

September 29, 1974

Mr. Palmer Williams  
CBS News  
524 West 57th Street  
New York, New York

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Dear Mr. Williams:

Please temporarily regard this as confidential for two reasons, preservation of my rights and policy-level decision by another net to which I made a proposal a month ago.

It is because I remember so well the almost uniquely decent reception you gave me in the winter of 1965 that I write you personally.

Since then I have continued the same work, developing new methods and areas and an abundance of new and the most sensational evidence in which there has been no major-media interest. The content and volume are such that two colleges want my files for permanent archives.

To circumvent official suppression, I have resorted to the courts. I have filed four suits under the so-called "Freedom of Information" law. Having established this willingness - and I believe I am the writer who has used the law most - the government often elects to give me outside of court what it knows I will go to court to get. It always has to worry about the possibility that some one of these unreported suits may attract attention to the evidence sought.

Recently it made such a decision. After denying me a document so exceptional it is still spectacular after the Nixon transcripts, during the litigation the government just mailed the thing to me. Getting this one document required about eight years of effort. The document was classified TOP SECRET. It is a transcript of a session of the members of the Warren Commission meeting to work their way around the "rumor" that Lee Harvey Oswald was a federal agent. Actually, they also went into other matters.

Once I read it, I saw the possibility of misuse of this document as part of Nixon's justification of his gestic-like acts and in the defense of those closest to him. This, of course, meant I had to be circumspect in the use of the material and to use it in a manner that would either frustrate this possible perversion or make its success less likely. It also meant I had to make the fastest possible use because, while developments of the case in the court of a Watergate judge makes initial Nixonian use dangerous if not criminal, once I had time to use it, the same thing could be leaked to another who might be more to Nixonian liking. And, of course, I felt it was necessary to use it straight, the story itself as that story should be told.

So, while doing other work that could not be avoided - I make no public use of it but I am James Earl Ray's unpaid investigator and we are now approaching an evidentiary hearing that by normal standards should make news - I rushed through the fourth of my "underground" books, the only feasible way of doing it fast. Were it not for

printers' gremlins, the book would have been manufactured before this. It is now in manufacture.

My approach to the other net was an effort to sell the subsidiary rights. This is the reason I write you because, if they have not decided by the time I have returned from a coming trip on the Ray case, I will have to look elsewhere.

These 90 pages of transcript are reproduced in facsimile. I illuminate them with FBI and Secret Service reports and other classified documents I consider relevant already in my files. (I have so many FBI reports there must be about 2,000 pages I haven't had time to read.) They are preceded by as short a text as I felt would serve and followed by what is called but is more than a legal analysis by the lawyer who represented me. It includes an account of how to get this document I put my head on the block, confronting the government with the choice of charging either its prestigious witness, the former boss of the Warren Commission, or me with perjury.

This transcript is not of a gathering of Nixonian paranoids. It is a session of the most eminent who expected that no word they uttered would ever become known. As an insight into how government works when it works in secret, I have seen nothing like this. And in its explicitness - well, I think even Nixon was not as explicit as Allen Dulles on the DIA and the FBI: "Terribly bad characters." And they perjure themselves regularly. He would like even to the Secretary of Defense. The one exception he specified, the president, we know from the Bay of Pigs and the Powers U-2 affair, he did lie to. All about how they hide the identity of their agents so nobody can ever prove anyone is, that it is all done in a code only two people know and they will swear falsely in court if necessary.

The late Senator Russell at one point said, "You'd know a man for five years and swear you never saw him," a statement to which Dulles agreed.

What until now I have never used is the secret relationship I had with Russell, the Commission's most conservative member. Following what I put in his hands, the destruction of the record of the doubts I knew privately he had had about the Report he signed under a deal then made and of which no record now exists, he resigned his CIA oversight responsibilities, ended his long friendship with LBJ (who was not guilty in this case but to Russell it was a second LBJ double-cross), and when he knew his death was imminent, he made a limited public record of his doubts. To his dying day he continued to encourage my work to disprove the Warren Report while expressing regret he was unable to be part of it but always wanting to be kept informed.

Part of this was verbal but I have perhaps a half-dozen letters. There is some record of all of it.

The other net seems to be emphasizing this Russell part. I have much more on it than is in the book. They appear to be having trouble locating his former assistant with whom I also met and corresponded. There should be no difficulty. My own view is that this Russell part is a separate story, really, if there is TV interest, and a very good one, quite Orwellian because it involves the faking of a transcript as well as the destruction of the record for history Russell thought he was making. I gave him the fake and it stunned him. The one question he had is, was there still the original. I obtained official proof for him that there is not and developed my own proof that it never existed (also stamped TOP SECRET). All of this is in official documents and correspondence.

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When I was in Washington Friday, I tried to reach George Herman, who knows me. He was busy on the inflation story. In speaking to his secretary, I did not remember that I would be away most of Saturday. George normally works Sundays. In a few hours I have to leave on this Ray case work. I write in the event George does not reach me or that he says to write you. I had in mind that he might take the time to read this book of which I now have only a single set of proofs, and give you an opinion. I would have delivered it to him on my way to the airport.

However, I have no reluctance in trusting you. My wife will be home in my absence and can mail you these proofs if you phone. I will be back the end of the week.

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I am aware of the problems for CBS in anything that destroys the Warren Report. The part on Oswald as an agent proves at least intent to cover up. Other parts of this transcript do demolish the Report, beyond repair. Over the years I have obtained much evidence the Commission did not have. It does the same thing all over again. But I have been without the means of printing that completed book and these documents. It will cost about \$15,000 and I'm broke. (My lawyer borrowed the money to pay the printer for the book of which I'm writing.) However, if I were CBS and it were going to happen anyway, I'd want to do it myself and recapture what that makes possible.

If you elect to consider my offer, please do not be reluctant to ask questions. There is nothing in this book that I have not established separately with countless other official proofs. Because of money problems, I had to keep down the size and use excerpts instead of complete documents, all in facsimile. One example of this is my use of excerpts only on the FBI's withholding from the Warren Commission of the fact that Oswald carried an FBI agent's name, phone and license numbers. I have a fat file of xeroxes on this and more from my own investigations.

I do hope this can receive serious consideration. I do believe it will make superior TV journalism.

On another subject that has been in the news lately, Harlan County, I am the only man who was part of the two federal investigations of the past, by the Senate and by the Department of Justice. CBS has reported excellently on the current situation. I think there is quite a story in the past, the past of which I happened to be part and a story that, to the best of my knowledge, has never been told outside the official records. I have those of the Senate (I was also that committee's editor) and can locate those of the Justice Department if they are not in Washington.

While I am rambling, I mention another currently topical story from my past as an investigative reporter, before I went into intelligence in World War II and while I was also a volunteer British agent in economic warfare. Some of my exposes of Nazi cartels were so hot they could not be printed. A decent series was published and attracted much attention. Government action followed a number of these exposes. One deal with which I could do nothing precluded American development of synthetic gas and rubber. I remember enough to trace all the proofs through the patent office if it is not too hot.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg