

Dear Dr Wecht,

June 10, 1975

There is much to read about the assassination of president Kennedy. And, consequently, much to write about to you. For example, in reading George O'Toole's The Assassination Tapes, I noted his single reference to Dr Burkley occurred in the context of reportage of your position on the autopsy and in connection with the still missing medicoballistic evidence. O'Toole wrote, "All of these items were reportedly turned over to the National Archives by Adm. George Burkley...but the archives has no record of them" (p38). Why O'Toole wrote "reportedly" I do not know. His reference, undoubtedly, is to your article in the Sept. 1973 issue of The Forensic Science Gazette in which you cited a memorandum of transfer of April 26, 1965 as the basis of the information regarding Burkley. Which reminded me I asked you in a letter dated March 31, 1975, "Where is the memorandum of April 26, 1965 to be found?" and "What is the source for the statement the autopsy team examined these particular photographs (of the interior of Kennedy's chest cavity, which are now missing-TS) in December 1963?" Questions to which you have made no reply.

Again, I was struck by "Wecht found no support for the 'grassy knoll theory'" (p37). He quoted from your Forensic Science Gazette article: "The available evidence, assuming it to be valid, gives no support to theories which postulate gunmen to the front or right front of the Presidential car." That was your view in the fall of 1973. O'Toole's book is copyright-dated 1975. On February 5, 1974 you wrote to me, acknowledging receipt of a copy of my report after viewing the Zapruder film in the National Archives in the summer of 1965: "It is quite possible that he (Kennedy) was struck by two shots in a simultaneous crossfire. This could explain the movement of his body, as depicted in the Zapruder film...I definitely agree with you that the Zapruder film is of major evidentiary value...Clearly, it is perhaps the most important key to the physical events of the assassination..."

Inasmuch as these two positions are diametrically and irreconcilably opposite, I take it the later position represents movement of your thought of which O'Toole, very likely, was unaware because you had not, I believe, signified your change of position publicly.

While I pondered, your letter of June 6 responding to my letter of May 15 inquiring about Rankin's reference to "minutes" of the autopsy in the transcript of the Warren Commission executive session of January 21, 1964 arrived and sent my thoughts in another direction. I put the question: "Inasmuch as Rankin said he had asked for the 'minutes of the autopsy' must we not predicate the existence of such minutes, at least as a basis for our own inquiry?" You have replied in the negative.

You may be correct. But your reasoning is unpersuasive. You begin with "Rankin, most likely, was simply mistaken." Two sentences later you refer to "another error" by Rankin, this one sure, in connection with the "ballistic evidence in the Walker shooting," and suggesting, therefore, the rapid movement of the "first" error from likelihood to certainty.

In support of this evolutionary view you note "Rankin was overloaded with work, and he seems to have had difficulty distinguishing between what he had actually seen and what he had only heard about. Also, he had an unfortunate tendency to want to please the Commission Members and impress them with his knowledge and command of the evidence, at the expense of occasionally slipping into error about what he knew." What was Rankin's error? You assume "Rankin may simply have assumed" that "a tape recording of autopsy procedures" had been made or that "someone at the autopsy may have taken detailed notes." With respect to the second assumption you note, "Indeed the FBI agents, Siebert and O'Neill actually did so and later reported their observations." It follows, does it not?, Rankin's assumption" was grounded in reality, and was not an error at all, either probable or certain.

As for the first assumption of a tape recording, it is one you yourself make: "I would assume that it is and was fairly common practice to make a tape recording of autopsy procedures, but not universally." It would seem Rankin's assumption was also based on "fairly common practice" and cannot be dismissed as you do toward the end of your letter as "somewhat presumptuous remarks."

More weight must be accorded your point you "have never seen any other reference to 'minutes' of the autopsy, nor to any tape recording..." But I would remind you the transcripts of two Warren Commission executive sessions are still withheld from research. And, we have the word of the National Archives for it, we do not know how many executive sessions were held.

Your speculations do not dispose of the problem of the "minutes" of the autopsy.

Moreover, the total significance of Rankin's "remarks" outweighs their accuracy or error. Note first he "sent" for the "minutes." Should we not be curious to know to whom the request was addressed? Has it occurred to you it may have been the elusive Dr Burkley who escapes our investigatory grasp at every turn? Ought we not want to know in what form the request was made? And what response it evoked, if any?

Then there is the intriguing motivation: "to see what doctor A said about something while he was saying it, to see whether it is supported by the conclusions in the autopsy and so forth." To you "It is perfectly obvious that the Commission did not understand the President's wounds and how to account for them and that they were not satisfied with whatever autopsy report they then had." I agree. But how do we convince others of what is "perfectly obvious" to us? By a series of deductions and assumptions only? Would we not be in a stronger position if we located these "minutes" and established their provenance and history, or disproved their existence definitively? h
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I was about to suggest a direct approach to Rankin for information and documentation when everything was eclipsed by the news of your appearance as a witness before the Rockefeller Commission on the CIA, your complaint your testimony had been distorted in its Report, and your determination to secure a copy of the transcript of your testimony which you said was being withheld from you. I have seen neither the Commission's report nor the transcript of

your testimony but I believe you.

Distortion was to be expected. The mutilated autopsy, the manipulation of autopsy reports and death certificates, the manufacture of evidence, the subornation of perjury, the frame up of Oswald, the slander of Marxist thought, the falsification of history by the Warren Commission, and the continuing defense of its Report by the government guaranteed in advance your testimony, if importantly adverse to the government's interests, would not be reported truthfully. Should you not have taken the elementary precaution to make your testimony dependent on written assurance you would be given a transcript promptly after you testified? Or should you not have testified orally and in written form? Am I correct in assuming you did ~~not~~ neither but entered the belly of the beast with a trusting heart and became its cooperating victim?

What did you expect to achieve by your testimony? Conversion of the unbelieving? Coronation of truth? What was your understanding of the function of the Rockefeller Commission? Was it not apparent to you this ad hoc creature of the executive branch of the government was created to help the chief executive cope with the international and domestic clamor over revolting offenses to life, decency, and law by the executive-branch agency detested all over the world as the CIA, as the Warren Commission was created to assist Johnson in restoring governmental stability, shaken by rumors and suspicions following the murders of president Kennedy, policeman Tippitt, and patsy Oswald?

If this strikingly obvious parallel escaped you or was not concordant with your conception of government, did you not, at least, see the Rockefeller Commission in terms of what the establishmentarian-liberal anti-communist weekly, The Nation, designated "Assassination Politics" in its lead editorial in the June 21 issue, which opens with the apt observations: "The Rockefeller Commission was so heavily stacked with Establishment types that it lacked credibility from the start. Its mission was not to investigate but to save the CIA"?

Which raises the interesting questions: With what intention with respect to the CIA did you appear before the Rockefeller Commission? I cannot believe it would be to defend or support it. Could it be to join the chorus which attributes Kennedy's murder to that source? You had not said so before to my knowledge. You had not claimed to have or to have seen or to have knowledge of evidence identifying or indicating the CIA as the assassin. And you are not, obviously, a journalistic vulture, to quote Kissinger, or demagogue or egomaniac who contrives dissemination of information for sensational and careerist or pecuniary effect.

When I learned you were considering giving testimony to the Rockefeller Commission it seemed to me the only purpose you could have would be an attempt to persuade the Commission to reopen the investigation of the Kennedy assassination. And I thought nothing to advance the truth in that event can be expected from that quarter; your appearance before it could be useful for the cause of truth only if you contrived to use the occasion as a *raison d'etre* for a subsequent press conference in which you could advance ideas about

the frame up of Oswald and the cover up by the government of Kennedy's assassins and their employers and sponsors. And for that, of course, it was essential you entertain such ideas and advance them to the Rockefeller Commission.

What line did you take in your appearance before it? I do not know exactly; the transcript of your testimony is withheld.

What line could you take? Judging by your published articles, press interviews, discussions on radio and TV which I have heard, and correspondence with me, your total concern seems to be problems of physical evidence. For you medicoballistic evidence is the universe. Not for you Hamlet's observation to Horatio. Necessary political inferences to be drawn from the evidence, invaluable and indispensable signposts to truth, appear not to interest you. Am I mistaken - you have not ever affirmed Oswald's innocence and the government's guilt in framing and defaming him; or expressed views on the motivation for the assassination and on its source; or explicated the government's assassination policy; or attempted to place the assassination in contemporary political and broader historical context?

But the government, a quintessential political body, it cannot have escaped your attention, takes an opposite attitude. It is acutely sensitive to political implications of evidence, including physical evidence, which, history and daily life teach us continually, it creates, manipulates, and suppresses, not as aberrant miscarriages of justice, but as characteristic operations of the "justice system" in accordance with exigent political needs.

You could not have moved the Rockefeller from its appointed course with physical evidence any more than you could have moved the Warren Commission had you been given the opportunity and were the angel of truth incarnate. Moreover, your conclusion more than one gunman had brought Kennedy down, no matter how demonstratively reasoned, was for the Rockefeller Commission a belated echo of Warren Commissioner Russell's view, and Johnson's opinion, and Connally's belief, all of which had no effect in altering the Johnson's and its successor administrations' assassination policy. Nor was your "finding" all shots were fired from Kennedy's rear by "more than one gunman" based on positive evidence, but was a deduction from contradictory medicoballistic evidence and related testimony. It could not, therefore, impress the Rockefeller Commission as more than an unnecessary hypothetical alternative to the Warren Commission's necessary "single bullet" theory which, by the way, you, not the government, believes is crucial for the latter's account of the assassination of president Kennedy; and also a welcome offset to the irrefutable evidentiary logic of the Zapruder film of an enfilading ambush in Dealey Plaza.

Yet, I assume, it was the evidence of the Zapruder film which gave the Rockefeller Commission great concern. How else explain its appointment of yet another panel of professional experts to review again the medicoballistic evidence, and its attempt to reconcile this evidence with the contradictory evidence of the Zapruder film by recourse to the patently absurd and long discredited idea the violent backward thrust of Kennedy's body when struck fatally resulted from an explosive physiologic reaction to the impact of the bullet? Was the Commission aware, do you think, this fantasy

puts to rest the equally false notion the gyrations of Kennedy's torso were caused by sudden acceleration of his limousine?

The Zapruder film must have been a problem for you, too. To ignore it would have been failure to challenge the government's frame up regarding one of its most vulnerable points. To reaffirm your published position on lack of evidence of a right-frontal lothal shot would have played directly into the government's hands. And to assert the position you took later in correspondence with me would have weakened your presentation by the necessity to argue against your former position.

In sum, because you restricted your testimony to physical evidence, it lacked sufficient impact to expose the government's Kennedy-assassination cover up policy. Had it that potentiality you might not have been permitted to testify, or the Commission would have referred what you had to say, along with other assassination data, to the president who could then have referred it to other executive-branch agencies, and to Congress. As it was, your testimony constituted no more than an embarrassment which it was as easy as it was necessary to disregard or distort in the pattern of the Warren Commission.

But there was no need for lamentation. Were you endowed with the common sense of Tom Paine, the libertarian wisdom of Tom Jefferson, the fanatic religious fervor of John Brown, and the compassionate eloquence of Abe Lincoln you could not have inspired the Rockefeller Commission to raise the banner of truth.

Consider the situation! From the lonely height of Marxist thought it has its comic aspects. In command of the ship of state was crewman Gerald Ford wearing Nixon's uniform, himself, as a Warren Commissioner, an accessory after the fact to murder, who set the course the helmsman had to follow: CIA is indispensable; its "covert activities" will continue; log its domestic derelictions. At the helm stood deferential philanthropist Nelson Rockefeller, the unrepentant butcher of Attica, nominally second in command, but part owner with his peers of the ship, their overseas empire protected against revolutionary overthrow by diplomacy, military bases, and CIA "covert activities" directed by an admitted assassin, all interlocked and intertwined to foment counterrevolution, support fascism, overthrow governments, conduct wars, train torturers, and assassinate enemies. Is it not ludicrous? In midstream skipper Ford became aware of a rising storm of suspicion and clamorous accusation and instructed first mate Rockefeller to navigate the mine field of CIA involvement in political assassinations.

To be sure, this was more than you could say, even if you believed it. But suppose your target was the ravening press. What if you had shaped your testimony accordingly? Suppose you had come before the Rockefeller Commission as Othello appeared before the "most potent, grave, and reverent signiors" of Venice and said:

Gentlemen: The President has assigned you the task of considering CIA involvement in political assassinations, including, possibly, the murder of the 35th President of the United States. I address the problem of his assassination.

The President gave you this assignment in response to a rising tide of rumor and accusation engendered by Water-gate disclosures, augmented by continuing revelations of scandals and crimes by government personnel and agencies, and accentuating in turn persisting disbelief in the official account of the assassination of President Kennedy. The Warren Commission Report enjoys little credence. A voluminous and growing literature has demonstrated the incompatibility of the Warren Commission's finding of a solo assassin with the physical evidence on which it is based.

As that lamentable event moves into history it is seen as the work of a conspiracy. Political instinct, developed by centuries of experience, so recognized it. Testimony taken by the Warren Commission recorded Vice President Johnson's thought, expressed to his aides in Parkland Hospital in Dallas, while awaiting the outcome of efforts to save the President, the assassination might be associated with a coup d'etat. It is a matter of record that President Johnson accepted the Warren Report's disclaimer of evidence of conspiracy. But ex-President Johnson reaffirmed his first opinion in ~~any~~ interview for public disclosure. After the Warren Commission was dissolved the late Senator Russell revealed he had not been permitted to include his dissent from the single-assassin theory in the Commission's Report, and made public statements of his belief in the presence of more than one assassin in Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963. Ex-Governor Connally's differences with the Warren Report are well known; he insists on them.

An accumulating body of evidence attests the existence of an assassination conspiracy. With respect to physical evidence the Zapruder film is conclusive; it shows the President hurled suddenly and violently backward and to his left following instantly on impact of a bullet fired - the deduction is inescapable - from a point in front and to the right of his limousine. The film makes an unforgettable impression; its evidence cannot be gainsaid - the President was caught in a carefully planned ambush.

Definitive proof of existence of an assassination conspiracy was in possession of the Secret Service thirteen days before President Kennedy was killed. On November 9, 1963, nine days before the President was scheduled to visit Miami and ride in a motorcade through the city, the Associated Press reported on February 3, 1967, the Miami Police Department gave the Secret Service the tape of a telephone conversation between a police informant and an individual called "Brown," in which the latter revealed a plan to kill the President by rifle fire from a high office building was "in the works" and included the arrest of "somebody...afterward just to throw the public off." Miami police persuaded the President, the Miami News Reported, to abandon the plan for a motorcade from the airport to downtown Miami and transported him by ~~helicopter~~

helicopter. Aborted in Miami, the murder plot was executed in Dallas. Significant breaches of routine security measures by the Secret Service in Dallas, virtually glossed over hitherto, should be investigated in depth.

Who were the conspirators? We do not know. Evidence is lacking. Search for it was avoided by the Warren Commission which found none. Renewed investigation by the executive branch of government is precluded generally, in effect, by consistent official support of the Warren Commission's Report, and more specifically in the present instance by pervasive awareness findings adverse to the Warren Commission's conclusions reflect unfavorably on its surviving members, and would be particularly embarrassing to President Ford. For reasons which are readily apparent to this Commission, I am sure, discussion of investigation by the legislative branch of government seems inappropriate in this forum.

In the absence of evidence suspicion falls inevitably on CIA as President Kennedy's assassin. Although established by lawful enactment, it is essentially a conspiratorial society whose modus operandi is limited neither by law nor morality. It violates the law of virtually every country in the world. It spies on and corrupts men and women and institutions; it overthrows governments; it murders adversaries. The President has affirmed the necessity of continuing "covert activities" in the interest of national security thereby foreclosing full public disclosure of CIA crimes. Nevertheless its frightful record is known and understood on all continents, and grows daily; yesterday in Guatemala, Iran, the Soviet Union, Cuba, Italy, Greece, the Congo, China, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam; today in Portugal, Angola, Zaire, Lebanon; tomorrow in whatever country and situation the National Security Council decides.

But, it is argued, CIA is forbidden by law from operating within the United States. One thinks of King Canute. This geopolitical restriction, seemingly satisfactory on paper, is unrealistic and cannot be obeyed in life. It implies impossible separability of foreign and domestic policy, and denies history. Conflict between its American colonies and the British government before 1783 was, by definition, on both sides originally, an internal British affair. After establishment of the United States conflict between the two governments became a matter of international relations.

Foreign and domestic policy imply each other, are obverse sides of the same coin. Acutely strained relations between France and the United States, stopping at the brink of war, at the end of the eighteenth century, spawned the notorious Alien and Sedition Acts. Almost a century and a half later, American antiSoviet cold-war policy, epitomized by the Truman Doctrine of "containing communism," gave birth both to CIA and the repressive anticommunist crusade of the 'fifties whose heroes in-

cluded Senator Joseph McCarthy and Congressman Richard Nixon.

Moreover, artificial statutory restriction of CIA creates contradictory standards of law and morality. Thus, opening mail in ~~the~~ England is permissible but forbidden in the United States. Spying on Congresspeople is allowable in France but not at home. Keeping foreign intelligence agents and officials under surveillance is CIA's duty in Turkey, a crime in this country.

In fact, CIA operations abroad would be impossible without essential complementary, domestic activities. Not only does CIA have an input in executive-branch policy formulation, in which it has acquired a vested bureaucratic interest, with headquarters situated near the seat of government, but CIA is charged with coordination of all government intelligence; it spies on its own personnel. By decision of the Supreme Court CIA enjoys exclusive right of prepublication censorship of writings by its agents - in perpetuity. It recruits agents on college campuses and other domestic sources and trains them in the United States, partly under "cover" of special military units. It creates economic corporations and foundation outlets for disbursement of its secret funds. It penetrates unions, student organizations, and political movements. It subsidizes publications and operates communication media. The close working relationship of CIA with Hughes' interests, revealed in connection with the hundreds-million-dollar exploit of the Glomar Explorer, establishes CIA as a primary component of what President Eisenhower designated the "military-industrial complex." And the inseparable linkage of foreign and domestic CIA activities was manifested by CIA's Air America transport of opium from the "golden triangle" in southeast Asia during the wars in IndoChina for processing and distribution by the underworld, and the recruitment by CIA in the United States of underworld criminals to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba. CIA's Phoenix assassination program, which accounted for more than twenty thousand murders in South Vietnam, was planned in the United States.

The possibility of CIA involvement in the assassination of President Kennedy arises also in connection with the problem of motivation. The Warren Commission convicted Oswald but, remarkably, confessed itself unable to determine his motive. Perhaps it was, at least in part, because the evidence it accepted as motive for his alleged attempt to kill General Edwin Walker, whom he allegedly regarded as a fascist, virtually excluded motivation for assassinating the President whom, the Warren Commission reported, Oswald liked and whose civil-rights policies he approved.

As in the assassination of President Lincoln, motivation for killing the 35th President, when determined, will prove to be multiple and complex. An important part of it

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has been documented and was published in 1972 in an essay, Vietnamization and the Drama of the Pentagon Papers, by Professor Peter Dale Scott. Scott's essay which appeared in Volume V of the Senator Gravel Edition of the Pentagon Papers, Critical Essays (Beacon Press, pp211-247), established causal connection between the conflict in the Kennedy Administration over American involvement in the war in Indo China; Kennedy's final decision to withdraw, made shortly before he was killed; his assassination; and subsequent large-scale military intervention in Vietnam by the Johnson Administration. Scott's documentation pivots on National Security Action Memorandum #273 which is classified but which Scott said he reconstructed in part from a number of sources. In Scott's account, NSAM 273 was intended to embody President Kennedy's decision to withdraw from Vietnam but was falsified after his death to include premises for escalation of American military intervention in Vietnam, and to make it appear as a continuation of President Kennedy's policy, foreshadowing as it were, the scurrilous attempt of assassin E. Howard Hunt to forge cables implicating assassinated President Kennedy in the assassination of President Diem of South Vietnam.

Scott's discovery of the triggering motive for the assassination of President Kennedy has excited little notice among both defenders and critics of the official account of the President's murder.

Scott emphasized the secret activities of American "intelligence agencies" in Indo China and thought they "suggest that, in late 1963, covert operations were beginning to escape the political limitations, both internal and international...established during the course of the Kennedy Administration" and "may have been escalated in defiance of the President's secret directives;" and "President Kennedy had lost control of covert planning and operations" (p230).

Scott made no reference to CIA involvement in the overthrow of the government of South Vietnamese President Diem who had opposed U.S. troop increases in Vietnam in 1963 and sought to negotiate an end to the war; and in whose assassination three weeks before Kennedy was killed, CIA was implicated, certainly indirectly and possibly directly.

CIA involvement in murder of the premier of newly independent Congo excited little notice. And liquidation of Diem in South Vietnam may or may not have been approved officially in Washington. But assassination of the head of state of the United States by an agency of the Federal government, however stigmatized legally, would be treason.

Was CIA guilty of treason? The evidence against CIA thus far is circumstantial. So, too, is a body of what, after investigation, may prove to be exculpatory. Photographs and physical description of a man who identified himself to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City in the fall of 1963 as Lee Henry Oswald, but who differed dimensionally and in

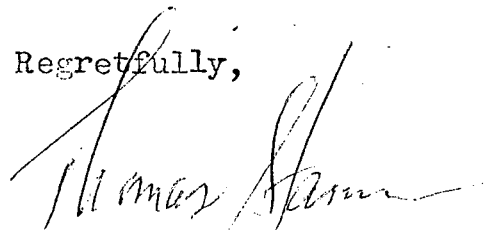
appearance from Lee Harvey Oswald, were forwarded by CIA to the Secret Service and FBI on November 22 and 23, 1963, following Lee Harvey's arrest and while he was in police custody undergoing interrogation, thereby establishing evidentiary existence of a "second Oswald" and complicating investigation of the assassination. Examination of incidents prior to the assassination, involving an individual who identified himself as Oswald, reviewed by the Warren Commission and rejected by it as unbelievable, suggests a systematic attempt to create a fictitious Oswald with personality traits uncharacteristic of the real man, and acting in circumstances and at times easily shown to exclude the presence of Lee Harvey Oswald. The activity of a government intelligence agency is indicated, one, moreover - the implication is plain - with foreknowledge of the impending assassination. The evidence of a "second Oswald" gives rise to the possibility CIA attempted to obstruct the assassination or impede investigation of it.

CIA's role in the assassination of President Kennedy is shrouded in mystery. Suspicion and accusation will continue until truth is established, which will not emerge, it is certain from CIA testimony in response to circumscribed governmental investigation. And no other is possible. It is a task for historians compiling, sifting, weighing, and analyzing historical evidence. This Commission can make a contribution to history by recommending to the President historians be given unlimited access to all materials and records in possession of the government, with out exception, including in the first instance, classified information relating to national security. Open Pandora's box. Let truth emerge.

Suppose you had said that. You would not have moved the men with "hearts of flint and bowels of brass," to quote Debs, but oh the press you might have had! WBAI could not have made you sound, forgive me, like an outraged virgin.

This has been a long letter, longer than I intended; it is now July 3rd. It is time to say good bye. It seems I will not hear from you soon again; you will "not have the time to respond in detail," even to the extent of your last two-page letter. I am sorry. I thought we might collaborate.

Regretfully,



Thomas Stamm