <sup>and</sup> mine. He convened the meeting at which we reached an agreement but the Army <sup>later</sup> decided to ~~negotiate~~ <sup>renege</sup>.

I remember one you may recall, a Col Robert(?) Low, assistant to the asst sec for Fiscal Management. He came up, said he knew the truth without my explaining it, we had a short, nice visit and a regulation prohibiting any military chopping within 5 air miles of our farm was promulgated. He was a nice guy.

You say I should have advertised my embassy row customers. That I never did, not even by word of mouth. And I had quite a few ambassadors, too. Your mention of jumbo eggs reminds me, when the New Zealand Ambassador was appointed their ambassador to the UN I left five dozen of them at the embassy for him every Wednesday and they went to New York with the pouch. His wife mailed me a check monthly. I think she'll still remember me if she is still alive for several incidents, ranging from her dog suddenly turning mean and taking a hunk out of my backside to my rescuing her during the first Seato conferences when unexpectedly she was serving dinner that night. She had an Austrian refugee cook named Rosie. They were talking when I entered the kitchen. I got the drift of the problem, Rosie gave me a look, I gave her a nod, and Mrs. Knox-Monroe asked me if I had some extra birds. The next week she told me her dinner had been a great success.

Once when Mrs. Foster Dulles gave a luncheon for Mamie Eisenhower she'd ordered my smallest birds and Mamie was so pleased she went to the kitchen and asked the cook where she got such delicious birds. The cook and the butler, Danes and man-and-wife, also told me that Mrs. Dulles had decided to have them done in aspic, which this pair considered the

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means of preparation they liked least.

Did you know Nando Castillo, the Dominican military attache? He was related to Trujillo, and whenever Trujillo came to town if Nando hadn't ordered those individual-serving birds he'd pack Nando up to the farm to get some. (I think Nando, Samule, Fernando and many other names Castillo, was part of the Guatemala overthrow, working from Venezuela.) One Xmas he got drunk and by accident met us in the store of a Paraguayan on 18 near Columbia Road, Carlos Somethingorother. Nothing would do but that I drive Nando to his apartment so he could get some gifts for Lil. Turned out to be a bottle of fine Scotch, one of an excellent Spanish anisette, El Mono, and another bottle of a liquor -il would not touch. Good Xmas for me. ...Our favorite of the embassy people was Guillermo Murdoch, known as "Boo." He was Uruguayan, and when he went back he was made chief of staff. He'd brought a former actress as a mistress when he was sent to DC from London and he did not take her home with him. Lil invited her to stay with us and that lasted two years!... Many stories come to mind. All the famous the (French) British Embassy chef served our birds to including Winnie. In his jump suit, I suppose. Marcel was a nice guy. Used to bring his boy to the farm but had to stop because the kid wanted to stay!

It is 3:30 a.m., I've just finished the first chapter of Mangold's book on Aggleton and in a few moments will go out for the papers. First a few side matters. I'll be walking at about 5 a.m. I don't know what your surgery was ~~but~~ and I've a few years on you but I strongly urge you to spend some time walking every day. I can usually do at least five minutes before I have to get off my complaining legs. I then sit in the car in the shopping center parking lot, read and listen to WETA off a similar Baltimore station and walk again when the legs permit. I've developed a pain in the hip that may inhibit me but I'll do it this morning. I used to walk continuously before the venous thrombosis and complications following implantation of a teflon artery in the left thigh prevented that. I assure you that walking time is also good thinking time, especially when writing or planning writing.

While resting these mornings and at other odd moments when I've not felt up to working I'm been annotating Beschloss' "The Crisis Years" for Dave Wrone. If you are not familiar with the book, it deals with JFK and Khrushchev. This bastard with scholarly credentials is thoroughly and quite professionally dishonest. There are some areas where you have personal knowledge, like where I am now, in one of his treatments of the Bay of Pigs. I spent close to two hours on a dozen pages annotating the lies and dishonesties for Dave, which also means as a record for history. Beschloss for whatever reason is covering the CIA's collective and individual asses. It takes the closest and most critical reading to detect what he is up to. From recollection, to illustrate and to indicate why your annotations from personal knowledge would be helpful, on page 132 he makes one of his vague references to the CIA's briefing of JFK during the interregnum. I think he fails here to say that it was at Joe. K.'s Palm Beach place. In the very next sentence he says that Dul-



les and <sup>A</sup>Bissell kept warning <sup>JFK</sup> about what he and perhaps they refer to as "the disposal problem," ~~the~~ those trained anti-Castro Cubans in Guatemala. Beschloss by this linking of the two matters tells the reader that their informing JFK of this began before he was sworn in. In fact as you know if my recollection is correct it did not happen until JFK was calling on the project, just before it finally started. Aside from the wretchedness of making JFK witting when he was not because the CIA itself had under-informed him, of which this ~~disposal problem~~ was but one area, Beschloss also diminishes that earlier than this page by limiting it to one thing, that all those Cubans would be going through<sup>1</sup> Latin America bad-mouthing JFK. Not a word about what Dulles blackmailed JFK with in those last and critical days, what would they do with more than a thousand armed, trained and angry Cubans then in Guatemala, which wanted them out.

There is no catching up with all the dishonesties in all the revisionist books and it may be that the time spent in annotating<sup>INC</sup> them is wasted, but unless it is done there is no record for history, for those later wanted to check on and be honest about our history and what later can be learned of it. This is why I take the time for Dave, for whom I've annotated enough books I do not remember them all. I think it is worth the time.

Before I forget, as I recall one of the things you said, I disagree to a degree with it. So I'll say now that the first Wednesday - I remember two people I spoke to while making my deliveries in Washington, which was on Wednesdays - I made what I still regard as a basically correct analysis of what Khrushchev was up to. One was to an editor for whom I'd done my series of "azi cartel exposes before Pearl Harbor, which I also predicted, among many other things in accurately forecasting what Japan would be doing (it appeared that September, the one before that December) and the other was the then foreign editor of the Post, as I recall named something like "hornberry" <sup>or Dury</sup>. I had customers in the Post newsroom, to which I made their deliveries. I am reminded of this also in connection with what you say about those missiles being covered by tarps. Was there ever at the time of JFK's speech and of Adlai Stevenson's speech at the UN any proof that any warheads were in Cuba? I think that in a series of conferences between participants of both sides the USSR people have said there were. But I <sup>later</sup> was looking for evidence that there were some, as I assumed there would have to be, and do not recall disclosure of any proof that there were warheads in Cuba. ...

You say you are convinced that NSA 203 is why JFK was killed. You don't have to argue with me that it is possible but I think you overlook other possible inspirations. I mean preceeding it.

When I had to quit farming I was working on a number of possible books. I'd been an OSS analyst with some experience as what I was not trained for, a Latin Americanist. I had some successes and in general did what the PhDs could not do. One book I planned and never started writing was "Aesop in the State Department." Dave Wrone has the clippings I had for <sup>it</sup>.

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One I remember rather clearly was a Post story listing Latin American tyrants of various rank all of whom had been trained in our War Colleges, from Leavenworth, as I now recall, to Washington.

In general I was alert to such things and thought about them and about policy.

You may recall that I added an epilogue to Whitewash II, my thinking about the assassination and what may have been behind it, along the lawyer's line of thinking, "cui bono." At that time I believed that it might be possible to get somewhere thinking that way. I was wrong.

This had been on my mind and as often happened then I awoke after about two hours sleep with how that part began in mind. I went to the typewriter and didn't stop until I'd finished it, except for dressing after I'd gotten started and a few necessities, like making a pot of coffee. I remember that was a Saturday and I'd just finished it when a then Baltimore Sun reporter came. He read it and liked it and paid it a to me high compliment, saying it rolled on the tongue like a fine wine.

But I hadn't really thought it through and what I printed is the corrected rough draft. Later I came to realize that there were just too many people and forces for whom seeing some form of benefit in killing JFK was either apparent or could be believed.

So while that NSAM could provide motive, why not also what you next refer to of the previous June, his American University speech? Among so many others, Fletch.

You go into the missiles in Cuba. I do not dispute that they were in all pictures covered by tarps but I thought that when the pictures you refer to were taken and shown on TV they were not. I remember that they were on the ships taking them out and remember seeing the crews remove the tarps so the flyers and the cameras could see that there were missiles under them on the decks.

As I recall one of the first things done after JFK was informed, and I am satisfied the CIA had proof long before he was informed, was to send extra troops to Florida for a possible invasion. But JFK realized that devastating Cubans would be no solution and would have been condemned by the entire world.

You say that when you were sent to brief "George" Adams and the admiral at Norfolk that evening," which not specified, "JFK knew he would not have to attack." I believe that he never intended to attack and that any attack would have been at the least counterproductive. I take it you mean one of the earliest days. I think that until almost the end JFK did not see the end and that before then he was at least worried about his military and diplomatic advisers and what they were telling him to do.

You next refer to Tonkin Gulf. I was not aware that earlier there was OP 34 plans for what led to the crisis and that after LBJ was President they were used by the military to provoke a North Vietnamese response. I was aware that the Navy had been <sup>shelling</sup> bombing their shorelines. There was a lot leaked and on the basis of thinking about what was leaked I wrote



contemporaneous and accurate analysis which went into the provocation (I remember the Turner Joy but not the name of the other ship involved) in which I concluded that in fact there had not been any real attack on either ship and that there had been either error on our part in reporting observations or the whole thing was made up ~~up~~ <sup>both</sup>.

You had knowledge from personal involvement in the Bay of Pigs but I did not. I do recall some of what I read in a number of sources I believe are dependable and the reporting is what you report, that JFK did not decide to let the invasion go ahead until the Sunday before it happened. I think that what led to that decision is what Beschloss misrepresents on the time, Dulles' telling JFK the night before that they had this problem, what were they going to do with those armed and angry Cubans in Guatemala. I have always believed, and I think this goes back to Haynes Johnson's book, that Dulles blackmailed JFK into going ahead with a plan that could not work even if there had been a successful second air strike if the intent was to establish and hold a beachhead that would lead to a war, not just to hold it long enough for what I am sure was a plan, for us to recognize a government in exile.

I did not recall, if I ever knew, that Bundy had cancelled the approval for that second strike. You say of it that <sup>DDCI</sup> Cabell delayed speaking to Rusk to get an OK, as he was to have done, and that is why those planes were an hour late, which you do not mention. I do not dispute your version but I do remember that the Navy was then silent when it was reported that they had loused up on time and were that hour late, too late.

You say we could have beaten Ho with conventional weapons. In our military terms, without question. But he would likely have survived the attacks and what did eventuate would have eventuated anyway. Destruction of the land might have been greater but an end to guerrilla warfare would not have been likely. We could have controlled the land militarily but without peace and there would not have been peace as long as there was military occupation.

Back to the 1962 missile crisis. My analysis then was the title of the book I planned and for which I did much research, "Tiger to Ride." I believed and still believe, with some confirmation from the recent bi-party conferences on that crisis, that in placing the missiles there Khrushchev was giving JFK his own tiger to ride, the tiger of making the decision. I do not for a minute believe that Khrushchev wanted to or intended to use those missiles. Originally I believed that there were no warheads there but as I thought about this later, that would have been foolish because there was always the chance they'd get used in response to an attack. He wanted to have them there to use in bargaining a solution.

What the revisionists ignore is that this was his first proposal that he did not trust to his own diplomacy. He had it delivered by a man I think was KGB with an embassy cover and function, to that dumdum John Scali, then with ABC News, who never really understood what was ~~afloat~~ <sup>in</sup> afloat from his own later writing about it. When with a short time that got

response Khrushchev used a different approach. He disclosed his second proposal publicly while it was being transmitted in official channels. The news people had it as it came over the wire as fast as the White House did. He offered to remove his missiles if we would remove ours in Turkey. He was, I believe, confident that the US and JFK would not accept that proposal after it was so public because it would appear like a retreat.

This is what led the White House thinking that bypassed all the advisers.

Did you know that two people saw the solution and I think the purpose immediately? One was Adlai Stevenson at the UN, and how he was defamed and bedevilled over it by the uncomprehending hawks <sup>politicians and</sup> but ~~not~~ <sup>in</sup> some of the military for it, and John McCone at the CIA. But before long others in the CIA went to work on McCone and within a short time he changed his position.

As I recall now it was Robert Kennedy who saw the wisdom of going back to Kh's original proposal, in part because we could hardly claim the right to have similar missiles not <sup>island</sup> ~~island~~ away but on the border, in Turkey, and claim that was right and proper but that having some on the nearby island wasn't. The world would not have bought that and we'd have looked so very bad and so aggressive, with them looking right.

When JFK learned that we still had missiles in Turkey he was aghast. He had ordered them to be removed, more than once when he learned his order had been ignored.

As Robert and John discussed what Robert saw they decided to broaden the guarantee Kh had demanded, that we would not invade Cuba. What the US really proposed was much more, that we would protect Cuba against any invasion. If you have the records on this, and I now do not, you'll see I am correct.

Who won is immaterial and it made little difference to Kh that our side proclaimed a big victory that in reality was more (in the wrong terms) of a big defeat. We gave him more than he'd demanded and proclaimed victory. The real victor was the world and avoidance of what without it there would have been because Kh had one of what we called "mutual assistance" deals with client states would could give no assistance. Raul Castro and Che Guevara were in Moscow that June reporting that another invasion impended and asking the USSR to keep its word. It could not defend Cuba from any attack. Any attack would have ~~lead~~ <sup>lead</sup> it waste. That is hardly defending. But Kh could not back down because the loss of face if he did not go help Cuba after an invasion would have made him a paper tiger and treaties with his country valueless.

So, he passed the decision to JFK and the world is indebted to both of them for working it out without war.

Thanks and best wishes,  
Do you remember the Navy taking 3 Cuban fishing boats on the high seas, to Tampa, making phony charges in another provocation, <sup>Harold</sup> ~~Harold~~ Weisberg in which most if not all the story was false, and Goldwater playing along with his own provocation involving Guantanamo? Will we ever know how many provocations were created by some of our military? Did you learn when at JCS?



4201 Peachtree Place, Alexandria, VA 22304 June 22, 1991

Harold Weisberg  
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Dear Harold,

Travelled to my 50th Class Reunion at the Univ Massachusetts in Amherst. Spent several fine days there among 110 old friends. It was my first vacation trip in years; so we thought we'd stretch our legs a bit more and go on up into Maine. Without prior plans we ended up in Boothbay Harbor and stayed right on the wharf. It was great, and the lobster is incomparable. Then back via NH, VT, NY and PA. I was tired when I got back; but it was worth it.

Then, for the past three days I have been attending the annual conference of the Society of Historians for American Foreign Relations at GW Univ. I have been with this organization since its earliest years and I enjoy the meetings. I don't travel to them; but when they are this area I go.

Got home today and found a letter in the mail from Dave Wrone. He is a fine guy and one of the true professionals in this field. I had not had the pleasure of hearing from him for a while but he mentioned that he had been with you. I'm sorry I missed him. I've been up at Stevens point with him...but too long ago.

I have your letter of 5/30. My operation has slowed me down and I have trouble doing the things each day that I want to do. But things seem to improve each day.

That headline in the Stars and Stripes was of course the military pick up on the story. Around the world everyone knew that NSAM 263 was JFK's premiere plank of his 1964 campaign for re-election. What could have been better.

I have been surprised for years that more people did not pick up on how important NSAM 263 was in the assassination context. I am convinced it was why he was killed. In that day, under those conditions, it was an extremely important directive. He would have been re-elected on that platform.

John F. Kennedy's "Special Message" speech of Nov 22nd appears on page 226 of Vol II of the Gravel edition of the Pentagon Papers. It was a most important...proposed...speech.

Your story of your visits to the Foster Dulles home is most valuable. He was a real character. During this SHAFR Convention and young man tried to give a paper on Dulles. There is no way he could catch the full flavor of that man without knowing him.

You talk about his gout. Did you know that brother Allen had a club foot? He got over it rather well and played a fair game of tennis. He had a tennis court in the backyard of his home in Georgetown.

You ought to have a special advertising circular made for the Embassy Row set about your birds and Dulles. If you are ever having any delivered in the Alexandria area you'll have to let me

know. Birds are not what they used to be.

I used to have chickens that never knew a cage, never knew prepared foods and could fly. They were huge and were delightful. You can't get that sort of thing today. Today I went to the Alexandria Farmers Market just to get three dozen farm fresh jumbo eggs. I can't get them anywhere else and I can not get good bird meat anywhere. Dulles would know how to find "Good Birds." My visits to his home, or his brother's, were limited to business; so I do not have the individual memories you have.

In his library Foster had a white phone with no dial. All he did was pick it up, say a few words, and the world was at his hand. I saw him call Russians in Russia many times. Good phone. Great man.

One thing I could never figure out about him is that in 1950 he made a speech in the Far East when he had no job with the government and in that speech he said that Chiang Kai-Shek and Syngman Rhee were great Christians and "the equal of the Founders of the Church." I have trouble believing that he said that or what he meant by it. Some guy.

The steps taken by JFK, and others, to assure the live removal of the Diems are fairly well described in the Pentagon Papers; but they did not know the full details. He was to be flown by a chartered Air France plane to Europe.

As for the missiles in Cuba. We never saw a single "MISSILE" in Cuba. We saw stacks of things covered by tarp that were the size of missiles; but we never saw them without the tarp. I had a good friend who was the pilot of a Navy RCN aircraft that used to shoot across that "missile" site at very low altitude with a special camera that had its shutter open all the time and the speed of the film movement was matched to the speed of the plane. This gave extremely clear pictures.

None of their pictures, and none of them personally ever saw a real missile. All they saw was the tarp.

With reference to that "Missile Crisis" most people seem to have overlooked the fact that we had naval forces in Guantanamo and that we had ships at sea and that we had U-2's overhead and that we had lots of "thunder" in Florida. For JFK told Gen Adams to attack, Cuba would have been done in an hour or two. If they had made a move to remove the tarps, we would have attacked anyhow. Khrushchev was a bluff: we had them in our sights.

I happened to be the person sent by the JCS to speak with Gen Adams and the Admiral in Norfolk that evening. I was totally up to date, and I know that they were ready and able. JFK knew he did not have to attack.

It was JFK's strength not to use force when force was not needed. He did not in Cuba and he had declared that he would not in Vietnam. It is this fact that caused the big boys to decide that he had to go. They want force...witness this Gulf scenario.

In the Tonkin Gulf, the situation was a response to provocation.



You'll recall that in the summer of 1963 JFK had asked the JCS for plans for covert attacks on the North. When they were done my boss took them to Adm Felt in Honolulu. They were never used by JFK; but he held them ready. Then when LBJ became President these same plans, known as OP-34 were taken out and with NSAM 288 of Mar 1964 they were used. This meant that US forces supporting Vietnamese forces were running sneak attacks on the Vietminh. After one of these attacks the North Vietnamese responded.

LBJ said the North provoked the attack, over-looking the first strike by our people and the Tonkin Incident followed. It was all a covert powerplay that had been planned for a long time. It may well be that the US Navy vessels were never actually hit.

You're correct about Tad Szulc. He always played the party line.

Now I am going back to your 5/23 letter. In this you say something about the "Second Strike" of the Bay of Pigs operation. Let's review the bidding.

First of all the "Letter to the President" June 13, 1961, by Gen Maxwell Taylor and the Special Study Group that reviewed the Bay of Pigs on orders from JFK (Burke, Dulles, and Bobby) is the key to the facts of the case. It is available at the JFK Library. It is also available, verbatim, in an excellent book, "ZAPATA".

JFK did not approve the landing of the Brigade on the beaches of Cuba until mid-afternoon of Sunday the day before the landing. At the same time he ordered that there be a B-26 bombing strike against the last three combat-ready aircraft Castro had. He was looking at U-2 photographs that showed where they were. The four B-26's were at Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua. They would be released to strike these planes at dawn, Monday at the same time the troops were landing far to the north. This was all approved on that Sunday PM and all the commanders knew their orders. My friend was at Puerto Cabezas and he called me on the phone at my home that night. That second strike on three small aircraft on the ground would be a cinch. His men were ready.

That night, according to Gen Taylor, McGeorge Bundy called Gen Cabell, Dulles #2 man (Dulles was out of the country) and told him that the flight would not be flown. If Cabell disagreed he was to speak to Rusk. In the uncertainty Cabell let the hour go by when the planes had to leave to be there by dawn. This caused the whole collapse of the plan because those three jets sank ships and shot down the slower B-26's. The invasion failed.

That was the reason...pure and simple.

The idea of a second wave of aircraft is ridiculous. The damage was done at dawn when those jets took off and sank the Brigade's supply ships. It would have done no good just to fly over there. The damage had already been done and it was irrevocable.

The people who talk about a second Navy strike aren't using their heads. What could it have done with the ships already destroyed and 16 B-26s gone? That's foolish and JFK a Navy veteran knew it. The mistake was by Bundy. In the Group meetings, as you can read, neither Taylor nor Burke...both combat veterans said a word about the "Second Strike" foolishness. It was all over by the time the

jets took off.

If you want to know why, with a superior military force, we did not defeat Ho you ought to read my old boss' wonderful book "First to Fight" by General Victor H. Krulak. He has one chapter in that book which more than any I have ever seen anywhere tells the sad story of Vietnam. In essence Averill Harriman and LBJ turned down a plan to attack with the comment "Do you want to get us in a nuclear war?" Krulak packed up his War Plan and knew the game was lost. You must read that magnificent and sensible book (one chapter only) to see how important that was.

The first man I reported to in 1941 was Capt Creighton W. Abrams. He was from my home town. I knew him from 1941 until I retired in 1964. Under Patton in Europe he was the most brilliant combat commander we had. He was Commander of Patton's Lead...Third Army...Brigade. When he went to Vietnam he wanted to take Hanoi. LBJ would not let him. "Do you want to provoke nuclear war?" That is what beat us in Vietnam.

We could have whipped Ho Chi Minh with conventional weapons; but our leaders believed that Russia would have retaliated with the nuclear weapon and ignited a global disaster.

You ask a great question...can we conquer an army but not the people? Up to the time of Napoleon that was possible. After that armies became people's armies. Just think of the slaughter in the Ukraine...of civilians...in 1943-1944. Today the army and the people are too much the same and the weapons are too massive. Just look at the gulf war and how the people who were non-combatant died by the thousands. And that is without the nuclear weapon that is always ready.

What we seem to have forgotten is that "WAR" is, and must be, an all-out, unfettered, "last act" of a nation. The minute someone attempts to limit it or put it under control it is no longer war. Thousands can be killed, as in Korea and Vietnam; but that is not "WAR." Our leadership has not, and can not, figure out how to wage "WAR" under the threat of the super Hydrogen bomb that exists today.

Man will fight a duel. He has a 50% chance of survival...perhaps better than that if he is expert and his opponent is not. But a nuclear war does not even give the chances of a 50% solution. Not only will man die; but so will Earth.

This is where mankind is today. We had better begin to THINK.

Thanks for your good letters.

Ciao,

*Fletcher*

L. Fletcher Prouty