

April 5, 1974

Hello, Harold!

Congratulations on your sixty-first birthday. May your next close a more fruitful year for you, one in which your research will bring us nearer to truth, your writing will be published, your debts diminished, your hours of sleep increased, your understanding politicized, your friends and collaborators more numerous, your critics more sympathetic, and your correspondence more satisfying.

It may be a portent of better times for you - last night, the sixth anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, WBAI's 6:30 evening news broadcast included a section on James Earl Ray, unanswered questions about him, based largely, it seemed to me, on your book, and the status of his effort to achieve revelation of the conspiracy of which he alleges he was a part. Then the reporter added he had entered a Fifth Avenue book store and asked for a copy of your Frame Up. He said he was told the store did not have one but the man with whom he was speaking said he had been Ray's Missouri-prison instructor. He said, too, Ray had not escaped from prison but had walked out. If you are interested, you should be able to obtain the name of this store by writing to WBAI and could then interview the man to whom the reporter spoke by mail. Or you could ask someone you trust to interview this individual in person.

By the way, were you aware when you wrote Frame Up that was the title of a book on the Tom Mooney-Warren Billings case written by Curt Gentry and published by W.W.Norton in 1967, that is four years before your own work, albeit on the James Earl Ray case, of the same name? When I read Gentry's book I was struck by numerous parallels with the frame up of Oswald. For example, on page 113 of Gentry's book one finds that Tom Mooney and his wife, Rena, when arrested, in 1917, were "Taken to the office of the Bomb Bureau...and interrogated from 12:45 until 4 a.m....Both repeatedly asserted their innocence; both repeatedly asked permission to consult an attorney.*"

The asterisk draws attention to a footnote at the bottom of the page, which reads: "Later, in the trials, the defense, in an attempt to confirm that the Mooneys had not changed their stories, would ask the prosecution for the transcripts of their interrogations. In reply (DA) Fickert and his assistants would state that no transcripts had been made. They were discovered nearly twenty years later, when the Bomb Bureau files were opened. They not only proved the defense's contention but showed that Tom Mooney had demanded counsel a total of 86 times." I conclude from this it is possible that the interrogation of Oswald was recorded and will come to light in time. Perhaps it will be you who will make the discovery and the revelation.

I suppose it was tactless to describe one you respect or protect as a ninny. But that does not justify your apprehension I have embarked on a crusade to "get" Burkley. I am puzzled by his course in the Kennedy assassination and want to discuss it with you. You say I am wrong in my suspicions he may have had a role in the post-assassination frame up of Oswald. I am open to conviction. I ask you for fact, for analysis, for insight. You reply with personal abuse. It is a strange exchange.

I know of no parallels in literature. Perhaps if you put suspicion of me aside you will feel free to explain your view, not only about Burkley, but about what is far more important to me, your concept of the Kennedy assassination as an historical event. I am especially eager to discuss that since you wrote you had no quarrel with the political approach I outlined in earlier letters. Political agreement, in my view, is the soundest basis for collaboration.

Several letters back you confused me with Occam. Now you lump me with Dick Sprague. What's the point? Where's the logic? Can't you conceive me as a friendly collaborator?

Optimistically,

Thomas