

5/28/72

Mr. Ben Bradlee, Executive Editor
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Bradlee,

Excellent, relevant and accurate as much of the Davidson-Patterson piece, "The Violence of the Disposed" in today's Outlook is, it remains inadequate and misleading and fails to allocate responsibility for the fault it correctly find.

This letter, by the way, solicits no response. I am aware that you are a very busy man. My purpose is to inform and provoke thought, no more.

The opening is particularly good, but it achieves dishonesty ~~xxx~~ in "The National Pathology" section by restricting itself to what our society shares with most others and eliminating the most immediate "malignant elements", carried forward in "A Good Country", where historical not current national violence is given as causative. The current age of political assassinations coincides with Vietnam, not the winning of the west, with national policy, not history with which none of the accused had much association. Need one expound on the bestiality first hidden, then condoned or praised by all the major media, that permeated the lives of all the accused? Sam Houston and Buffalo Bill surely didn't.

"The Rage of Impotence" flies into the face of official mythology inseparating Ray from "these pathetic non-winners." This is the motive attributed to him, not Sirhan, who is included. But if the burden of this section is to be accepted, then it is a simple matter given your belief and that of your authors, to place the blame for the JFK assassination squarely on the FBI, which got Oswald fired from every job he had, according to that which the Commission elected to suppress but is in its files. And he did not lack satisfaction of that "inner feeling" in all his employment. (Nor did he have "nowhere to go but home to the television with a six-pack.")

Flawless as is the reasoning in "The Culture of Violence" when it deals with the influence of such things as "Gunsoko", whether or not the other accused saw these shows and movies, Oswald didn't, preferring the Philbrick show praising if not glorifying spying for the FBI. What could the shrinks do with this? He didn't even miss the reruns.

In the context of the piece and its doctrine, the conclusion of this section invoking "the martial spirit that built America when it was a struggling young nation" deceives and covers up, for the martial spirit that could have influenced these accused is that of today, not the past, Vietnam, not the winning of the west.

In one way, if to lesser degree, this piece is consistent with all the writing about the assassinations and mental health. It will be taken by the sick as suggestive. How interesting that the psychiatrist ignores Bremer's reading of "R.F.K. Must Die". If I am no shrink, I can refer you to the reporter close to Milwaukee who I asked to check that library the evening of the Wallace shooting for just this kind of thing, it was to me so obvious. The net effect of all the major reporting of all the political assassinations is that in this land of peace in which they are ^{foreign}, only the lone nut commits any because he finds in it his own fulfillment. The sickest of this endless repetition, which began with the JFK case, was Hoffer's senate-committee appearance.

I am not singling out the Post. I know of no major part of the media that did not do this or should not have known better. Not am I suggesting there was no legitimacy in the question. Rather am I suggesting that the manner of treatment was sycophantic, not in the honorable tradition of American reporting, and inevitably insensitizing rather than discouraging such notions.

The net effect was to suggest assassinations to those ill and susceptible to suggestion, of whom Bremer and Sirhan seem likely subjects. With the truth of today's piece, that we do have all these sick people, what the press has done is almost to advertise for assassins. This is not a new feeling on my part. I have been worried about it for a long time and have spent many hours trying to decipher one such threat, beginning about a year ago. What has worried me more is that fine minds, not mediocrities, among these countless sick, would be so turned on. With the "responsible" press of closed mind and fixed policy, I did a hasty piece on this and submitted it to The National Enquirer. I do not presume that you have the time or interest to read it, but I send it anyway. I ask that you please give it to Paul Valentine. He had covered the King assassination for you, so when this threat was referred to me by Gravel's AA, I gave him a copy. He may or may not be interested in this part of what I found worth considering as possible hidden messages or predictions in that threat, which was in the form of a direct challenge to me, "Can Mr. Weisberg translate?" Let a man like the author of that one, an intellectual, start playing games with the police, whether or not he ever gets around to trying an assassination, he can do considerable damage if only in diverting their energies and attention.

Your piece quotes Santayana aptly. Let me also cite him: those who do not learn from the past are doomed to relive it. Bobby Kennedy liked this one, but failed to heed it. Alas poor Teddy hasn't yet learned who held hot irons to him, so he still misplaces trust and denies it where he ought not.

Intending no offense, I comment on your page-one Bremer piece this morning. This is the cliché journalism of the past, not the kind of work one might expect of the seemingly new Post that is emerging from the hand of the (I hope) dead Wiggins past. With all the good reporting you have done on this case, and all the fact you had to have developed, printed and unprinted, is this your concept of constructive journalism, or of the Post's standards? Could not someone, especially with the Post's fine record of reporting FBI deficiencies, have considered doing a piece on how all the police fell apart in the Bremer case, beginning long before the incredible performance at his apartment. The schmalz you rendered was rancid before the pot boiled. Difficult as is the police role in elections, and close to impossible as it is to frustrate a determined assassin, this one might have been detected with alertness not really above the norm, and the evidence at his apartment might have had evidentiary value. The FBI arranged to destroy that. The parallel to the Oswald case may be unknown to you, but when there was no need, all the "evidence" seized was taken illegally and could not have been used in a trial.

It is always time for the casting of notes. I look forward to the day when the Post and other major elements of the media recall the complete biblical admonition.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg