

13 January 1970

Hoch  
Dear Paul,

Thanks for your note of the 9th and the two enclosures. Regarding the letter Rankin to Hoover on the palmprint, I had concluded from the timing of Hoover's reply (CE 2584) as well as from the other CEs and the testimony in general that (as I said in Accessories) the Commission was not at all interested in the authenticity of the palmprint, but only with the appearance of its authenticity.

I tried, in my chapter "The Palmprint on the Rifle," to pull together all the relevant "evidence" and to place it in a chronological context, so as to show the strong grounds for doubt that the palmprint was genuine, and the basis for at least a hypothesis that it might have been fabricated. Some time after my book came out, I acquired the enclosed memorandum of 8/23/64, Liebeler to Rankin, which is a copy of a poor xerox copy and which I typed and marked so as to produce as close a facsimile as possible.

So far as is known, the steps suggested by Liebeler were never taken and the questions he raised were never resolved. This is all the more scandalous when one recalls that the palmprint on the rifle is not the only weak link in the Commission's chain of evidence, which purports to establish Oswald's purchase, receipt, possession, practice with, and firing of the rifle before 11/22/63, or his transporting of the rifle on 11/22/63 from Irving to Dallas, its introduction into the building, or its placement by Oswald on the 6th floor. Receipt of the rifle from the post office was never established; possession rests on the testimony of Marina Oswald alone, except for the dubious and contradictory "corroboration" provided by Mrs. DeMohrenschildt; and so on and so forth. To enumerate all the holes in the evidence would take too long and would be repetitious, in any case, but the plain fact is that there is no incontrovertible evidence after the purchase by mail order to tie that rifle to Oswald.

Had the Commission insisted upon examining the FBI's file on Oswald instead of abjuring the opportunity, I wonder if they would have found therein information on Oswald's mail orders for the rifle and the revolver, or whether such information would have been absent. I showed in Accessories that as of April 1963, if not earlier, the FBI was intercepting Oswald's mail at the point of origin. This has been blandly asserted, in fact, in 1967 and 1969 columns by Paul Scott (Allen/Scott syndicated column), which appear to be based on an FBI leak. I think it is likely that the mail interception was instituted in mid-1962 on Oswald's return from the Soviet Union, and that the FBI file on him should therefore include a contemporaneous record of the mail orders for the two weapons (which might cast light on the swiftness with which the rifle was traced on 11/22-23/63). But this is all problematical, since I feel certain we would never be given access to that file.

My own list of CDs in my possession is rather rudimentary but you are welcome to the enclosed copy. Best regards,

P.S. You have never commented on my paper about Oswald's supposed request to see an FBI agent when he was under arrest at New Orleans. Please do not hesitate to criticize it if you disagree with the reasoning.

P.S. Harold Weisberg indicated only last week that he agrees that the discrepancy between Frazier's description of the weapon at the Shaw trial, and Weitzman's description in his testimony, may be very significant.