

cc: Mary, Sylvia

December 29, 1977

Dear Jeff, Jim, and all,

First, thanks for all the stuff you have been sending, and my apologies for not ~~have~~ having produced any detailed notes on the FBI documents. I got started on them, and then was sidetracked.

About the SS documents Jeff mentioned: this 800-page batch sounds very much like what Bud got some time ago (Mark Lane also). I went through ~~xx~~ what Bud has in his files, and found relatively little of interest - a lot that is at the Archives. I think Jim has gone through some of the SS stuff too. Also, Lifton may have gotten part of this batch through New Times. In any case, I think it is something we should not put too much time into now. (Naturally, we shouldn't turn down a ~~xxx~~ free copy.) If the SS provides any list, I would like a copy, plus any selected goodies.

I have a longer version of the UPI story on these SS documents which you sent me (from the Post of 12/22). It is quite overdone, and got badly overplayed in the Chronicle. (Copy enclosed, AIB only.) The Chronicle seems to favor using displayed quotes from junk like the Pedro Charles letters and the "Bobby is next" story. (The Cuban stuff in this UPI story is familiar to me from the Archives documents; I think Peter Scott is quite interested in some of it.)

Also enclosed: my list of clippings from the S.F. Chronicle for September and October 1977. I have such lists going back to about 1972, which I can send if you want.

Mary sent me copies of her letters of 12/16 and 12/19 to you. Offhand, I don't see anything wrong with having given the stuff to Golz. (My only objection is that I don't think the document implies that Priscilla was considered ~~xx~~ a suspect in the assassination; "captioned case" usually refers to the title of the current document, not to the last-referred-to case.) Maybe we should have a more explicit understanding of policy on distributing this material. I would like to operate on the assumption that there are no restrictions on ~~xxxxxx~~ distribution to the press or to other critics, unless such restrictions are explicitly placed on specific documents. For one thing, it would take a lot of time (which we don't have) if we had to coordinate all dissemination. Certainly ~~xxx~~ if I give anything to the press, I'll try to get in a plug for the AIB; but, since a lot of those guys seem reluctant to give credit, I don't think it is something we should insist on. Also, I would like to be able to send the annotated lists I have prepared, notes, ~~xx~~ and selected ~~x~~ documents to various critics; please let me know if you have any objections in general. I know from past experience that hassles result when people try to put restrictions on public documents, even if the selection of those documents is something for which the finders really should be given credit.

Thanks for the clip (WP 12/21) on Weisberg's suit for a free and early copy of the next 40K pages. I ~~hope~~ hope Jim has been able to get together with Harold, as he intended. I know how ~~xxxx~~ difficult it is to work with him, but it seems ~~xxx~~ worth a try. He seems to have done a good job to influencing Lardner. We certainly shouldn't try to ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ undercut him, but direct contacts with Lardner seem worth trying for. (I talked to him a couple of months ago, but ~~xxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ haven't gotten back to him on this release.)

I trust you all received the package I mailed on the 20th.

I talked to Warren Olney (Warren's first choice for Rankin's job). I'll do a memo, but basically I didn't get anything sexy. He said he had had the usual differences with Hoover, the most recent of which (at the time of the assassination) was a strong complaint over JEH's habit ~~xxxxxx~~ of sending him unsubstantiated allegations about ~~xxx~~ judges. (He was administrative head of the courts, or such.)

Let's not forget the last batch of CIA documents, which have been in the review process for many months now. Jim, I'm looking forward to hearing what ~~xx~~ you found out about the various questions I raised, such as the status of the FBI review (if any) of all pre-ass'n LHO files.

The 1/78 Gallery has an interesting Prouty article on the U-2, with a sidebar repeating the story that Garter had to shake up the CIA to get the JFK documents. My earlier reaction was that this rumor was too much like a distorted replay of the "Primula Report" business to be credible, but who knows. (I don't have ~~x~~ that

~~wink~~ story, and would appreciate a ~~copy~~ copy, if you have it.)

An interesting item in ~~Maxx~~ Marianne Means' column of 12/25: the release of the 40K pages "puts intense pressure" on the HSC to "put up or shut up.... The FBI files show the agency didn't find out anything we don't ~~x~~ already know, but certainly used all its resources trying. It's difficult to believe a bunch of politicians can do better."

Enclosed (for the AIB only): a Reuters pre-release story of 12/7, indicating some ~~reliance~~ reliance on FBI sources (probably ~~Gem~~ Gemberling). "While the hitherto secret files will probably touch off a new wave of interest in the assassination, few startling revelations are expected. FBI agents closely associated with the investigation over the years not that the WC's inquiry into the ass'n was based largely on the Bureau's investigative resources.... This [WC] official view has been challenged over the years but FBI ~~xxxx~~ agents connected with the case said they doubted whether the documents being opened for inspection today would ~~ya~~ yield anything to conflict with it."

Also enclosed (to AIB) [Mary, Sylvia - of course, let me know if you ~~x~~ want any of this] - a bit from the National Lampoon (1/78, p. 14) which quite logically proves that there was only one assassin. (Sure enough, only one bullet actually ~~kill~~ killed JFK.)

Did I mention that the generally ghastly Newsweek piece of 12/19 had a remarkably careful paragraph on the medical controversy? It looks to me like only someone very conversant with the matter could come up with a paragraph which is so precisely correct in most details, but totally misleading. (A former WC staffer, maybe?) For example, they mention that the SS and FBI men at the autopsy were not medically qualified; that's relevant only if they were reporting their own ~~xxxx~~ observations, which of course they weren't, and Newsweek didn't say they were! Clever. (By ~~xxxxxx~~ contrast, the Time story badly misrepresented the ammo memo, ~~wink~~ making it seem much sexier than it is.) (/ & sloppily)

A mutual correspondent told me that Mike Ewing thought (at least at first) that the Army-FBI item Carl talked about on Good Morning America was a real ~~xxxx~~ "smoking gun." As you know, I don't see anything in that document to imply that the Army was doing anything before the assassination, and I think that was implied on the broadcast. I hope we are all in agreement on this item now.

Jim: we may have talked about this, but were you able to find out if there is a "Gale" file which includes stuff not in this first batch, such as his 12/10/63 report?

I just got a batch of documents from Jane Bartels at CBS. I told her I would give her first crack at any story ideas ~~x~~ I find; I'll check with ~~xxxx~~ her to see if I can send you the documents as soon as possible.

No HSC news from out here. I haven't talked to Jerry for some time, so I'm not current on the gossip.

I hope these comments aren't too diffuse to be useful!

One more: I haven't seen all of the NYT series on the CIA and the press, but the CIA efforts to "counter criticism of the Warren Report" seems rather conspicuously omitted. ~~xxxx~~ Unfortunately, it might be impossible to get ~~xxxxxx~~ people turned on to those documents, since the are no longer "new."

As Alex Cockburn said (Voice, 12/12), "The way things are going they ~~wink~~ soon won't be able to give the ~~wink~~ weather reports without saying that the information is 'based on secret documents acquired from the government under the Freedom of Information Act'.~~x~~ And with the release this week of the FBI assassination files, it seems clear that the way to keep the press usefully and harmlessly occupied is to drown it in paper."

The reference to "Wisner's Wurlitzer" in the NYT CIA-press story sent me back to the last chapter of Copeland's "Beyond Cloak and Dagger," which has a menacing and totally unexplained reference to "music." Worth re-reading occasionally.

Best ~~wink~~ wishes to all.

Sincerely,

Paul
PLH