

THE CONSPIRACY TO KILL J. F. K. -- ITS MEANING

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THE SEARCH FOR THE CRUCIAL TAPE

Dr. Robert H. Bahmer, Archivist of the United States, wrote to Salandria on November 20, 1967 that Mr. T. H. White was wrong in his contention that there is a tape in the Archives which contains the contents of the communication between Air Force One and the White House Situation Room. Dr. Bahmer advised:

"We have no knowledge of the existence or location of the tape recording mentioned by Mr. White, despite having made some efforts since the receipt of your letter to obtain some information about it."

At this point Salandria switched his appeal to Mr. Pierre Salinger. In Mr. Salinger's book, WITH KENNEDY, (4) he made mention of radio communication with the White House and the cabinet plane over the Pacific on November 22, 1963. Mr. Salinger's voice is recorded on the tape mentioned by T. H. White.

Salandria pointed out to Mr. Salinger the significance of the Pentagon announcement that Oswald was the lone assassin:

"If such was said, before there was any evidence against Oswald as the assassin, and while there was overwhelming evidence of a conspiracy, then the White House is in the interesting position of being the first to designate Oswald as the assassin and the first to have ruled out in the face of impressive evidence to the contrary, that there could have been a conspiracy." (Letter from Salandria to Mr. Pierre Salinger, December 3, 1967.)

Salandria concluded a plea to Salinger for the tape with:

"Will you render this service to civilian rule and democracy for which President Kennedy gave his life?"

Pierre Salinger was quite willing to render such a service:

"Since the tape with which I worked was provided by the White House Communication Agency, it would seem to me that the tape of the conversation to which you refer would emanate from the same source, if such a tape, in fact, exists.

"As to the conversation with the cabinet plane, the transcript of that conversation is in my personal files which have been turned over to the National Archives for placement in the Kennedy Library.

"I certainly have no objection to your seeing that transcript, although the National Archives will undoubtedly write and ask my permission since it is included in my personal papers." (Letter of December 26, 1967 from Mr. Pierre Salinger to Vincent J. Salandria)

But apparently what the Pentagon White House Communication Agency giveth, the Pentagon may taketh away. Dr. Bahmer answered Salandria's next request for the transcript of the tape in a letter dated January 9, 1968:

"After receipt of your letter of December 28, a careful examination was made of the papers that Mr. Salinger has sent to us for storage. We have not, however, been able to find anything in the nature of a transcript of the tape recording that you are searching for.

"I regret that our reply to your inquiries, therefore, must still be in the negative. There is nothing that we are able to add to my earlier letter to you on this subject."

In his letter of January 2, 1968, to Salandria, Colonel James U. Cross, U. S. Air Force, Armed Forces Aide to the President, was succinct in his refusal to cooperate in the search for the tape:

"I have been asked to respond to your letter, addressed to the White House Communication Agency, concerning a tape recording to Air Force One, November 22, 1963.

"Logs and tapes of the radio transmissions of military aircraft, including those of Air Force One, are kept for official use only. These tapes are not releasable, nor are they obtainable from commercial sources."

"I am sorry my response cannot be more favorable."

And so was Salandria. But Colonel Cross should know that Mr. T. H. White had access to the tape and his was not an official use." Mr. Salinger had access to the transcript of the tape, and the use to which he put it was not "official."

Who removed Mr. Salinger's tape from his

4. Salinger, Pierre, WITH KENNEDY, pp. 22-25. New York: Avon Books, 1967.

"personal files" while they were in the custody of the "National Archives for placement in the Kennedy Library?" How could a transcript of a tape which was turned over to a journalist attain, on an ex post facto basis, classified status and thereafter be restricted to official use only? The release of this tape at this late date would be suspect. Any tape produced at this late date after the shenanigans outlined above will perforce be as suspect as the X-Rays and photographs of the Kennedy autopsy will be if and when they are ever produced.

The search for the tape did come full circle however with the following letter:

"In order to reply to your letter of last December 26, we sent a number of inquiries to various government agencies which resulted in this very tardy reply.

"To begin with, a search of our collections in the Library of Congress has not revealed any such recording. Normally we would expect such recordings to go to the National Archives, and since it relates to the assassination of President Kennedy, to the Office of Presidential Libraries in that agency, where material for the Kennedy Library is being assembled. As I understand you have already learned from your earlier inquiry to the National Archives, no such recording has been located there. Our further inquiries with the Department of Defense have also failed to turn up any evidence of the recording, but we were advised to request that you write to the Department of the Army, Chief of Communications and Electronics, Department of Defense, Washington, D. C. Perhaps that office can be of some assistance." (Letter from The Library of Congress, Donald L. Leavitt, Head, Recorded Sound Section to Vincent J. Salandria, dated February 20, 1968.)

In summary, the report of this tape provided by Mr. Theodore H. White indicates that the Federal governmental apparatus had jumped the gun right after the guns of Dallas had completed their deadly work in dispatching a President from this world. The Pentagon had overly reacted to Oswald as the assassin and prematurely began the federal government's unvarying pattern of refusing to react to evidence of conspiracy.

If the problem of a tape informing us of a conspiracy at too early a moment in the history of the investigation were an isolated incident, we should be less confident in our suspicions, but it is no more than one element of a syndrome of behavior inappropriate to the challenges raised by the President's murder.

As we have said, it is always the case that

officials are acting in the designation of Oswald as the assassin where the evidence does not warrant such a conclusion, and are failing to act by not investigating the evolving evidence pointing towards conspiracy. In the case of the tape there was an overaction in the governmental officials' determination of no conspiracy. Such a finding was made by the federal government without any basis. Compare that with the inaction in the failure of the police officials to cut off transportation out of Dallas on the ominous day of the 22nd of November, 1963.

Mark Lane in his early lecture tour provided us with a most revealing story. A French journalist, desiring to provide an existential account of the efficiency of the FBI, decided to go to the airport at Dallas on the day of the assassination and attempt to fly back to France. He knew he would be questioned concerning why he was buying a ticket on the day of the assassination, and why he was trying to get out of the country. He was ready to sacrifice himself in order to get a first-hand account of how the FBI would swing into action and deal with a man trying to get out of the country. It would probably be tough on him, but would make a good story. He got a good story all right. He bought his ticket; boarded the plane, and flew back to Paris with no interference. Transportation was not sealed off. The President of the United States had been murdered; the world leader had been shot down in the streets, and Oswald had not yet been established as a LONE assassin, and transportation routes weren't blocked off!