

"Tramp" pictures

1/7/69

Dear ^{Mr}oo,

The enclose copy of this a.m.'s letter to Sprague speaks for itself. You know my source.

When I phoned Sprague the end of last week to get his Altgens notes for you he told me more about what Turner has established, he thinks beyond any doubt, about these pictures. It seems they can always be interpreted to fit each new development, each time all earlier interpretations being forgotten, each positiveness of the past in now way impairing the dependability of the same wrong source in the present.

About Altgens: He has never typed his notes, has only one copy, and promised to Xerox them yesterday and mail a set to you. I have never seen them. Aside from learning that Altgens himself did not know how many pictures he took until Sprague started getting him to backtrack, when he found about a dozen, I do not recall, if I even knew, what Altgens did get. He recalled only the three that had been used by the late time, June 1964, that the feds got around to speaking to him.

First I must acknowledge a prejudice. Were Turner today assure me that God is in heaven, I'd accept his assurance as reason to doubt it.

So here is what Sprague, with some excitement, told me on the fourth:

Of course, the one man is certainly Bradley. While once he doubted it, he now does not. The man with the hat is Crisman, also beyond doubt. There are two identical scars on a recent picture of Crisman that exactly coincide with two scars on this man's face in these pictures. (Obviously the mere executioners did not trust their "pymaster", so they insisted he be on the spot and pay them immediately!) "Hold your hat", he told me of the third, and then said it was too hot to put on the phone. You realize, the remaining man is the romantic "Frenchy", not too far in the past so certainly connected with the LBJ ranch, was it? He is now a former Minuteman, an anti-Castro fighter from Miami and New Orleans.

From another of my young (and from my experience, solid and dependable) collaborators, I learn that Sprague, presumably with Turner's assistance, has identified Frenchy as "Raoul" in the Hue version of the life of James Earl Ray.

In view of the record of the recent past, I believe you should have this. If Oser is showing any interest in the pictures, please tell him. I think Louis should also see. Because of the evil potential of these pictures, I will continue my checking. I fear, because of the influence these pictures and people have had on him, it is required....How deeply we are indebted to Johnny Carson for his boorishness!

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

1/7/69

Dear Dick,

Because I know how convinced you are that there is real and deep significance in the tramp pictures I have misgivings about telling you what my own incomplete investigation shows. It comes from a source in a position to learn what might be true, a person well-connected in Dallas and friendly toward me personally.

He has his own ways of reaching official sources ~~from within~~ in that city. He reports these men were arrested after the assassination and before Oswald. They were released without charge after Oswald's arrest. The place is what interests me most: behind the post office. I have just gotten this report from him and will be pursuing it further, for example to be certain that his reference to the post office is to the Terminal Annex, which is in the 200 block of South Houston. If this is, as I presume it is, the place of the arrest, there is no street behind Houston at that point, only the railroad tracks.

I sent him that one of the series of pictures showing only two men. He told me there were three, that one didn't show in the picture, and that they were picked up in a box car.

Now if this is the case, it become difficult if not impossible, regardless of any tentative identification that might be made, to believe any of these men could have been an assassin, for it would have been impossible for them to have done any of these things:

Shot from there;
Shot from the area of the depository and gotten there without passing many too many people on the overpass;
Disposed of their weapons.

I think there are ways in which I can carry this further. As you know, I have not, from the first, had any confidence in what was attributed to these pictures. I see other meaning and significance in them. However, for several reasons, one of which is the harm their misuse can do us, another the large amount of time I feel might better be spent in other areas they have and are taken, I have spent a little time in tracking them down, trying to learn what I can about them. Another person, unknown in Dallas, who got in touch with the police, got nowhere. My own checks with the paper disclosed that when LIFE asked the identity of the men, contemporaneously, there was no record. The photographers were then shooting at anything that moved, without time for the lefts to rights.

If these men were arrested where I have been told they were (and I use the word arrest not because it is accurate, but from habit, for everyone has assumed it, they would have been walked to the police cars by way of the tracks, as you know from having been there.

I will now attempt to get a picture of Lonnie Rey Wright. I do not know if I can. There are also other efforts I will make. Also, a real photographic expert who is a close friend of Garrison's has been asked by the staff to compare a real picture of Bradley with these pictures. He says the resemblance is truly remarkable, but that close comparison of all features and contours convinces him they are not identical. Sincerely, Harold Weisberg