

[These notes cover the 77 pages which I have numbered as items 9 thru 51, and some of the press reports.]

In general: The early memos (re Katzenbach, etc.) are really amazing. Too bad nobody leaked them in 1964.

The press has made much of the FBI's eagerness to track down all leads - meaning (mostly) the kooky stuff. The one angle that it apparently would have been impossible to get into is the possibility that Oswald was innocent. In all these 40000 pages, is there any indication that this was considered after (say) 5 p.m. on 11/22? Was anyone suggesting that the Dallas Police may not have gotten the right man (after Hoover decided they had), or even that they were criminally culpable in the murder of Oswald?

One thing we can add to these early documents is the relationship (or lack of one) between the premature conclusion and the evidence as known at that time. At the very least, we can point out that the conclusions on Oswald appear to have been reached well before there was any reconstruction of the shooting which made it even possible that one man did it. (Hoover's unhappiness with the Commission's rather half-hearted attempts at a reconstruction are certainly a surprise to me; it makes me wonder if he knew that there were serious problems in this area.) It appears that the conclusions were not affected by rather serious changes in the details of the case against Oswald.

A second perspective we can add comes from knowing what was happening in the press and inside the Warren Commission at this time. It would be good to review all of the executive session transcripts, and the few early internal WC memos which are at the Archives. For example, we can compare Hoover's version of his contacts with Rankin with what Rankin told the Commission (if anything - I don't recall hearing about his 12/12/63 contact before.)

Even though its treatment of the FBI-CIA files was somewhat superficial, at least the Schweiker Report put the post-assassination reaction of the agencies, and their relationships with the Warren Commission, in the proper context - i.e., the fears and suspicions raised by the anti-Castro plots, stories like "D", and so on. It's still not at all clear to me who was up to what at that time - for example, the report that McCone leaked the "D" story to Ford and Drew Pearson is new to me, and obviously important (but not in any obvious way) - but it is clear that some very heavy games were being played. The Pedro Charles story - which, on its face, is rather simple - has to be put in that context. By and large, the press hasn't done so.

#9 [See separate listing for identification of documents]: I think I do have a Katzenbach memo of around 11/27, with ideas about what should be in the FBI report. As I recall, there was nothing really sensational, compared to what we are seeing now. (I'll check my files later.) Incredibly, Katzenbach said (or at least was quoted as saying) that questions like Oswald's marksmanship were "minutiae," and "extreme speculation." Someone told me they had talked to Katzenbach about his 11/25 memo (quoted in the Schweiker Report), and he said something to the effect that he wrote it, and that was the way he really felt (no conspiracy, etc.), and that there was nothing sinister about it. The extent of this new material raises additional questions about why he was doing all this, whether he was acting on RFK's behalf, etc.

Although it is not clear from these memos, I think that the fears about the Texas court of inquiry were largely legitimate, since they were likely to go after an "international communist conspiracy" regardless of the evidence.

This document indicates that the FBI report was at first expected to be done by the weekend of 11/30-12/1. The date on the final version is 12/9. It might be useful to locate and examine some of the earlier versions. As I recall, there are indications (e.g., pages numbered -a) of last-minute changes or additions. (Are there various versions in the released files? If not, where are they?) Any earlier versions of the section on the medical evidence might be particularly useful. (The same goes for the Supplemental Report in January.)