

12/1/1968

Dear Sylvia:

First, about the "kidnapping". The rush of O'Donnell and O'Brien to take credit for the Dallas-Bethesda transfer has been impressed on me often and I admit it's impressive. One can't easily imagine them taking on themselves such a large share of work for the assassins. - So I am likely wrong in my hypothesis, but let me fire two volleys in its defence before I give it up.

(1) Did O'Donnell plan the removal of the body or did Lyndon Johnson?

O'BRIEN. He /Ken O'D/ as I recall, again, went to the room in which the Vice-President was waiting, to tell him specifically that the President had died, and to discuss with him the steps to move the Vice President out of the hospital and to the airport and on to Washington.

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O'Donnell came out of the room with the decision to remove the body as the only way of getting Mrs. Kennedy to return with Johnson.

The removal of the body was decided on in the context of what LBJ's move was to be. LBJ would not return w/o Jackie, Jackie would not return without Kennedy's body, ergo the body had to be taken with LBJ. So the decision was, thinly but really, Johnson's.

(2) Does any of the diplomatic reasoning assigned to the body removal apply to the removal of the limousine? Yet they were both pieces of primary evidence in a murder case, both removed illegally, and both moved at approximately the same time. What a paucity of evidence about that car removal! What do you think about it?

No, I haven't gotten the current Jagdlust about Government agents. My Turner problem came up because I mentioned the article and my correspondence to Salandria who then told me his suspicions. With Vince and his friends, it's not "cops and robbers". What it looks like to me is the filling in of all the gaps in our knowledge with neatly cohering, dramatic suppositions of a master plan. The world of conflict and accident is replaced by endless chains of secret cooperation and conspiracy. That way lies paranoia.

But I do believe that Kennedy was killed by high-level action inside the Federal government. I don't know it. I believe it.

Recently I looked into the aspects of the Diem murder that might relate to JFK's death. The general feeling seems to be that the CIA did Diem in. I'm afraid that my own close-to-the-surface research leads nowhere but to Kennedy himself. The CIA was in-close with Diem and was paying his private military corps, the special forces that made Ngo-Dinh-Diem and his brothers independent of the generals. After the MacNamara mission of 1963, just a month before the generals' coup, Kennedy removed Richardson, the head of the Saigon CIA, shook up the CIA's operation (to McCone's distress, who thought CIA would be the scapegoat for the whole Vietnamese collapse), and ordered all payments to the Diem special forces stopped unless they left Saigon for "the front". This removed Diem's last defence.

An unfortunate by-product of our work has been to help the natural post-assassination cleaning up of the Kennedy image. In my opinion, he was to the last a combination politician-dreamer without the saving grace of moral courage. Without political guts or principle, he was left an incompetent President, since he could not be a thoroughly effective bastard like his successor. Best wishes,