

Rt. 12, Frederick, Md. 21701

1/23/77

Dear Mr. Fortas,

Today's Post's story, which I imagine is the cause of some unhappiness to you, carries me back to the Durr memorial, when you asked me to arrange to see you in your office. It relates to one of the matters I suggested might be of interest to you.

With the passing of time we forget. Not long after these services I was hospitalized with serious thrombophlebitis. You may have forgotten this or you may have decided not to interest yourself when I wrote you last April. Your file will show I did not push. I am not now.

Obviously I have no way of knowing what is behind this story. I see the atypical in it. I see it as a hatchet job. There are completely abnormal omissions from what I know of fact and journalism. Two are Wolfson's former Washington base and his first wife's terminal illness. The omission of this illness at the time he said he had to stay out of jail for a while longer strikes me as vengeful writing.

You had little recollection of how we met. Your wife probably did not know me well when I was a Senate investigator and she was in our offices often. (She, my wife and Bert Wheeler's daughter Francis were the young women who then did what they could about Japanese aggression by wearing lisle stockings.) Virginia Durr remembers me well, if you want to learn about me from those you know.

In recent years I have devoted myself, not quite exclusively, to the political assassinations. I have never been in pursuit of a whodunit. My work is a very large study of our basic institutions in time of crisis. In the course of it I have done virtually all the solid work not in accord with the official explanations of the JFK and King assassinations. I have begun the deposit of my papers in a major university system. There is continuing interest in them because mine is substantial work. A week ago I had a request for these papers from a large west-coast university. The head of another history department is coming here Wednesday. While the subject has attracted many huts and self-promoters it does mark a turning-point in history. Mine is generally regarded as the most extensive and most dependable work.

It is from this reputation that there were several approaches from European publishers for me to do a Watergate book. By the time it was apparent that the market did not desire anything definitive, basic writing I was well into an investigation and writing I did not want to lay aside. I developed information as yet unpublished about some of the central characters. This led to what was attempted on Mr. Douglas, how by whom and with what clandestine support, thus also to you.

A Washington associate of Mr. Wolfson sent me to Florida to approach the Wolfson foundation for support. My meeting with Arvin Rothschild was interfered with by a betting charge laid on him. We spent some of the afternoon together and with his wife dined that night. He seemed impressed and he said he was. He later reported that the probability of foundation support did not seem high. As I now recall it I had completed a long, hasty and almost entirely unread rough draft while deeply engaged in other work, some thanks to you and Harris V. Hilsen. I could not abandon the other work and I was anxious for a good editing job for which I could not pay.

Several months later I was invited to Ocala for the same purposes. Mr. Wolfson was off with his horses when I reached there. He had a Cuban or Mexican trainer come at the same time. Just before and during supper most of the conversation was about horses. At the end of the meal Mr. Wolfson invited me into the living room to discuss the purposes of my going there. We spent about an hour, often interrupted, in conversation. He had glanced casually at some of the documents I had with me and abruptly terminated our meeting by having me ushered to one of the cottages. I have neither seen nor heard from him

since. Before he terminated the audience he did know the essence of what I had developed relating to the involvement of some of the Watergate characters with the Nixon-Ford efforts against the Court members. When he seemed unable to detach himself from the horses and speeches favorable to those I knew to be charlatans I did ask him to do what he could to make information available to me. This was limited to those Court efforts. Nothing happened. Considering what I had and showed him in solid evidence this was then surprising and now it is more so.

Many things suggest themselves. I have no way of knowing whether any is relevant. One example is the timing, the appearance of this story in the first Sunday edition after the change in administrations, the first Sunday Ford is not resident. Another is that it was fed to Bob Woodward, whose non-reporting in Watergate in part accounts for the fact that what I report above is not public knowledge.

I do not know if what I know is of interest to you. If it is I do not go to Washington from time to time. I suppose because of the clots I have been cautioned against injury or jarring. However, once the weather clears I will be going there for some blood tests if you want to speak to me. Obviously I am asking nothing of you.

But I'm sorry about this for you. And I do wish you well.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg