

PU, P.B., J.P., J.W.

5/29/72

Mr. Tom Kelley, Ass't Director
U.S. Secret Service
1800 G St., NW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Tom,

The Bremer case reminds me of a letter to the administrative assistant to Senator Gravel dismissed as a "nut" letter by the Secret Service. If you do not recall this of the many that reaches your agency, it is the one that began "Can Mr. Weisberg translate?" An area of doubt remained in J.M. Rothstein's mind, so he sent me a copy.

The threat to Senator McGovern, whether or not intended for implementation, seemed rather explicit. Some of what must have seemed like gibberish had fairly transparent meaning to me. It sounded like a man on whose past I had spent much time, and I considered him a candidate for authorship. However, the deeper I got into "translation" the more clear it became that this was beyond the intellect of the man I suspected. There are word usages with multiple meanings, archaic usages, philosophical references hidden and other factors that persuaded me and others whose help I enlisted that the author or authors were of better than average education. Intellectuals. One or more intellectuals penned it. I suggest a second not only because of the two typewriters, but because the style is of two kinds. Why the challenge to me I don't know. Why not the better known, like Jim Harrison or Mark Lane? Yet the challenge was in more than using my name. That thing was mailed on my birthday, the odds heavily against coincidence.

To give you one illustration of the kind of game that was played, the return address was "I.F. Stone, Rockville, Md." The street, 1910 Luke. There is no Luke St. in Rockville. However, if you check the Book of Luke, 19:10, you will find a comprehensible message. Including "if" and "stone". (There are, as I recall, at least seven references to stone in some form hidden or explicit in that letter.) Another is the beginning, which refers to Senator Edward M. Kennedy. The two signatures could refer to a novel about the philosopher-theologian Occam, whose best-known theory, of minimalism or parsimony, strongly hints, in context, at killing.

Some time after your people decided this was an idle indulgence by a nut and after I had been working on this for a while, I got a series of phone calls from a stranger, out of the blue and for no apparent reason. What he disclosed of himself is consistent with his having written this message. The name he gave me is a real name. At the place of employment he gave as his, a person of the name he gave did work. He said he was then about to leave, with a disability retirement, for Miami, where he was to teach. The only disability I can conceive that would disqualify him for the employment he then had and not for teaching is emotional, and there were things in the conversation suggestive of emotional problems. He discussed such things as marital problems and his finances.

When what could not have happened in the Bremer case did happen, despite everyone's best intentions, it shook me up and reminded me of this, made me think what, really, can the best police agencies do if a real brain starts playing intellectual cat-and-mouse games with it, leaving it first to make sense out of such messages and then to wonder whether or not they are of serious intent, and who wrote them. I don't envy you a bit! And this letter is not intended as any kind of criticism.

The stranger who phoned me asked if he could visit me, and I invited him. Because he claimed expertise in seven languages (including Russian, translated in intelligence) and because there seemed to be, as I now remember, references in four languages in what seemed to have meaning in that message, I asked him if he'd care to go over it. I haven't heard from him since.

This is not to make an accusation. But when he didn't come at the appointed time, didn't phone, didn't write, and when he said he was going to Miami when the most explicit reference in that letter was to New Hampshire, I suspended work on that "translation". Should you feel that with the coming Miami conventions you might want to go over this file, it is, of course, available to you.

As I do not pretend expertise in your business, I also do not with mental derangements. However, I am not without experience with people of this kind, from my work and from the past, when I spent some months as a military guard in a locked ward in a large mental hospital. I know from personal experience the subtleties of which people so afflicted are capable, have seen the deceptions of which they are capable, and know the mercurial changes in personality and capabilities that can't be predicted. After 30 years my recollections of some of these things are pretty sharp.

I have never been anti-police and think that, more than most writers, I have had contact with good, professional police. I once spent four months living with some of the best Bureau agents on a case. I have a current relationship with a thoroughly professional police intelligence unit. It is my observation that men properly trained for such work are, for the most part, not trained in the arts and literature, not prepared to interpret such seeming gibberish as is in the letter to which I refer above.

So, I take the liberty of making a suggestion for your consideration. It is that someone with protective responsibilities undertake to arrange for consultations with imaginative people who are familiar with a wide variety of things that could be interests of the sick intellectual, from the antiquities to science fiction (the novel is Occam's Razor, by David Duncan). Scholarship alone might not be adequate credentials, in my view. I think that among experts who might be drawn upon, there should be a quest for the most uninhibited minds, the most imaginative people. One of the means of finding them might be through editors at publishing houses.

Referring to our previous correspondence, some remains unanswered. I'd appreciate answers or an explanation of why none has been provided.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg