

1/9/76

Mr. Les Whitten
1401 16 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Les,

(Wednesday)
Yesterday's column refers to an agent Hoover used "to prevent such embarrassments" as the appearance of books Hoover didn't like.

If you know who had this function beginning in 1965 it could interest me much and might be of value in what I am sure is going to wind up in court. I've finally started an FOIA/PA action with the FBI on myself. They are going to have trouble with it as the other agencies have. I've started against two others. This is aside from my still numerous cases to bring suppressed evidence to light.

I wrote Whitewash under a contract. I had to do it in takes to meet the 2/15/65 deadline. Shortly thereafter I was at the publisher's office. The vice president was drooling in the till. He told me that merely by the salesman mentioning the book and its subject the advance sale before editing began was 25,000. He described this as a "gold-plated best-seller." In those days without doubt.

Two days later, while I was working with the editor, this vice president made a trip to Washington. The next day they broke the contract for a spurious reason. I never even got the manuscript back, or the advance, and had to reconstitute the manuscript from incomplete carbons.

That book probably set a record for rejections. But in no case was there a single adverse editorial comment. In some cases the policy decision was spelled out.

That summer the manuscript was read by a member of the House Judiciary Committee, a friend. He made some efforts, including with the daily and magazine press and even with old Manny Celler. From the reaction he got and from what I reported about my experiences in publishing houses, so many editors of which predicted best-seller before the executives rejected the book, this Member told me what I did not then and for a long time credit: that as soon as I walked out of a publishing house an FBI agent walked in to express Hoover's views.

Aside from this first manuscript I never got back others disappeared in the mails to and from Europe. One was stolen from inside Der Spiegel. A friend delivered a copy to a friend at Fischer A.G. He and I both were written letters of approval. They went for the book, we found out years later, and wondered why neither of us responded. Finally they mailed the ms., a carbon, back. And in Post Mortem I recount how Hoover issued a personal press release attempting to refute charge I'd not yet made public but were in my second book, of which one copy also disappeared, prior to printing. There is more, and not only where the FBI may be suspect.

Our experience in these FOIA cases (again in Post Mortem) is that the FBI gets an agent to swear falsely by getting an agent who does not have personal knowledge and therefore can escape a perjury rap. They also, regularly, consult only the wrong files. They then swear these (unidentified) files do not contain what I seek. Right now I can recall three agencies swearing they have no files on me where other agencies have informed me these agencies do. So, knowing the right guy or guys could be very helpful. Hope you can help. Thanks either way.

Sincerely,
Harold Weisberg