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January 30, 1995

Mr. Jeremy Gunn
Deputy Director
Assassination Records Review Board
600 E Street, N.W.
Room 208
Washington, D.C. 20004

Re: Radio Reports, Inc.

Dear Jeremy:

During our lunch a few weeks back, I mentioned to you that the CIA had purchased copies of transcripts of Harold Weisberg's radio and television appearances from an outfit called Radio-TV Reports, Inc. This was done through the CIA's Public Affairs Staff, operating out of P.O. Box 1282, in the Main Post Office here in D.C. I enclose a few documents which reflect this relationship and some of the appearances which were monitored.

Although Mr. Weisberg submitted FOIA requests for all records pertaining him back in the 1970s, I believe the CIA never produced any Radio-TV Reports transcripts in response.

Recently I reviewed a CIA release made to Bernard ("Bernie") Fensterwald, III, in response to his FOIA request for records pertaining to his father, Bernard ("Bud") Fensterwald, Jr. These contained a couple of transcripts of Bud's appearances furnished by Radio-TV Reports, Inc.

I think that all such transcripts purchased by the CIA should be considered JFK assassination records under the JFK Act. I would include transcripts not only of Warren Commission critics, but of the Warren Commission supporters, such as David Belin and Arlen Specter, as well.

Among the questions raised by the CIA's interest in Warren Commission critics are these:

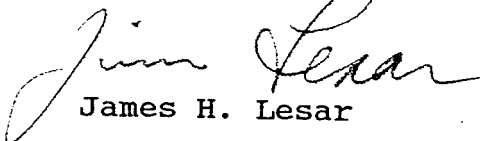
- (1) What was the purpose for which the CIA sought these transcripts?
- (2) Which CIA officials or components had access to, or received copies of, these records?

- (3) Were the transcripts accessible to other agencies?
- (4) How long did the CIA continue this practice?
- (5) To what uses did the CIA put these transcripts? Did they play any role in the CIA's campaign to call on its assets to counter Warren Commission critics?
- (6) How much taxpayer money was spent on such transcripts?
- (7) Was the CIA's interest in the public appearances of Warren Commission critics unique, or did it extend to other subjects?
- (8) Did the CIA exceed the limitations placed on it by its charter or other relevant laws?

These records obviously are of some historical importance because they document both the public activities of the critics and the interest of the CIA in ways that would be difficult to replicate through any other source (unless, of course, Radio-TV Reports still maintains such transcripts).

In drawing attention to these records, I do not mean to slight what may be a more important cache of records relating to the CIA's efforts to counter the critics by calling on its "assets." It has long been known that the CIA directed its officer to "employ propaganda assets" to counter the critics, but the extent, form and character of such a campaign is, to the best of my knowledge, not known, although it is possible that some light has been shed on this subject by recent CIA releases of JFK assassination records of which I am yet unaware. (For your information, I attach a copy of the CIA's April 1, 1967 dispatch to "Chiefs, Certain Stations and Bases," which lays out a line of attack on the critics.) In any event, it is an area which I think the Review Board must thoroughly explore. The public is entitled to know the extent to which an agency whose charter forbids involvement in domestic activities embroiled itself in seeking to counter, silence or discredit the views of citizens on a matter of paramount domestic political importance. It is essential that the public be provided with the complete details as to which officials and assets were involved in this campaign, and what precisely they did.

Sincerely yours,


James H. Lesar

cc: David Marwell
Sheryl Walter
Harold Weisberg

RADIO TV REPORTS, INC.

540 NORTH LAKE SHORE DRIVE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 312 827-4290

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9/13/68

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DISPATCH

CLASSIFICATION

PROCESSING ACTION

chiefs, Certain Stations and Bases

X

MARKED FOR INDEXING

NO INDEXING REQUIRED

Document Number 1035-960

ONLY QUALIFIED DESK CAN JUDGE INDEXING

for FOIA Review on SEP 1976

MICROFILM

Countering Criticism of the Warren Report

REQUIRED REFERENCES

SYCH

FOR OSWALD
FILE 2
COPIES

THIS WAS PULLED TOGETHER BY [REDACTED] WE FURNISHED MOST
IN CLOSE CONJUNCTION WITH [REDACTED] OF THE SOURCE MATERIAL, PROVIDED FINALE THE THEMES,
AND PROVIDED GENERAL "EXPERTISE" OF THE CASE. THE
SEPARATE ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN [REDACTED]

1. Our Concern. From the day of President Kennedy's assassination on, there has been speculation about the responsibility for his murder. Although this stemmed for a time by the Warren Commission report (which appeared at the end of September 1964), various writers have now had time to scan the Commission's published report and documents for new pretexts for questioning, and there has been a new wave of books and articles criticizing the Commission's findings. In most cases the critics have speculated as to the existence of some kind of conspiracy, and often they have implied that the Commission itself was involved. Presumably as a result of the increasing challenge to the Warren Commission's Report, a public opinion poll recently indicated that 46% of the American public did not think that Oswald acted alone, while more than half of those polled thought that the Commission had left some questions unresolved. Doubtless polls abroad would show similar, or possibly more adverse, results.

2. This trend of opinion is a matter of concern to the U.S. government, including our organization. The members of the Warren Commission were naturally chosen for their integrity, experience, and prominence. They represented both major parties, and they and their staff were deliberately drawn from all sections of the country. Just because of the standing of the Commissioners, efforts to impugn their rectitude and wisdom tend to cast doubt on the whole leadership of American society. Moreover, there seems to be an increasing tendency to hint that President Johnson himself, as the one person who might be said to have benefited, was in some way responsible for the assassination. Innuendo of such seriousness affects not only the individual concerned, but also the whole reputation of the American government. Our organization itself is directly involved: among other facts, we contributed information to the investigation. Conspiracy theories have frequently thrown suspicion on our organization, for example by falsely alleging that Lee Harvey Oswald worked for us. The aim of this dispatch is to provide material for countering and discrediting the claims of the conspiracy theorists, so as to inhibit the circulation of such claims in other countries. Background information is supplied in a classified section and in a number of unclassified attachments.

3. Action. We do not recommend that discussion of the assassination question be initiated where it is not already taking place. Where discussion is active however addressees are requested:

E	CS COPY	[REDACTED]
9 attachments h/w	DISPATCH SYMBOL AND NUMBER	DATE APPROVED FOR RELEASE 4/1/67 Date 23 Apr 82
1 - [REDACTED] Sattis 8 - Unclassified	CLASSIFICATION	HCS FILE NUMBER DESTROY WHEN NO LONGER NEEDED

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1. To discuss the publicity problem with liaison and friendly elite contacts (especially politicians and editors), pointing out that the Warren Commission made as thorough an investigation as humanly possible; that the charges of the critics are without serious foundation, and that further speculative discussion only plays into the hands of the opposition. Point out also that parts of the conspiracy talk appear to be deliberately generated by Communist propagandists. Urge them to use their influence to discourage unfounded and irresponsible speculation.

Warren

2. To employ propaganda assets to answer and refute the attacks of the critics. Book reviews and feature articles are particularly appropriate for this purpose. The unclassified attachments to this guidance should provide useful background material for passage to assets. Our play should point out, as applicable, that the critics are (i) wedded to theories adopted before the evidence was in, (ii) politically interested, (iii) financially interested, (iv) hasty and inaccurate in their research, or (v) infatuated with their own theories. In the course of discussions of the whole phenomenon of criticism, a useful strategy may be to single out Epstein's theory for attack, using the attached Fletcher Knebel article and Spectator piece for background. (Although Mark Lane's book is much less convincing than Epstein's and comes off badly where contested by knowledgeable critics, it is also much more difficult to answer as a whole, as one becomes lost in a morass of unrelated details.)

3. In private or media discussion not directed at any particular writer, or attacking publications which may be yet forthcoming, the following arguments would be useful:

1. No significant new evidence has emerged which the Commission did not consider. The assassination is sometimes compared (e.g., by Joachim Joesten and Bertrand Russell) with the Dreyfus case; however, unlike that case, the attacks on the Warren Commission have produced no new evidence, no new culprits have been convincingly identified, and there is no agreement among the critics. (A better parallel, though an imperfect one, might be with the Reichstag fire of 1933, which some competent historians (Fritz Tobias, A.J.P. Taylor, D.C. Watt) now believe was set by Van der Lubbe on his own initiative, without acting for either Nazis or Communists; the Nazis tried to pin the blame on the Communists, but the latter have been much more successful in convincing the world that the Nazis were to blame.)

2. Critics usually overvalue particular items and ignore others. They tend to place more emphasis on the recollections of individual eyewitnesses (which are less reliable and more divergent — and hence offer more hand-holds for criticism) and less on ballistic, autopsy, and photographic evidence. A close examination of the Commission's records will usually show that the conflicting eyewitness accounts are quoted out of context, or were discarded by the Commission for good and sufficient reason.

3. Conspiracy on the large scale often suggested would be impossible to conceal in the United States, esp. since informants could expect to receive large royalties, etc. Note that Robert Kennedy, Attorney General at the time and John F. Kennedy's brother, would be the last man to overlook or conceal any conspiracy. And as one reviewer pointed out, Congressman Gerald R. Ford would hardly have held his tongue for the sake of the Democratic administration, and Senator Russell would have had every political interest in exposing any misdeeds on the part of Chief Justice Warren. A conspirator moreover would hardly choose a location for a shooting where so much depended on conditions beyond his control: the route, the speed of the cars, the moving target, the risk that the assassin would be discovered. A group of wealthy conspirators could have arranged much more secure conditions.

4. Critics have often been enticed by a form of intellectual pride: they light on some theory and fall in love with it; they also scoff at the Commission because it did not always answer every question with a flat decision one way or the other. Actually, the make-up of the Commission and its staff was an excellent safeguard against over-commitment to any one theory, or against the illicit transformation of probabilities into certainties.

e. Oswald would not have been any sensible person's choice for a co-conspirator. He was a "loner," mixed-up, of questionable reliability and an unknown quantity to any professional intelligence service.

f. As to charges that the Commission's report was a rush job, it emerged three months after the deadline originally set. But to the degree that the Commission tried to speed up its reporting, this was largely due to the pressure of irresponsible speculation already appearing, in some cases coming from the same critics who, refusing to admit their errors, are now putting out new criticisms.

g. Such vague accusations as that "more than ten people have died mysteriously" can always be explained in some more natural way: e.g., the individuals concerned have for the most part died of natural causes; the Commission staff questioned 418 witnesses (the FBI interviewed far more people, conducting 25,000 interviews and reinterviews), and in such a large group, a certain number of deaths are to be expected. (When Penn Jones, one of the originators of the "ten mysterious deaths" line, appeared on television, it emerged that two of the deaths on his list were from heart attacks, one from cancer, one was from a head-on collision on a bridge, and one occurred when a driver drifted into a bridge abutment.)

5. Where possible, counter speculation by encouraging reference to the Commission's Report itself. Open-minded foreign readers should still be impressed by the care, thoroughness, objectivity and speed with which the Commission worked. Reviewers of other books might be encouraged to add to their account the idea that, checking back with the Report itself, they found it far superior to the work of its critics.

