

Mr. David Ignatius
Editor, Outlook
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20071

11/19/89

Dear Mr. Ignatius,

The Post has a rather poor record on the JFK assassination and I regret to have to say that you have worsened it by James Johnston's "Did Cuba Murder JFK?" in today's paper. Appropriately, the subhead is plain bullshit in representing the factual and intellectual trash as "a new look" at those really non-existing "puzzles."

I regret I am not now able to write you about this in the ~~next~~ detail I'd like, to inform you, not seeking either space or attention, as I'll explain, but first I suggest as a text, from A32, what the east German spy chief says, that a successful operation owes more to correct analysis than the acquisition of top-secret papers. Analysis is the thing and as part of the analysis, does it make sense. (I was an intelligence analyst.)

What you published is the vapid conspiracy theorizing for which the Post, along with just about all the major media, has always condemned all questioning of the official solution to the JFK assassination. To describe this as merely irresponsible is almost to praise it.

You and the Post need not agree with my belief but I state it so you can understand where I'm coming from. I believe that the assassination of a president is the most subversive of possible crimes in a society like ours. I have published six books on this terrible crime and one on that of Dr. King and there is no substantial error in any of them. They do not theorize any solutions. I have made a rather large study of how the basic institutions of our society, of which the press is one, worked or failed to work in those times of great stress and since then. In the course of this work, faced with the media and official attitudes, I took an approach I believe may be unique, I submitted fact, not theory, about the assassinations to the testing of our judicial system in a series of lengthy, costly, extremely difficult and sometimes precedential FOIA lawsuits. What I did was make myself subject to the penalties of perjury when there was no need to ~~do~~ (+ could have let my lawyer do the arguing and factual presentations) and challenge the government to refute my factual allegations. In length these affidavits and my testimony exceed a half-dozen large books. And the government did not accept this challenge, could find no error in what I swore to, and even when it had a "Get Weisberg" crew of six lawyers working on it, could not find and ~~charge~~ charge any perjury. Or error, for that matter. If you think I exaggerate, in Lesar was my lawyer. His phone is 393-1921. Prof. Dave Wrone, History Dept., Univ. Wisconsin, Stevens Point, will tell you that I've written the definitive history of those assassinations in court records. You can also get an evaluation from Dr. Gerald McKnight at local ~~Wood~~ College, where all my records will become a free and permanent archive. So, this old man bites your dog. The Post is an irresponsible conspiracy theorizer and in this subverts our system of representative society by misleading the people.

Early Tuesday morning I'll be at The Johns Hopkins Hospital for a cardiac catheterization. Hopefully, I'll be home some time the next day with an evaluation made or to be made, with or without restrictions, I don't yet know. But I want to get this to you as soon as possible and although with Reaganite efficiency and Bushwacky care we have no outgoing mail from Frederick from Sundown Friday to Sundown Monday, I write this in haste. (To get it to the post office, which will send it to Baltimore and perhaps save a day.)
The Amlash irrelevancy was first leaked to the Post many years ago and it was then the main Outlook article. It is the one theory the Senate was considering that Senator Schweiker and his then assistant, later US attorney in Philadelphia, did not run past me the most painful morning of my life when they'd asked me to go in and see them. I was suffering an acute thrombophlebitis and that can be and was agony. I demolished the other four theories and offered to do the same for any others they came up with. And then went to George Washington Hospital, where I took a private room to be able to confer with
in privacy

them and a House FOIA committee I was then helping in ~~privacy~~.

It was not, as Johnston says, the Senate Intelligence Committee that did this work. It was Schweiker's subcommittee, of which the only other Member was Gary Hart. I'm sure he'll confirm to you, although I have never spoken to him, that he pretty much distanced himself from Schweiker's spooking, junior grade, and from the Schweiker report.

aside from numerous errors in fact I raise a question of Johnston's honesty in his quotations from the French reporter, Daniel, who was with Castro when they got word that JFK was assassinated. And of the reason for Daniel's visit from JFK's interest. Daniel was JFK's emissary in seeking to improve relations with Cuba, which Cuba needed and needs very much. On a more official level, these efforts were going on more or less in secret at the UN. What Johnston did was hide Castro's shock and distress over the assassination he wants it believed Castro had done and hide Castro's motive for not wanting anything to happen to JFK. (At the UN JFK used ~~A Howard~~, later publisher of ~~Newsday~~.)

He had other and even stronger motive, as you can confirm from the Past's own morgue. The solution to the Cuba missile crisis (and I omit the ~~USA~~ because Cuba was not a knowing participant) was JFK's guarantee of Cuba against any invasion. That is an assurance the USSR could not give although it had what we rather light-heartedly described as a mutual assistance pact" with our own mendicants. Can you imagine that Castro would kill his only real insurance in the entire world?

But had ~~he~~ been zany enough to do that, why in the world did he have to wait for the Amlash time? He knew and documented many earlier CIA attempts to kill him. He gave George McGovern a book of them of which I have a copy to which you are welcome. The only real secrets, including even the Bay of Pigs, was from the American people. And the press bears the responsibility. You have probably heard that JFK talked the Post and Times out of reporting what they'd learned. But even more was ignored in the UN's debates, copies of which I got for a book I was never able to write. All the CIA's plots were caught and most of the plotters with the exposure over a period of years.

There is a rather ludicrous story the official files on which you are welcome to in the CIA's childish attempt to use the mafia. Sam Giancana demanded as his fee that he be given proof that his friend Phyllis McGuire was laying Dan Martin. The CIA provided a wireman from Miami who was so amateurish his bugging of Dan Martin's bed was detected and he was caught and charged. Thus the FBI learned promptly (and neither it nor the CIA told the Warren Commission) and when it suited FBI purposes it told LBJ.

There is also much nonsense in Johnston's piece. One that just ~~snatched~~ caught my eye is that the CIA broke contact with Amlash, whose name is "ubello (phon), for security reasons. When FitzGerald, as Johnston's article avoids saying, gave him that pen, the mission intended was completed because JFK was then killed. And after that Castro arrested Amlash and he spent some years in an insane assylum.

There are substantial questions about the Harker story and its interpretations but it was known to the Commission and it was known to the Commission and the FBI from another source, an article in Bohemia. I am not certain of the details since writing about it in a book published 22 years ago but my recollection is that the FBI debunked it. I believe the Cuban involved in that version is named Portuondo, later a Nixon leader in the Cuban community here.

I call to your attention the timing of this piece - at a time when the world's passions are cooling and this tends to heat them up again. And there really is nothing new in it at all. Except, of course, that it comes just a few days before the anniversary. What a way to commemorate such an event, one that turned the world around! and about which the press failed so greatly!

As you'll see, I've avoided any comment on the actualities of that terrible crime. However, I'll be glad to if you'd like.

Harold Weisberg
Sincerely,
Harold Weisberg