

Dear Jim,

Executive Session 1/22/76

3/21/76

I was able to read this through but once and that barely when I got it yesterday.

Again, lest us remember, in reaction to or in anticipation of one of our legal moves.

There has been too much for us to organize my thoughts on it. So, I record some as they come back rather than risk forgetting, which has become too common.

If I forget or don't have time to go into the things and possible correlations, at some point we should discuss them. It appears to me that there is a well-developed federal campaign to dump blame for all that is wrong upon the wings of the late saint. This transcript fits that perfectly. In this one, note, there is no single CIA reference although there was no time from the beginning when it had not been mentioned in those rumors.

The transcript is neither accurate nor complete. It was not made by a court reporter. Certainly the obvious thing would have been to get Ward & Paul to do it. It is fairly clear to me that this had been done within the archives by one not familiar with Warren material. Thus the misspelling of Rankin as "Rawkin" throughout. I take this as a misreading of stenotyp tapes.

One of the gratifications to me is that Dulles saw exactly the Oswald role in SA & FBI service I did, to use his past and to build it up so he could penetrate RFUC and related groups. In this connection, I'm fascinated that Dulles also postulates Oswald could have served SA & FBI in Russia, where O & is more likely.

Ford's awareness and understating of the improbability of Oswald's having genuine Communist belief bracketed with understanding that what Oswald was known to have done far from acting as someone's agent is quite pointed, very clear.

I suggest particular care to the Rankin of this session as contrasted with the Rankin of all others. Here he lays it out as it actually was. For the last time except where he has a purpose to serve.

They all knew what Hoover was doing to them. They understood it clearly and spelled it out. The passages I read seemed to fascinate McKinley (no callback, which could indicate higher-level decision or consideration). This initial understanding differs from earlier indication of it in its explicitness only. That, of course, is significant. But don't make the mistake of thinking that it was this alone that informed them what Hoover was up to. Katzenbach's appearance as I recall the transcripts that I read more than five years ago certainly embodied fairly full recognition of the role Hoover was playing.

This one, however, is the turning point. They knew and they accepted, as the 1/27 one shows they knew what could not and should not be accepted only to do and accept only that which they knew they should not and could not.

There is a fair amount of dishonesty in this. I'm not sure whether it can be attributed to Hoover's holding back on them. The stories had appeared long before this session yet they had ignored them. Here they display what can be taken as a lack of knowledge of what had appeared, even of names not secret. The most natural thing would have been for Rankin to ask for an immediate callback on the names. I can't imagine Henry Wade not knowing about the stories or not asking Alexander for the names. You now know Bonnie's version of how well cued in Alexander was. (His evaluation of Alexander as a prosecutor is enormously exaggerated and probably reflects their friendship.)

Their internal evidence on when the transcript was made can lead to contradictory conclusions. I have a hunch that it was made about the time they gave me the 1/27 transcript. There are considerations they could have had in mind that we have no way of evaluating, as excitation of the attention to the focus of the O'Toole book.

I'm inclined to doubt that it was transcribed as soon as they got your letter but it is a clear possibility. The actual transcribing is not that big a job. What makes me tend to doubt this is that it has FBI DC/RAI stamps. There would have been no need for them if the transcription was made after the decision to declassify. On the other hand, they could have put them on and crossed them out either because the original classification covered the notes or to cover themselves. I am not certain, either way.

Why release it so fast, when we make the first steps toward forcing it? Why not let us do more work, waste more time? This suggests, of course, that they want it used, one of my fears yesterday! they'll see to it that it is used because they no want, which can take the edge off proper uses.

If I am correct in this then they welcomed your letter. With surveillance they could have been waiting it.

By the way, funny things not duplicating the rest happened to my phone last week. I had enough experience making and repairing radios as a youth to recognize these as make-and-break sounds, typical of wires being connected and not making good or solid connections. Since then no repetitions. Perhaps there was a repair being made somewhere along the line. No way of knowing. They are the kind of sounds you'd expect if wires were being connected, not from plugs being inserted at a switchboard.

Please remember that they never informed me of the existence of the stereotype tape although I did request the transcript. While by itself this may have no significance in law combined with other things it may.

As I told you last night it appears to be my destiny to do an enormous amount of work and on schedule to be screwed, whether by a government or a mad or stupid publisher or a firm. You are not part of this. I think it best that there be awareness and as much acceptance as possible so that the unwanted consequences be reduced to the minimum and we be able to operate as effectively as possible. With this, while I've still not been able to think it through clearly, I tend toward making proper use as fast as possible. My hunch is to give it to Shuren and to let the city wire know in advance so we can be picked up on leaving. This may mean contact with Burke Marshall, I'm not certain. I don't know if he is there or a consultant, a garageless, this is the right approach. He might take a copy to Don Gonzales, who fell silent after an initial approach to me. Not Gonzales. Maybe Abzug too. Or first. She also did not respond. Nor did Seltzman. Please think these through and form your own opinion. I can be in DC Sunday by noon. This will give the entire afternoon. I'll try to get some duplicate made today. This morning, really, when I take Bill to work.

Remember also that this is but one of the many developments that is going to jam us up even more and prevent production. There has been a continuing problem since. Once again I see it as meaning more of my interests will go by the board.

It appears likely that the debates on meaning of I and M's role may have been what may have compelled a new executive-branch approach that the need to use Hoover as the lone goat coincides with. But the spectro matter is, I think, pivotal. I think it went down in the executive branch team that they could not withhold that particular file from me. They probably took it as a declaration or a sign that they could no longer pull the stuff of the past and have to behave differently. To the extent that disclosure serves immediate purposes they'll disclose while they'll try to withhold what is most important to them, like the real spectro results. This is why I suggested that we consult with Herb.

In any event, this is a changing time and we'll do well to try to adapt and be ready.