

Dear Roger,

7/6/75

Our pleasant afternoon two weeks ago (for which I am much in your debt) was the closest to a relaxed period for me until now. Probably I didn't seem relaxed but for me and particularly for the combination of circumstances I was. Thanks.

I'll add a bit to what I told you of the unusual project on which I was engaged but it all must remain confidential.

What made the whole thing more difficult is that the agent knows me and my work well and was afraid. He showed it until deep into our meeting, when I began to participate. He had indicated he would oppose my being there and when I went to the bathroom when the legal matters had been worked out asked what the hell I was there for.

What I wanted of my participation was more information. McDonald is an expert in identification and interrogation. He has investigations, extris, teaches them etc. Nonetheless, in my own way, I was able to get much from him. Including real names.

The word "Byzantine" comes to mind regularly. ~~With~~ With this stuff in particular.

The important new name was not unknown to me. Since then I have had a long and friendly meeting with that former agent's last lady friend. Another of the real characters in the story happens to own a farm not far from here, between here and a ~~farm~~ she owns and on which she is spending the holiday weekend. She was to have phoned him and to have invited him to meet with me. Rather risky, sure. But I felt I had to chance it. I do not take silence as indication of less risk. She is also to phone still another of the dramatic personae who is temporarily in NYC for the same invitation. Unless they were all privy to a real termination with extreme prejudice or are afraid they should be willing because they are knowing. An alternative is that all are part of a conscious Department of Disinformation project.

All the details, including communication with The Great Beyond during the interview, are pretty hairy.

One of the more unusual aspects is the enormous amount of time Time has put into this with Sandy Smith. He spent a month in California and thereafter conducted what appear to have been extensive interviews in the east. He has been working on CIA since his Watergate work, he says. Or, can you imagine the fun they can have in their coming whitewash with this communication with the departed spirit? He has it all in notes. Two separate notebooks. One for the live interviewee, one for the spirit. He has a tape, too, as I have.

There is just too much money and effort in this fakery not to wonder if not worry.

Until Tuesday I've cleaned up all I need do on the current FOIA suit. It now has a record that, with major-media attention, could break the whole case apart. As there has been no such attention, I expect none. One consequence may be the rewriting of the law in court with the help of the judge who was just overruled on the FBI's right to indiscriminate wiretapping. Jim and I have worked hard, doing all two men can. I can only hope it is enough. I'm charging and proving a new FBI perjury. In the course of this I've gotten much I didn't want but is useful. Could make a real good story: "Secret Evidence Proves Oswald Innocent."

The government has moved to dismiss. The next calendar call at which the judge will rule one way or another on something is for the 15th.

I've not been able to catch much electronic news reporting lately but I did catch ~~two~~ two interest Schorr TV bits on Oswald. If the texts are available they'd interest me. In time perhaps CBS. One I believe has its origin with Bud Fensterwald. Although we have not been talking he sent me word a month or so ago that a guy had walked in off the street with some CIA/Oswald information. Bud was going to write a memo and wanted my appraisal after I read it. If he wrote it I never got it. I suspect this may be the man Schorr aired in the story that he had seen an interview report on a returned Marine defector. This area has long interested me and I have much on it.

The other story was attributed to recently declassified Warren Commission documents. One of my interests is in whether the Archives withheld this one from me. It would not be the first time if they did. Another is in whether, as would be neither wrong nor unnatural, other material was woven in.

The thrust, as I remember it, was that Oswald may have been used by the anti-Castro. The thought is not new but if a real document was the source, one recently declassified, one involving the White Russian Dallas-Fort Worth community, that would be new.

It also would not be inconsistent with this black-book deal. Depending on the part not yet written, it could be entirely consistent. Part of it, in fact.

I'll be in Washington Tuesday. If I have time I'll phone Schorr or Pliassner (the latter has always been a one-way street) and see if as I do not believe this is a confidential source. If it is other than I have I'd want to see it and learn why the Archives is withholding it from me.

Given TV's need to encapsulate, I imagine the short bit was a compilation that began with the peg and included other sources one of which is general knowledge.

In all of this the manipulation of the media does concern me. There would be real spook delight in using Schorr in particular. Besides, he is an exceptionally good reporter and could be expected to follow leads with more than average diligence and competence. His interest is in a story and that is the interest he'd follow, without the background required for discriminating between plants that serve hidden purposes and straight, untainted news.

Both of these are completely legitimate stories. Both were handled competently and honestly. However, there remains the possibility that someone outside CBS had a special interest in each being aired and each being aired as it was.

Bud is moved as easily as a pawn. More easily because he is a self-starter with all the right (which is to say wrong) instincts and preconceptions and hates.

I found Esther Kartiganer an exceptionally able researcher and a decent human. Her head it put together better than any I can remember and with a facility for holding onto what she wants to learn that particularly with my weariness and all I'm trying to keep in my head I envy.

I decided to be completely open with her, laying out my problems and potential conflicts and to trust her. I explained that I do not want to give all my work away and would not if CBS were to then duplicate it but that I wanted to be as informative as I could be while not violating my obligations to Ray. So that she would know what had to be checked with Jim before it could be used and what I had to restrict I taped the interview for her. She did not bring a machine. I gave her the tapes so she could do this checking when and as necessary. When she is finished she'll return them to me and I'll lay them aside for the time where there will be the scholarly interest in oral histories.

She returned something I loaned her with a nice note.

On the question of using what I do not want to give away, I told her that if CBS could pay an imposter like Schoenman as a consultant they ought have no trouble using an expert as one. She was unaware of this and made a note of it.

I also explained that there is movie interest in my work and I naturally don't want to give that away. If the record on these interests is not encouraging, there is always the law of averages and the changed and changing situation.

Nothing new from Birnbaum. I hope that when he calls again it is not in the middle of something else I can't drop. Both sides of the 15th can be such a time. I can't tell his part of the CBS bureaucracy what to do but it is costing them a fortune not to buy the available rights to the work I've already done. If they try to nip it off it may cost them more. But the most important consideration I'd weigh if I were CBS is the unadvertised competitive interest and time. It was a real stupidity to announce so far in advance and while dealing for the Ford crapola. I've heard from one net that both others are off and running and know whose project it is at one. If either comes to me to buy they'll be months ahead and have all anyone needs except the filming.

Hastily, and with thanks,