

Mr. Laurence Stern
Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

Rt. 12, Frederick, Md. 21701
8/22/76

Dear Larry,

Because you began with a prejudice you were intended to have you never learned much about me. My earlier experiences include intelligence. I was an analyst. Also a trouble-shooter, with a rather good record. Before that I was a Senate investigator. There also I was a trouble-shooter. From this experience and from as intensive a 13 years of investigation and analysis as I believe is humanly possible since JFK was killed I suggest a simplification with which you may want to approach a key paragraph in your long Russell piece in today's Post: in a really tough investigation or in an ~~any~~ analysis in which there are few or contradictory clues the best course is to seize upon one and bulldog it to death.

In your piece this is: "It was not clear then - nor is to today - why Morgan came forward at that time to bring Russell's story to the ears of the nation's highest law enforcement authorities."

I had no doubt then and I have no doubt now. I'll give you one clue: what else was going on then?

There is virtually nothing new in your story. Confirmation that Morgan was the source is new as a fact but long ago he was my first guess. I've forgotten why and what his background is. (More recently, because of ~~other~~ reasons, I switched to a second lawyer but originally I did believe Morgan.)

If I believe you to be some kind of fink I'd not be taking this time. Last year, after 62 of exceptionally good health, I had pneumonia and pleurisy followed by a severe thrombosis, with permanent damage that for several weeks has been bothering me more than usual.

I do believe that not for the first time the Post has been used in a disinformation operation. In this your and the Post's motives are irrelevant. I don't think that Bradlee's bed is in Langley, either.

And frankly I'm glad your prejudices prevented your asking me anything because I have undertaken a very large work and I want to complete as much of it as is possible.

To an experienced analyst your factually completely correct story collapses from internal self-destructs. But part of the accuracy - which comes from accurate quotation and citation - is unfactual.

I'll try to simplify. It simply is not true that the Warren Commission did not know of unfollowed conspiracy leads of precisely this nature. And it is true that if the Post did not have policy determinations against me and my work this would have been widely known, if not for the first time, last November. That is when I brought out what you may regard as a long, tendentious, prolix work titled Post Mortem. Barry Sussman was here and I discussed it with him. He left with a copy. He found it too complicated for him and turned it over to George Lardner. So a copy is available there. But what I have in mind, pp. 475-87, esp. 485-7, earlier was a non-story to the Post's national desk. I'm sure Bill Claiborne and George will remember. My release of it in April 1975, after I got it under FOIA, after 7-8 years of effort, coincided with the pneumonia. I went through with a scheduled press conference despite high fever. I gave Claiborne a copy of this transcript first and he discussed it with me afterward. He correctly chided me for understating. From my prior experience understatement seemed the better course. Perhaps I was wrong. But Bill did send that transcript to Washington and your national desk did read it and did not do a story. Nor did the Times nor any wire ~~xxx~~ service that I can recall.

The earliest reporting of any of this is in the manuscript you refused to read in 1965. It is in my first book, which was finished in mid-February of that year. Turn to page 153. That section begins about 149. Not an awful lot to read.

Schweiker began with four theories and wound up with a single intention, to be Ford's vice-presidential candidate. My correspondence on this and with him is dated prior to Reagan's move. All four theories came from my work. It tried without success to talk him out of any theorizing but he was off and running. I warned him with precise accuracy of the results if he did. He called me when I was in acute pain. I spent a morning with him on the way to the hospital. The above citation is one of the four.

Over the years, often too late, I've re-evaluated my position and approach, asking myself how I may best come as close to possible to doing what I never intended to do when I wrote that first book. Literary considerations have come to be of least significance to me. I no longer take time to read and correct most letters. I mean no offense in this, but I'm 63, work a long day still and want to go as many of those miles as Frost wrote about. Less and less frequently do I undertake to try and alert the media to its being manipulated. It is a competitive world that depends on sources. This translates for the most part into officials - and the need to go back and to meet the competition. Policies evolve and are rationalized into news judgments. I can no more compete with this than I can with the whoring the Lanes. So I try to do my own thing. For years that has been a very determined effort to bring out what suppressed fact I can and make as complete a record as possible.

I have had FOIA requests filed for all the things you mention for long periods of time. Long enough to have them all in court. But I'm still only one man. I have only one overworked lawyer. I can't pay him and he is just starting practice. We now have three unreported - and I'm satisfied they are unreported cases in court. Without help, and that is as likely as shrimps whistling from the backs of cows jumping over green-cheese moons, I can move no faster. However, with the onset of sickness I did establish an estate and have every confidence that two very fine young men will carry these matters forward. I no longer have to tell myself that in this I serve the nation's interest. A federal court has so mandated. Naturally this was not news and I now don't want it to be. If I did I'd have gone to the papers.

I had an entirely different interest in the Rosselli story and for this reason I followed it. There has been persistent official lying about it from the outset. I'll give you a couple of recent examples before I return to my own work.

There never was a time when the FBI did not have investigational jurisdiction yet it stated it did not and would not investigate. All the time it was. I can but will not name one interviewed and where. Many police departments are involved in a Rosselli investigation. To my knowledge, from solid sources, not fewer than two have lied about this. One involves a very dubious character who as a policeman is a notorious murderer. Two other murders coincide with Rosselli's, perhaps only coincidentally. One involved chains and dumping the body in the deep. The other is ruled "natural causes" by the medical examiner and "suicide" by the police.

If I were to bulldog your story, as you should and I will not, from this single hasty reading I'd say that an experienced political analyst of non-Angletonian preconceptions would be satisfied that of all the people who could have been responsible for offing JFK Castro is the least likely. This would have been part of what I had intended as my second book had it not been for the corrupt doctrines of the two books that immediately followed mine. They pinned it all on Warren. In my view if he bears his own faults, he carries enough. There are sufficient to go around. Truth and goats are incompatible. This is a turning point in history. It requires truth and the acceptance of truth if there is to be a representative society of any kind.

Sincerely,

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

8/22/76

Dear Les,

Were it to write an autobiography, which I will not, I'd title it Cassandra.

You ~~must~~ should recall a warning I wrote you some time back. Perhaps you can see it better in the Post story of today about which I've written Larry Stern the enclosed letter.

As it relates to Larry, I ask that you regard it as private.

I do suggest that you read the citations I give Larry.

Drew and Jack were used. I knew it then and why. Contending with it was a major problem. I was of limited success only. I've given you a clue I did not give Larry. If you want more fill me in on Morgan. I've forgotten why he was my prime candidate, initially the only one.

Not only no autobiography - I don't keep a journal despite urgings. In recent years I've started putting carbons in such a file on occasion. So I'll give you a little background that may or may not be of value to you but will make a journal item for me and may later have archival value.

I'll be factual but do not take all inferences as an expression of belief.

I had a contract for Whitewash with the son of Prince Serge Obolensky. Ivan was an incompetent. His vice president, a Greek fellow who had changed his name (I was told) to Ledes was a more sinister personality. I didn't want to write the book for various reasons so they provided an associate who was not up to it although he was a Stanley Walker man. To meet the contract I had to write the book in a month. I had to - and did - deliver by 2/15/65. I sent it in takes. I could not even write the chapters in sequence. What I could do fastest I had to do first. When I reached New York they were raving about what Ledes called a "gold-plated best-seller." Without any promos they had advance orders for 35,000, Ledes told me. While I was working with a socially-oriented woman editor of the farther right extreme Ledes made a trip to Washington, returned and the book was rejected. I never got the advance or the return of the manuscript. I didn't have full carbons and some were on the clear side of mimeographed paper. Wasn't easy but my wife and I did it rapidly. First place I went thereafter, sent to the friend of a friend, was Praeger, whose connections then were not known. No point in giving you a long history.

I became a publisher because of my experience with liberals at Norton. They sat on the book for months. Even asked Tom Wicker for an opinion. He was very decent from what they told me. Then they wrote me that if I would rewrite the book - and I'll never forget this so I'm not checking - around page 138, line 4, it would be a singularly important book they'd be delighted to do. I read this and realized it would require that I charge the government with conspiring to off JFK and refused. (Motive there is; proof there isn't.)

One of the reasons my writing is as elliptical as it is involves my concept of responsibility and integrity. Bear this in mind if you read that short passage in Whitewash. Unless the book has been thrown away you have it. I personally delivered each of the first four to Jack's door after phoning first. Of those you know the Post has all, as does Scott Malone. Jim is away.

The Odio story is true. I did enough checking. The FBI knew as did the Commission. Only at the end did the Commission decide no rug was capacious enough for that dust. And Tom Wadden thinks Harvey was killed, too.

Sympathetically,