

POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE "HURT SLIP" IN SKOLNICK'S SUIT

My present best guess about what happened is as follows:

1) Sometime before 8 p.m. on 11/23, John Hurt tried to call Oswald collect at the Jail. (Hurt is reported to be a bit dingy and to drink to excess on occasion, to have written and phoned prominent people, and to blame some of his problems on high-level officials. It seems plausible that he tried to call Oswald without having had any prior contact with him; I'm sure several people did that. On the other hand, I know of no record relating to such a call. Hurt is not listed in any of my CD indexes or in the Archives name file.)

2) The operator recorded Hurt's name, number, etc. on a scrap of paper as she handled the call, and threw it in the wastebasket when she figured out that he was not about to be connected with Oswald.

3) In the evening of 11/23, Oswald tried (unsuccessfully) to call Abt. The operator (Mrs. Swinney) recorded the information about this call on a scrap of paper and discarded it, as is standard procedure. (The Treon affidavit places the call by Oswald at about 10:45 p.m. J.L. Popplewell of the DPD recalled that Oswald used the phone for about 30 minutes, starting about 8 p.m. (CD 1444, Encl. 7). Mrs. Paine got a call from Oswald for Marina at (she said) about 9:30 p.m. Saturday (3H87). There may have been several calls, or some of the witnesses may have been wrong about the time.)

4) Treon witnessed Mrs. Swinney handle a call purportedly by Oswald. She claims she took Mrs. Swinney's scrap of paper from the trash and recorded it on what is now known as the Hurt slip.

5) I suggest that she picked up the wrong piece of paper - the one relating to Hurt's attempted call to Oswald - and recorded it as if it were the call from Oswald (probably to Abt) which she had just witnessed.

6) Skolnick alleges (based on statements by Bolden, I guess) that there was Secret Service interest in "John Heard" on 11/24. If the SS did learn of Hurt's attempted call, and his possible "presidential complex," such interest would be quite normal and more or less proper. (The lawyer who sent a telegram to Oswald offering his services reportedly got on the SS "nut list.") It has been reported that the SS did ask the Raleigh police about Hurt prior to a relatively recent visit by the Vice President. I have not checked SS records on Hurt; maybe that should be done. Skolnick's suit won't accomplish much.

I consider this explanation for the Hurt slip quite likely. Another, but unlikely, possibility is that the Treon affidavit is fraudulent; Treon may have been encouraged to give this story, or she may have had a grudge against Hurt. Oswald may even have tried to return a call from Hurt, not knowing who he was. Least likely of all is that Oswald did in fact try ~~to call~~ to call a former intelligence officer known to him (at a listed number, hundreds of miles away, over a phone he must have known was "public") for some reason connected with the assassination.

For various reasons I have not indicated my sources for much of the information and speculation in this memo. I don't claim that this interpretation is all my own original work, but I think it best not to identify my sources at this time. If Skolnick's suit is not thrown out of court I think we should consider providing this information to Skolnick or to the court; your opinions are solicited.

Paul L. Hoch
June 12, 1970

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