

9/25/71

Dear Jim, *Brown*

Your letter of letter of the 20th, could not be better. I had come to the end of a chapter in editing some old work, had worked cleaning up our road front for winter until winded, then got the mail as the rural carrier came, and yours is the only letter requiring answer, so before returning to work I'll answer it in haste.

Frankly, I had forgotten your offer of the use of your Long Beach home. Because at some point I'd like to resume my N.O. investigations, I wonder if Interstate 10 has been completed to the point where the travel-time is not now too great? Or if it is secure enough should I be able to accept your offer, for longer, weekend-long, perhaps, interviews? Should it be possible, there are some I'd like to be able to conduct in this depth. Possibility also includes my having enough time, should I get there and should I be able to get a car, which I'd not be able to rent. Last time I did it down there and for only two days and a 200-mile trip, it cost me over \$50.

Sorry you didn't get FRANK-UP from me. We send them out the day we get the order. and handle and pay postage and insurance for only 50¢ added.

You may have an important point in Rehtt Butler's having made a separate tape. I think I heard of this before, possibly from you. You are correct in all details in your appraisal of Butler, but you may underestimate a bit. I have no proof, no more than a suspicion, but I think he also finked for the State UnAmerican committee in racial matters. I have met some left-winger who say he hung out with them prior to his right-wing public identification, prior to INCA days. Which really means just before Oswald's reappearance, I'd estimate. They never kept their promise to search their recollections and fill me in.

There could be legitimate reasons for having Rehtt make a separate tape, one being editing and another in part what you suspect and in part a continuing dialogue after the taping of the show. However, whatever the reason, your hunch is worth following and could produce worthwhile information, the one question, aside from their willingness to tell you, being their willingness or perhaps ability to tell the truth. In the one confrontation I had with him, I did get Butler to admit he is a liar. I would add nonstop liar. He makes things up as he goes as they seem likely to be what he'd like to be true.

I've forgotten which of the records I have. I believe it is the LWA one. I also have, I believe, the unedited tape of the show. I'd probably have trouble finding it now. And I recall and think I discussed in O IN NO the hassle over the post-assassination debates record and a suit over one.

Is it possible he and Oswald talked before the show? Probable, the question being the length of time. Not unusual at all. Most people do not get to stations at the last minute. I do not recall anyone considering the possibilities that Rehtt's tape might hold, but with Butler not having used it, I'd suspect that either it is, as he sees it, of no value, or, if he just forgot and they listen when you ask, they'll not give and may misuse themselves. I'd not worry about the latter possibility were I you. I'd try for it.

I'd seen the Boggs quote before. Others had the Commission idea, including a DC radio station, which aired it. It was one of the obvious alternatives. Fortas seems to have handled this for LBJ.

I think it is OSWALD STANIS that I have. I'd ignore almost anything from Bood, who is no more dependable on political matters than Butler. However, there is no doubt about three things: Butler did appear before Dodd's Committee, it has not published (and will not release) his "testimony" x, and no copies in in the Warren Commission files. One of the more likely possibilities is that it is too terrible, for Butler knew nothing, and what he might have imagined might have terrified everyone. In writing a blurb, aside from his political bias, Dodd could just have made an honest mistake. But it is interesting that B was reminded of Van Der Lubbe, which I'd forgotten.

Your interpretation of the Reichstag-fire affair is essentially correct, but it was not part of an anti-Hitler plot.

If I do not have the leaflet in which Butler claims to have been called before the Warren Commission, I'd appreciate a copy. I'd then ask for the reports or transcript, which I think would show he lied, not existing. The trip was before the WC was appointed, unless there was a second one. In fact, the FBI seems to have paid remarkably scant attention to B. I have seen nothing to indicate they got any tape from him. I recall Ernesto Rodriguez and Stuckey as acknowledged sources from SS files and I suspect the FBI got it immediately from ADSU, as soon as it was aired if not after taping.

It is possible to take jacketblubbs too literally. They are frequently made up by artists who know little about the content. Hence there is the possibility that ref. to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and to an "interview" could be innocent exaggerations. But I doubt very much if Butler did not arrange this trip. I think it was his ticket to what for him is fame and he used it every way he could.

On the two possibilities with Mrs. B, asking for the Leht tape and his SIS testimony, good idea. And the money they owe you might help. You could ask them to apply that to the cost and bill you for the rest. I see no possibility she could be less truthful than Butler. I think this better than writing to him. If she is unproductive, you might then take it up with him. So, to answer your question, you are not off the track and I don't know anyone who looked into the Rhett tape. I wouldn't worry about "tipping him off" about anything. Let me evaluate any response for you. Nor do I know of any proof that he and LHO met on any other occasion. It is not impossible, but I have no reason to suspect it. ...How do you know Gil got CIA \$\$\$?...In those days, most INCA \$\$\$ from Ochsner...Butler should have known about the camps before the 7/31/63 raid because they had been reorped, including by Stuckey...I do not believe "that Butler knew about and/or supported the plans for the assassination".

There are possibilities in following up leads on Butler that, in every interest, I should not alert you to. I don't want you to be in the position of going out and looking for things to establish my concept of a possibility. This is not the way to investigate at this juncture. It would be much better if what I believe possible came out all by itself, without your conscious digging. I have ample reason to believe the possibility can be the fact. It would not be hurtful to Butler were it true.

Guess that's all for now. Again thanks and good luck.

Best,

SEPTEMBER 20, 1971

DEAR HAL,

SORRY IT HAS BEEN SO LONG SINCE YOUR LETTER. I WAS GOING TO WRITE YOU ABOUT MY WORK IN NEW ORLEANS RE THE RAY CASE, BUT I WANTED TO WAIT UNTIL MY COPY OF FRAME-UP ARRIVED TO SEE IF YOU ALREADY HAVE WHAT I GOT OR TRIED TO GET. I DON'T KNOW WHY IT'S TAKEN SO LONG, BUT IT SHOULD GET HERE SHORTLY.

IN THE MEANTIME, I HAVE RUN ACROSS AN ITEM IN RE-READING MY FILE ON INCA + BUTLER, WHICH YOU MAY NOT HAVE. I'VE ~~████████~~ NEVER SEEN IT ANYWHERE AND I DON'T THINK ANYONE IN NEW ORLEANS EVER CAUGHT THIS AS FAR AS I KNOW.

IF YOU'LL RE-READ THE NEW ORLEANS MAGAZINE ON BUTLER I SENT YOU (I'LL TRY TO SEND EXTRA COPIES IF I CAN--TO MAKE IT EASIER), YOU'LL NOTICE BUTLER SAYS HE ~~████████~~^{TOOK} HIS BROTHER RHETT AND A TAPE RECORDER TO THE RADIO STUDIOS TO DEBATE OSWALD. THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE I'VE EVER SEEN ANY MENTION OF RHETT BUTLER OR A TAPE RECORDER. IT IS NOT IN STUCKEY'S TESTIMONY, OR BRINGUIER'S TESTIMONY, BOOK, OR LITERATURE. NOW THE COMMERCIAL LP RECORD ALBUM DISTRIBUTED BY INCA ("OSWALD: SELF-PORTRAIT IN RED"), OF THE DEBATE, INDICATES ON THE JACKET THAT IT IS A REPRODUCTION OF WDSU'S TAPE. SO-- WHAT WAS RHETT BUTLER DOING THERE AND WHAT IS ON HIS TAPE? INTERESTING QUESTION, ISN'T IT? ~~████████~~
ED BUTLER HAS TAPED INTERVIEWS WITH HUNDREDS OF REFUGEES FROM SOVIET-BLOC AND LATIN

THAT ON THE AIRPORT BUS TO WASHINGTON HE HEARD THAT RUBY HAD KILLED OSWALD. THAT CERTAINLY CONTRADICTS TWO HIGHLY HONEST AND TRUTHFUL MEMBERS OF CONGRESS (JACK ANDERSON NOTWITHSTANDING). ~~HE~~ INCIDENTALLY, ~~HE~~ BUTLER SAID ~~HE~~ IT REMINDED HIM OF THE VAN DE LUBBE CASE. MY READING OF HISTORY IS THAT VAN DE LUBBE WAS AN INNOCENT COMMUNIST WHO STOOD TRIAL PUBLICLY FOR BURNING THE REICHSTAG, WHILE IT IS PRETTY CLEAR THAT HITLER'S OWN PEOPLE WERE RESPONSIBLE (EITHER AT HIS DIRECTION OR TO OVERTHROW HIM). WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD THE CASE OF A COMMUNIST SCAPEGOAT WHO TOOK A BUM RAP FOR NAZIS - OCCUR TO BUTLER? (UNLESS HE KNEW MORE THAN WE THINK HE DID!)

FINALLY, ONE LEAFLET INCA SENT ME CONTAINS THE STATEMENT: "BUTLER WAS CALLED TO WASHINGTON WITH THE TAPE [RHETT'S OR WDSU'S?] TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE WARREN COMMISSION." THIS IS ~~IN~~ IN ONE OR TWO PAMPHLETS OF INCA'S. ~~THE~~ THE TAPE AND HIS TESTIMONY ARE CERTAINLY NOT REFERRED TO IN THE 26 VOLS. IN YOUR RESEARCH IN THE ARCHIVES, HAVE YOU COME ACROSS ANYTHING WHICH INDICATED AN APPEARANCE OR TESTIMONY BY BUTLER WITH A TAPE?

THE MORE YOU FOLLOW THIS LINE, THE MORE INTRIGUING IT BECOMES. N.D. MAG SAYS HE WAS CALLED NOT BEFORE THE WARREN COMMISSION, BUT RATHER THE SENATE INTERNAL SECURITY COMMITTEE. AND ON THE "SELF PORTRAIT" LP, NARRATOR MARSHALL PIERCE SAYS IT WAS THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. IN VICTORY,

IT SAYS "MR. BUTLER WAS CALLED TO WASHINGTON LESS THAN 48 HOURS AFTER THE CRIME TO CONFER WITH TOP OFFICIALS ON THE CASE, SINCE HE WAS THE ONLY PROPAGANDA SPECIALIST EVER TO INTERVIEW OSWALD." (EMPH. ADDED)

NOTICE IT SAYS INTERVIEW, NOT DEBATE? AND WHAT "TOP OFFICIALS" WERE "ON THE CASE...LESS THAN 48 HOURS AFTER THE CRIME"? IN ANY CASE, IT ALWAYS SAYS "CALLED" (THE ONLY CONSISTENCY), SO THAT THE TRIP WAS EVIDENTLY NOT OF HIS OWN MOTIVATION OR VOLITION.

AT THIS POINT, I HAVE TWO POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES:

(1.) I COULD WRITE TO MRS. BUTLER AT SQUARE HDQTS. IN LOS ANGELES, AND ASK HER WHAT WAS (+ HOPEFULLY IS) ON RHETT'S TAPE + IF I COULD HAVE A COPY, AND ALSO COPIES OF ED'S TESTIMONY BEFORE THE WARREN COMMISSION, THE SENATE INTERNAL SECURITY COMMITTEE + HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. THERE ARE TWO ADVANTAGES I SEE TO THIS:

(A.) I HAVE, AS YOU KNOW, PREVIOUSLY CORRESPONDED WITH HER, VERY SUCCESSFULLY. SHE SENT ME ALL THAT STUFF I GAVE YOU COPIES OF. I COULD REMIND HER THAT SHE DIDN'T SEND ME A \$3⁰⁰ REFUND SHE PROMISED FOR MY SUBSCRIPTION TO SQUARE (NOW DEFUNCT), NOR A MEMBERSHIP CARD IN INCA (FOR WHICH I SENT \$10). ALSO, SHE'S

PROBABLY NOT AS BUSY AS HER HUSBAND AND COULD AFFORD THE TIME TO ANSWER KNOWLEDGEABLY + TRUTHFULLY. ALSO, SHE MAY BE A LITTLE MORE INNOCENT THAN ED ABOUT OSWALD.

(B.) I COULD WRITE TO BUTLER DIRECTLY. IT WOULD NOT BE AS DIFFICULT AS WITH BRINGUIER, FOR ME TO BE COURTEOUS AND DEFERENTIAL. ~~UNLESS~~ ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT SEEM UNFAIR TO PRESS HIM FOR DETAILS OF THINGS OVER EIGHT YEARS OLD, HE IS DEFINITELY IN A POSITION TO WANT TO PRESERVE HIS INTEGRITY, AS HIS ENTIRE REPUTATION AND SUBSEQUENT CAREER WERE BUILT ON HIS DEBATE WITH OSWALD. I WOULD EXPECT A COURTEOUS + PERHAPS ENLIGHTENING REPLY, I'M SURE.

IF YOU FAVOR EITHER OF THE ABOVE, I MUST FIRST ASK YOU:

(1.) AM I TOTALLY OFF THE TRACK HERE? DID YOU OR ANYONE IN NEW ORLEANS EVER LOOK INTO THIS OR CONSIDER RHETT BUTLER'S TAPE?

(2.) BUTLER IS OPPORTUNISTIC AND A PROPAGANDIST, BUT IS HE A LIAR? COULD I GET AN HONEST ANSWER OUT OF HIM? OR WOULD YOU RATHER I NOT TIP HIM OFF IN CASE WE MIGHT BE ON TO SOMETHING HERE?

(3) BUTLER SWEARS UP AND DOWN THAT HE ONLY MET OSWALD AT THE STUDIOS BEFORE THE DEBATE, AND NOT BEFORE NOR SINCE. THEIR ONLY CONTACT HE SAYS WAS A HANDSHAKE -- (OSWALD'S HAND WAS CLAMMY), AND WHEN BUTLER MENTIONED TO STUCKEY A "PROGRESSIVE" BUSINESSMAN'S ADVERTISING, OSWALD SMIRKED DISGUSTEDLY FOR HIM USING A REVOLUTIONARY TERM IN A CAPITALISTIC CONTEXT. AFTER THE DEBATE, OSWALD ASKED BUTLER HIS NAME + HIS ORGANIZATION. (HE WROTE "JOHN S. BUTLER", INCORRECTLY). AND BUTLER SAYS THAT IS ALL THEY EVER SAW OF EACH OTHER.

IS THIS TRUE? OR DID BUTLER AND OSWALD MEET ON OTHER OCCASIONS?

(4) ~~BUT~~ BUTLER ALSO INSISTS INCA HAS NEVER GOTTEN GOV'T FUNDS, ALTHOUGH SUCH PEOPLE AS MANUEL GIL DOUBLE-DIPPED ON INCA'S AND THE C.I.A.'S PAYROLL. ALSO, RADIO FREE EUROPE ADMITTED RECENTLY IT HAS GOTTEN COVERT FUNDS FROM THE C.I.A. IN OSWALD IN N.O., YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T KNOW, BUT DO YOU NOW, WHETHER INCA ALSO GETS SOME COVERT FUNDING? (IT HAS NEARLY GONE UNDER SEVERAL TIMES IN SPITE OF RICH RIGHTIST BACKERS LIKE PATRICK FRAWLEY. LORD KNOWS WHAT SAVED IT -- IF OSWALD WAS C.I.A., THEN YOU MIGHT SAY IT DID GET GOV'T HELP ONCE!!)

(5) DO YOU THINK BUTLER KNEW ABOUT THE TRAINING CAMPS?

(6.) DO YOU BELIEVE (OR KNOW) THAT BUTLER KNEW ABOUT AND/OR SUPPORTED

THE PLANS FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY?

I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AGAIN (SOON, I HOPE), TO READING FRAME-UP, AND TO HEARING FROM YOU. ALTHOUGH THIS LETTER IS A SHADE LONG, PLEASE DON'T FEEL COMPELLED TO TAKE TOO MUCH TIME AND TROUBLE AWAY FROM YOUR OWN GREAT WORK. ENVELOPE IS ENCLOSED + PLEASE NOTE THAT ADDRESS IS STILL UNIV. OF SOUTHERN MISS. THAT INVITATION TO MY HOME IN LONG BEACH, MISS., WHERE I LIVE BY MYSELF, IS A STANDING ONE, SO WE WILL JUST HOPE. UNFORTUNATELY, MY PLANS TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON HAVE BEEN RUINED AGAIN AND AGAIN, BUT I'LL WRITE. AND ONCE MORE, IF THERE'S SOME WAY I CAN BE SHARING THE BURDEN, I WOULD BE DELIGHTED. UNTIL WE CAN GET TOGETHER SOMEHOW, PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE

YOUR FRIEND

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a long, sweeping horizontal line that curves upwards at the end, with a smaller, more complex scribble above it.