

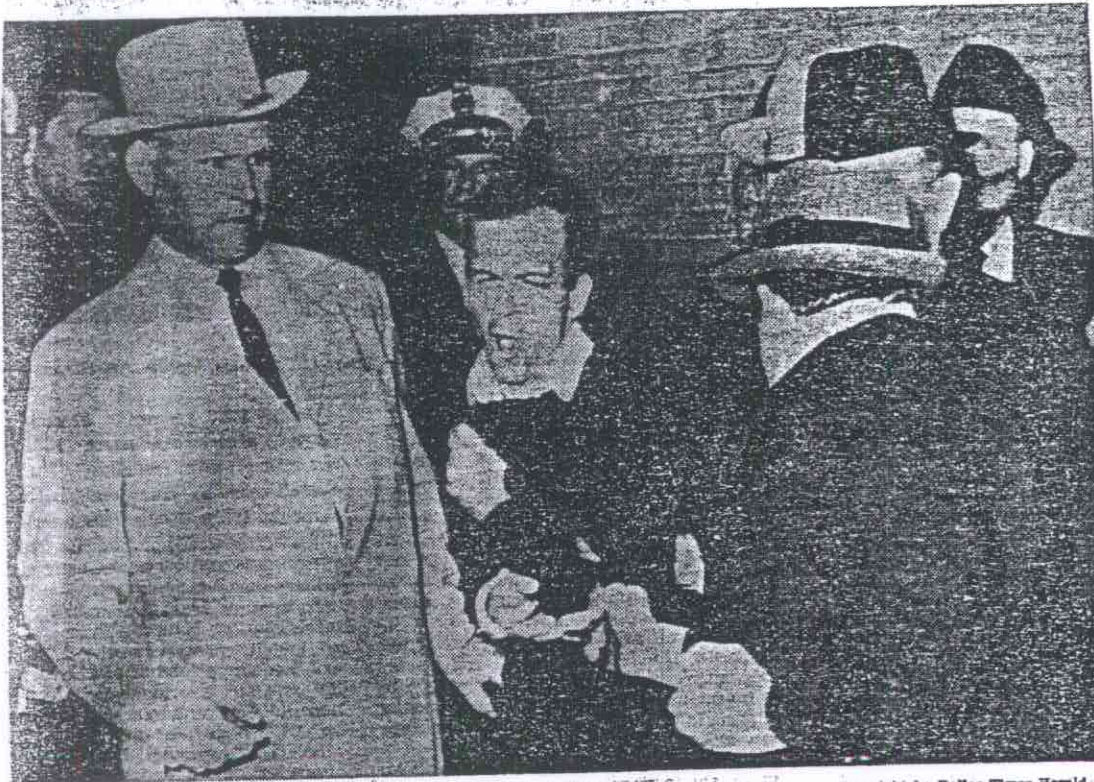
Washington Post

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1977

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Classified
Circulations

40,001 Pages From FBI Files



Copyright by Dallas Times-Herald

Jack Ruby, right, shoots Lee Harvey Oswald as Oswald is being transferred to county jail.

Infighting, but Little New Evidence

By William Claiborne
and George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writers

The FBI yesterday made public thousands of new documents that reveal intense backstage infighting over the conduct of the investigation into President Kennedy's assassination, but apparently no significant new evidence about the murder.

The records, released under the Freedom of Information Act, pro-

vide an unprecedented glimpse of the biggest and most painstaking criminal manhunt in FBI history.

They also reveal the degree to which President Kennedy's murder tapped national currents of paranoia as well as racial and political hostility that sent the bureau's agents chasing after informants, suspects and mental patients with equal zeal.

The FBI's investigators spent days tracking down one woman from

Panama City, Fla., who reportedly overheard two men plotting the murder in a bus only to find from her doctor that she was a "neurotic . . . a pathological liar who seeks to attract attention."

By the same token, the documents reviewed yesterday suggested that the FBI never seriously entertained the possibility that the shots directed at Kennedy came from anywhere but behind him.

See DOCUMENTS, A12, Col. 4

DOCUMENTS, From A1

The bureau at times seemed more interested in investigating the motives and affiliations of its critics than in pursuing the contradictions offered by the evidence at the scene of the crime.

Just three days after the assassination, high-ranking FBI officials were already reflecting in their internal correspondence on the frustrations confronting them as they sought to check out what they believed to be a negative proposition—that a foreign conspiracy did not exist.

"We are being called upon, in many instances, to prove the negative," Courtney Evans, a high-ranking aide to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, wrote in a memo following a telephone conversation with Deputy Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach. "Katzenbach notes it is more difficult to prove that something did not happen than it is to prove that it did happen."

The 40,001 pages released yesterday—which will be followed by another 40,000 pages of JFK assassination documents to be disgorged next month—also detail the degree to which the FBI sought to manipulate the news media during the Hong inquiry, appealing to those considered "friendly" and complaining of those who questioned its methods.

At one point early in the investigation, about three weeks after the President was killed in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, Hoover did profess far greater misgivings that he ever publicly acknowledged about the possibility that others besides Lee Harvey Oswald had been involved.

Recounting a conversation he had just had with Warren Commission general counsel Lee Rankin on Dec. 12, 1963, Hoover said in a four-page memo that morning that "I personally believe Oswald was the assassin, but the second aspect as to whether he was the only one gives me great concern."

But it remained unclear whether the FBI director was voicing this fear simply for the record or whether he was really troubled by it. As evidence of his apprehensions, he said he told Rankin of "several letters written to Oswald from Cuba" referring to the job he was going to do.

In another memo written that day, Dec. 12, 1963, Hoover dwelt on the suspicious nature of those letters, noting that they had been written on the same typewriter although ostensibly signed by different individuals, and concluded that they were apparently "an attempted hoax." There is no evidence that Hoover shared his doubts with Rankin.

The massive discharge of documents is a result of the bureau's "Project Onslaught," a \$2.8 million effort to reduce its huge backlog of freedom-of-information requests. FBI officials said the release of the Kennedy papers alone will cost, by conservative estimate, at least \$188,000.

Many of the papers released yesterday had been previously made public

before, but these were reissued together with the new documents without any distinction. Uncounted pages bearing on the Kennedy assassination in key FBI field offices such as Dallas and New Orleans are still locked up. The files being released under Project Onslaught consist solely of FBI headquarters documents under three headings: the JFK assassination; Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby.

Another memo from Evans to Hoover aide Alan Belmont repeated not only Katzenbach's concern for a speedy report on the FBI's findings, but reflected mounting worries about press speculation about a conspiracy.

Oswald's Motives

One of the dangers Katzenbach cited, according to this memo, was that an inquiry by state officials in Texas would delve into the sensitive area of Oswald's motives.

"One of the dangers which Katzenbach sees is the possibility that the state hearing may develop some pertinent information not now known," Evans wrote.

In an effort to minimize that danger, he said, he dispatched a Justice Department official to talk with Texas officials "to have them restrict their hearing to the proposition of showing merely that Oswald killed the President. He hopes to avoid the state hearing going into the question of motive or trying to resolve the communist angle."

The same memo revealed that Katzenbach had learned, "on an extremely confidential basis," that Washington attorney Abe Fortas, a confidant of President Johnson, had talked with Johnson and argued against the idea of having a presidential commission look into the assassination.

Fortas' argument, according to Evans, was that even to announce such a commission would suggest there was more to the assassination than one man acting alone, and that it would also call into question the effectiveness of the FBI.

"Fortas, of course, is no friend of the bureau and there would appear to be some obvious underhanded motive in his using us in his argument, although we don't know what this is," the Hoover aide said.

The Evans remark ran counter to a widespread assumption that Fortas was a principal advocate of the creation of the Warren Commission.

Signs of internal rivalry and occasional bickering among the highest levels of the assassination probe began to develop just a few weeks after the President was slain.

For instance, on Dec. 2, Katzenbach telephoned Evans, according to a memorandum of conversation, and said that Chief Justice Earl Warren was "strongly opposing" any publication of the still incomplete FBI report on the assassination. Warren felt so

strongly about it, Katzenbach is quoted as saying, that he would resign from the commission if anything was released.

The memo went on to say that Katzenbach also regarded Warren Olney, who was being considered as chief counsel to the commission, as "undesirable" for the post. His reasons were not spelled out.

The next day, Cartha (Deke) DeLoach, assistant FBI director, reported in a memo that Katzenbach had called him and said he believed that Olney had "definitely been dumped," and that he had given the go-ahead for the appointment of Lees Rankin as general counsel.

Trouble Over Release

Occasionally testy discussions also developed at the Justice Department and the White House over the form of a press release that was to be issued concerning the investigation.

According to a Dec. 9 DeLoach memo, Hoover felt "strongly" that only the first paragraph of a proposed press release—asserting "blandly" that an FBI report had been transmitted to the commission—should be released.

However, Katzenbach is quoted as saying there was a "stalemate" at the White House in connection with the release, with Fortas arguing that the entire release should be issued.

Fortas' argument, DeLoach wrote, was that "speculation, rumors and gossip should be dispelled right now." "He claimed that it made no difference that the presidential commission would present findings to the President and the general public. He felt rumors concerning collusion between Ruby and Oswald, also concerning international conspiracy, should be hit hard now," DeLoach wrote.

No Press Release

As a result of the bickering, he said, there would be no press release. Instead, Katzenbach was to write a letter to Warren and each commission member appealing for a quick report so that rumors and speculation could be eliminated.

Referring to Katzenbach's letter, DeLoach said, "He goes on to point out that [the] investigation thus far has nailed down the point that Oswald assassinated the President and had no assistance. He further mentions that Ruby operated strictly as an individual and had no assistance. He points out that there is no evidence of collusion or international intrigue."

Interestingly, the suppressed press release did not seem worthy of so much bureaucratic anguish.

It merely stated that an FBI report had been sent to the commission, and that the Justice Department was of the opinion that scientific examination of evidence had established that Oswald shot Kennedy. It also said

that no evidence had been uncovered to date of a conspiracy involving any persons, including Jack Ruby, but that this aspect of the probe would be investigated further.

The letters Hoover cited to Rankin as potential indicators of a conspiracy pointing toward Cuban Premier Fidel Castro concerned a so-called Pedro or Peter Charles. Hoover said he told Rankin that they alluded to Oswald's "good marksmanship" and stated "when it was all over, he [Oswald]

would be brought back to Cuba and presented to the chief," Hoover said. It was not certain that the chief was Castro, but suggested that the letters were sufficient reason for his strongly urging Rankin at that point in the inquiry "that we not reach any conclusion Oswald was the only man."

Despite all that, the FBI laboratory had by then made a thorough examination of the Charles letter, which was dated Nov. 10, 1963, but not postmarked in Havana until Nov. 23, 1963, and compared it with another letter also postmarked in Havana on Nov. 23, 1963, and addressed to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

The first letter, from Charles to "Friend Lee," was intercepted in Dallas Dec. 5, 1963, and was not, in itself, a new disclosure. It was written in such a way as to suggest that Oswald had been paid off by Charles in Miami to carry out an unspecified mission that involved accurate shooting.

The other letter, dated Nov. 27, 1963, and addressed to Robert Kennedy by someone calling himself "Mario dea Rosario Molina," asserted that Oswald had killed the President at the direction of Pedro Charles, a Castro agent who was supposed to have met Oswald in Miami some two months earlier and paid him \$7,000.

The FBI's Intelligence Division reported on Dec. 31, 1963, however, that both letters had been written on the same Remington typewriter, that the same type pen and ink had been used to sign both letters, and that the two postmarks contained the same irregularities.

'Attempted Hoax'

[It] seems clear that this matter represents an attempted hoax, possibly perpetrated by some anti-Castro group seeking to attach blame to the Castro government," the FBI's W. R. Wannall informed his boss in the Intelligence Division, William C. Sullivan.

Hoover indicated the next day, in one of the newly disclosed memos that he agreed, saying that "it appears this matter represents an attempted hoax," especially in view of the delayed mailing, but adding that the CIA and State Department had been asked to be alert for any signs that Molina might try to get to Venezuela as his Nov. 27 letter had stated.

There was no indication in the documents reviewed yesterday that he ever did.

Rich in detail, the documents portray a thoroughness which seems to transcend even the FBI's reputation for attention to detail. No matter how obscure or ambiguous, each lead was tracked down with personal interviews, tireless background checks and a seeming obsession for completeness.

The Warren Commission encouraged such thoroughness, as Rankin wrote increasing numbers of letters to the FBI telling it about new tips received or claims of overheard conversations.

At one point, FBI officials seemed to show minor annoyance with what the commission was forwarding to the bureau.

"From general appearances of this communication, it would appear the correspondent has little, if any, information and might also be a mental case," the FBI said of one letter-writer. However, in view of the commission's request, it is not felt we have any alternative but to handle the request," the memo added.

Total Checking-Out

No matter who was brought to the bureau's attention—or no matter for what purpose—the subject would be checked out. Somebody at American Broadcasting Co. sent Hoover a complimentary record album with key broadcasts about the Dallas tragedy and enclosed a form letter saying it was from ABC-Paramount Theater President Leonard H. Goldenson. Hoover wrote a cordial letter of thanks, to which a bureau official attached the note. "Bufiles [bureau files] contain no derogatory information regarding Mr. Goldenson."

According to the records, the FBI expended thousands of man-hour tracking down other false leads and hoaxes, but the bureau was apparently determined to leave no trivia unturned. It even undertook to investigate an article in Fairchild Publications Home Furnishings Daily which ominously reported, under a Dallas dateline, that "warehouse sales are becoming a red-hot weapon in the retailer arsenal."

Bizarre Theories Offered

Tips, Tipsters Probed

By John Jacobs and Ronald Kessler

Washington Post Staff Writers

In investigating the assassination of President Kennedy, the FBI pursued tips from sources ranging from shoeshine boys to deranged spouses; and one agent even speculated that some chalk handwriting found inside a boxcar in Newport, Mich., could have been Lee Harvey Oswald's and should be investigated.

The 40,001 pages of FBI documents relating to the John F. Kennedy assassination, released yesterday under a Freedom of Information Act request, reveal that the bureau, as might be expected, was eager to enhance its reputation, preserve its investigative territory from encroachment by other government agencies and investigate the backgrounds of people who sent in tips.

An example of the thoroughness with which the FBI followed its leads, no matter how seemingly

See GLEANINGS, A12, Col. 1.

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (62-10900) filed by [redacted]

FROM: SAC, ALBANY (62-1646) (P) [redacted]

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY
11/22/63, DALLAS, TEXAS
MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION CONCERNING

Re Dallas airtel to Bureau, 3/4/64.

The following investigation was conducted by SA EDWARD A. MC SHANE, JR.:
AT MONTREAL, CANADA

[Large redacted area]

Bureau (RM) CONFIDENTIAL REC-9 100-10461-2664
2-Dallas (100-10461) (RM)
2-Albany
JMF:jab
3/11/64 1964 EX-108
Approved: C. W. [redacted] Sent _____ M Per _____
Special Agent in Charge

A censored page from the FBI files.

GLEANINGS, From A.I.

Inconsequential, was a bulletin from the Miami field office to Director J. Edgar Hoover on Nov. 23, 1963, the day after the assassination. The Miami agent relayed a tip from a shoeshine boy that a Miami Beach gangster, known as "Jimmy Blue Eyes" was heard to remark: "They should have gotten the whole family, including Robert Kennedy."

Prior to a gubernatorial election in Louisiana, a source overheard a man in a Stetson hat say, "If we can't put a man in by ballot, we'll get rid of this one with a 30-30." The FBI investigated men around the state Capitol who wore Stetsons, discovering that five state senators and three state representatives did.

The files also contain a report about a Portsmouth, Va., woman who forged a letter in which her ex-husband confessed to the assassination.

Something about the Kennedy assassination seemed to provoke people's paranoid fears and resulted in a large number of bizarre predictions, hypotheses or leads to follow:

One man volunteered that Jack Ruby, who shot Oswald while he was being transferred from the Dallas city jail, did card tricks in Muncie, Indiana, in 1942 while visiting leftist relatives who ran a jewelry store. Another woman said her husband's relatives were "as mean as rattlesnakes" and could have killed Kennedy. She said her husband had been trying to drive her crazy for 16 years, but he was the one who was really nuts.

An anonymous caller informed the FBI that the Irish Republican Army was coming to Dallas to "commit mayhem on that city." The bureau registered

that grim message to the State Department, the CIA, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service in addition to cabling unknown parties in London.

An Italian from Vicenza wrote Hoover offering his services in the investigation. "I think to know whom has had the idea of shooting [sic] J.F. Kennedy," Gazzotto Amedeo wrote on April 2, 1964. "Do not think that I am an insane person I have (unintelligible) all the vicissitudes of his death."

It was noted on the bottom of his letter that he was interviewed "in the presence of the 163d Military Intelligence Battalion, U.S. Forces."

And then there was the "four jacks" theory. This contribution to the investigation was sent in anonymously. "J.F. Kennedy was killed by a rat named Jack Webber," the theory went, "and Oswald was killed by another rat named Jack Ruby and Webber was done away by Jack Prasher and his body done away with. There are four jacks named here and there is four jacks in a deck of cards and Webber was a partner of Ruby in crime and Oswald was ready to tell what he knew about Kennedy's death when he was done away with by a rat of low rating."

Alice Kinner of Albany, N.Y., wrote in that she dreamed about Kennedy's death two weeks before it happened. All the details were the same, except that in her dream his initials were in "big, black, bold print" in the newspaper, but "in real life, it was ordinary print."

Jack Mitchell Clay, of Rockford, Ill., informed the bureau that if Oswald hadn't killed the President, he would have. He further advised, according to an April 9, 1964, FBI memo, "that he would shoot any police officer or Negro who set foot on his porch."

One informant clued the bureau in to the possibility that a black waiter at a party in an Arlington motel "looked suspicious." He could have been connected, the informant said. A Nov. 27, 1963, memo summarizing this call noted that he thought perhaps even Richard Nixon arranged the assassination, but he could furnish no proof.

An FBI bulletin the day after the assassination singled out an El Paso man convicted for sending an extortion note to his mother. The El Paso field office thought he would fall "within the category of bureau interest" in the investigation because his probation officer thought he remembered that the convict wrote a threatening letter to the President in 1959.

Not content to simply investigate tips, the FBI also investigated the people who gave them:

After then Rep. Pat Minor Martin (R-Calif.) forwarded a constituent's letter suggesting that Oswald had really intended to shoot then-Texas Gov. John B. Connally, the FBI wrote in its own files, "Bufiles (Bureau files) contain limited contact with Cong. Martin (R-Calif.) and there is no derogatory information concerning him."

When the FBI learned that William Manchester had been chosen by Kennedy's widow to write a history of the assassination, the bureau noted in its files, "Bureau files contain no derogatory information [on Manchester]."

Karl Zerk of Los Angeles suggested in a letter to the Warren Commission that right-wing groups might have been behind the assassination and noted that Hoover's book "Masters of Deceit," had long been the "bible" of such extremists.

The letter was obtained by the FBI, which concluded Zerk had no information on the assassination. However, Hoover ordered a background check on Zerk, commenting that "the general tone of his communication is insulting and prejudicial to us."

In other cases, the FBI directed its investigative zeal at other government agencies that might embarrass the bureau.

In a Dec. 18, 1963, memo, the FBI complained that the Secret Service was trying to establish that the bureau had had personal contact with Oswald and his wife prior to the dates already acknowledged by the FBI.

Characterizing this as displaying "more than normal interest in our activities than would be considered necessary in the investigation of the President's assassination," the memo recommended "determining the purpose of the inquiries and obtaining a copy of the Secret Service's report before it was to be submitted to the Warren Commission."

When then-U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Thomas C. Mann attempted to pursue a possible Cuban connection to the assassination, Hoover wrote that he was "one of these pseudo-investigators, a Sherlock Holmes."

Commenting on a request from the Warren Commission that the FBI try to determine the exact speed of the presidential motorcade when Kennedy was shot, Hoover said, "OK. It sounds like a lot of peppycock to me."

Despite the crackpots and the weird allegations, the FBI managed to keep a straight face. One deadpan report described an investigation of the "Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness (sic) of Times (sic)." Another quoted Oswald's wife, Marina, as describing where she and Lee stood on the subject of America:

"Me like America. Lee no like America. Lee like moon."

All for the Answer: A Nation

By Ward Shackleford
Washington Post Staff Writer

It is, as Harold Weisberg wrote in the first of his seven books on the murder of John F. Kennedy, a story like none other in our history. With its disconcerting underpinnings of morbid compulsion, it has made us all a nation of G-men and, more, a nation of unrelenting skeptics.

All for the answer, the Gallup Poll reports, half of us "disbelieve the Warren Commission conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone as the assassin."

All for the answer, a disbelieving Congress sets out to conduct its own inquiry into the curious contradictions that continue to fuel the disbelief. All for the answer, as could happen only in America, it has spawned a lucrative school of media heroes, shonism and a cadre of media heroes who savor what we ask and tell us what we don't dare to know.

So yesterday, 14 years after that day in Dallas, the FBI responded to the endemic skepticism and doubt and turned loose 40,001 documents from the assassination file that hitherto had

been secreted in the physical's eyes. There will be more to come next month—something like 10,000 more documents from the 1963-64 FBI files. In the way, answers, some 60 requests for data filed under the Freedom of Information Act.

The cache of documents released by the FBI after editing and cleansing is massive: 279 bound volumes of raw data in 12 cardboard cartons. If the last four assembling the materials was formidable, which it was, both in terms of cost (\$187,000) and long man-hour, as the FBI equally imposing was the exercise of digestion.

The media and the public did the best they could to cope with an avalanche of data that by dint of volume and incongruity, at least defied quick digestion. In a first-floor reading room at its J. Edgar Hoover headquarters building, the FBI provided space for hundreds of the documents. Three research analysts, led by William Shackleford, who spent the last 18 months assembling the documents, stood by to help.

Our collective thirst for answers in the work. Gaddie had found the north withstanding, there was not a hand-office anybody at the FBI reading room. Maybe and there were those who said so—it was that the skepticism seems too deep for most. Reporters and researchers sat elbow-to-elbow at long tables in the classroom-like space and pored over the papers, searching for most knew not what.

Shackleford stood next to the six tall file cabinets, where the fruits of his search reposed, and expressed a thought. "I think it all will point to the same conclusion—that Oswald was the lone assassin."

John Geddie was a reporter in Dallas when Kennedy was slain. Yesterday, as a Washington correspondent for The Dallas Morning News, he sat at the table and studied volume after volume from Shackleford's cabinet. "I'm mainly looking for changes in the volumes of information," Geddie said. "A good indication of the amount of work that was done by the FBI."

By Monday after a full morning of work, Geddie had found little that would be helpful. Rather, he said, he was going to get others in the room, he was more curious about what the FBI had not included in the collection. Behind him sat Psychiatrist Johnson McWilliam, an associate at Harvard's Russian Research Center, who "lived with it for 13 years" before publishing "Marina and Lee" the story of the Oswalds.

of Unrelenting Skeptics

we're taking a wait-and-see attitude," he complained, that, AIB and ordinary citizens who have a need to see the documents are crippled by the court. At 10 cents a page, the FBI was charging \$4,000.10 for a complete set of the first documents.

AIB has asked the FBI to provide a cost-free set of documents as a public service. The bureau hasn't answered. Cost was less of a factor for the large news-gathering organizations which mobilized and teamed up with each other to attempt the challenging mission of digesting the mass for deadline distribution.

The Associated Press, United Press International and NBC News each purchased its own set of documents. Newsday, the Long Island daily, bought a set and shared with other papers.

The Washington Post purchased a set, opened a ninth-floor conference room and, with reporters from other outlets joining in, put a team of readers to work to ferret out the news, the revealing, the fresh.

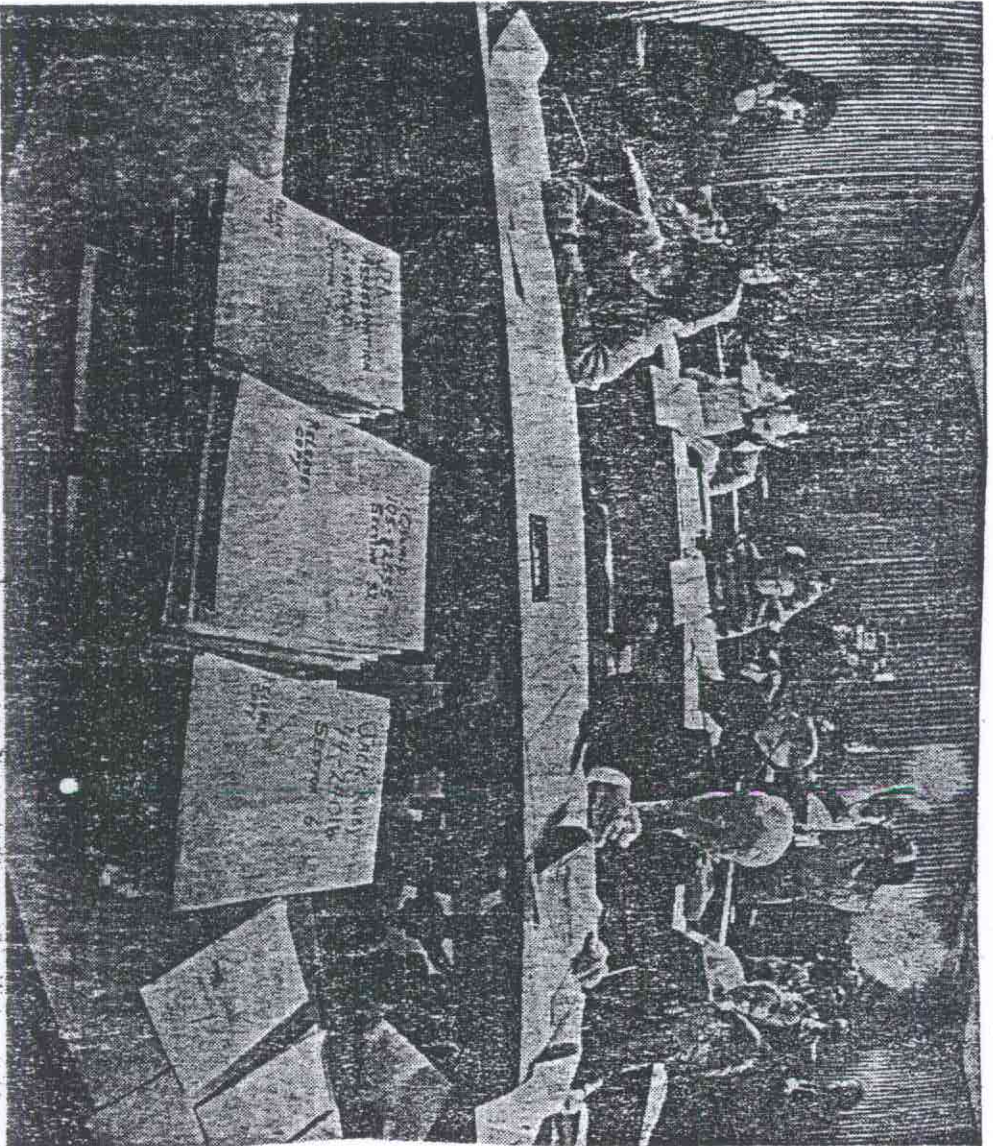
All for the answer, they found on page after page, a voluminous record of FBI investigation, very often down trails of disbeliefs, chasing tips from cranks and drunks and misled puzzle that beguiled and misled.

And through it all, the soaring persona of J. Edgar Hoover, responding to the tipsters, neatly brushing off the probes, thanking loyal and skeptical Americans for their concern.

Here, a Missouri boy urging examination of the contents of Oswald's stomach. There, a purported informant in Paris offering information for \$4,000 and two plane tickets to Portugal.

Now, a man in Argentina whose studies in "spiritism" gave him names and faces in Dallas. Then, memos from C. D. DeLoach, Hoover's right-hand man, fretting and warning about leaks in the investigation.

Harold Weisberg, a sort of father figure of the skeptics and the disbelievers, didn't even bother yesterday



Reporters read through documents released yesterday by the FBI on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

By Frank Johnston, The Washington Post