

FBI and press- FBI and control

On 11/25/63 DeLoach undertook to persuade the WxPost, through its v.p. and managing editor, Al Friendly, not to run a planned editorial espousing establishment of a Presidential commission. DeLoach represented his call as "a matter of grave concern" and he quoted Hoover as saying that such a commission would "muddy the waters." DeL said he thought a commission " would merely serve to confuse the issue." Friendly promised him that the editorial would be eliminated. Then Friendly called back to say that the final decision would be Editor Wiggins'.

Katzenbach, who in fact has strongly urged establishments of such a commission, offered to phone Wiggins to persuade him not to run the editorial and did!

Memorandum

TO : Mr. Mohr

DATE: November 25, 1963

FROM : C. D. DeLoach

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT

For the Director's information, I talked with Al Friendly, Vice President and Managing Editor of the "Washington Post and Times Herald" at 10:50 AM this morning.

I told Friendly that I wanted to be perfectly honest with him, however, I must insist that our conversation remain completely off the record. I mentioned we had had numerous cordial arguments in the past and the fact was well established that we usually had different points of view on most matters. I mentioned that the purpose of my call, however, was a matter of grave concern and I felt certain he would recognize this fact. Friendly agreed and stated our conversation would be maintained strictly in confidence.

I told Friendly that apparently there had been a "leak" to his paper to the effect that a "Presidential Commission" had been suggested to look into the assassination of the President and the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald. I mentioned we had received information indicating his paper planned to prepare an editorial strictly affirming the necessity of a "Presidential Commission." It was mentioned that such an editorial would be most unwise at the present time. Friendly interrupted me at this point and stated he did not personally know whether this had been a "leak" or merely the idea of one of their staff members. He affirmed the fact an editorial was being considered.

I told Friendly I had just conferred with the Director regarding this matter and wanted him to know that such an editorial on the part of his paper would merely "muddy the waters" and would create further confusion and hysteria. It was mentioned that the President had personally asked the Director to have the FBI conduct a full investigation both into the assassination of the President and into the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald. I told him Mr. Hoover was personally supervising these investigations and that reports would be submitted to the Department of Justice and to the White House in two phases: (1) the assassination of the President and (2) the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald. I mentioned that Mr. Hoover had seen to it that the best trained men in the FBI were on these investigations and that our inquiries were proving to be swift and intensive. I told him no stone is to be left unturned. I further told him that the President had additionally discussed this matter with the Director today and that the

- Enclosure
- 1 - Mr. Belmont
- 1 - Mr. Rosen
- 1 - Mr. Evans
- 1 - Mr. M. A. Jones
- 1 - Mr. Morrell

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Director had assured the President that thorough investigations were proceeding at full speed. I mentioned to Friendly that our investigation would include and lay to rest any rumors of substance that had been flying around with respect to the two matters. I mentioned to him also the fact that the State of Texas was concerned with the matter and was conducting inquiry. I told Friendly that, as a matter of personal interest to him, our investigation into the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald would determine the adequacy of security given to Oswald and that the facts, regardless of what they might be, would allow the Department of Justice to determine whether a Civil Rights violation had occurred. Friendly replied he was most interested in this phase.

I mentioned to Friendly that considering all the above, an editorial by his paper suggesting a "Presidential Commission" would merely serve to confuse the issue. I told him it was hoped that he would understand our viewpoint in this matter and would, therefore, eliminate the editorial.

Without any hesitation, Friendly told me the editorial would be eliminated. He stated he would, of course, have to mention this matter to Russ Wiggins, the Editor, on a confidential basis. I told him there were no objections to this, however, Wiggins should specifically understand my reasoning in approaching him, Friendly, in this manner. Friendly stated there would be no misunderstanding. Friendly added that while he would respect our viewpoint, he sincerely hoped I would bring to the Director's attention the need for some outstanding group or body of men affirming and issuing the FBI report other than the U. S. Attorney General or that "boob" (Waggoner/Carr) who calls himself the Attorney General of the State of Texas. Friendly mentioned he had every confidence in the Director and the FBI in conducting a fair and impartial investigation. He added, however, if the FBI investigative report was issued by either the Attorney General of the United States or the Attorney General of the State of Texas, the report would bear little weight in later suppressing rumors, ill-advised books, making a martyr out of Oswald. I told Friendly that in view of his cooperation, I would, of course, bring his personal thoughts to the attention of the Director and I felt sure that the Director would mention this to the President if the occasion arose. Friendly reiterated his confidence in the FBI and he stated he was glad to be of service.

The Director was advised of the above facts and specifically of Friendly's commitment not to print the editorial.

Friendly called back at 11:30 AM. He stated he had thought the matter over (he obviously had talked with Russ Wiggins) and wanted to let me know that while he agreed with some of our viewpoints, he could not make any definite commitment. He stated this was a matter for Wiggins to decide upon. I told him in view of his statements

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during our previous conversation, I thought the decision had already been made not to publish the editorial. He stated that had been only his personal opinion, that after all his paper had an obligation to the general public. I told him I was not asking him to suppress anything but merely to listen to a point of common sense during a very trying time. He stated this was all very true but we should recognize that his paper had an obligation to print what was felt might be the best for the general public. He indicated that no decision had yet been made concerning the editorial and in all probabilities it would not be printed, however, he did want to let me know as of this time no definite commitment could be given.

This, of course, is the usual "hogwash" on the part of Wiggins who cannot be trusted and usually attempts to run opposite good judgment in order to satisfy his own ego.

The Director was advised immediately of the above facts.

I went over to see Guthman at 12:05 PM. Guthman was told that apparently there had been a "leak" to the "Washington Post and Times Herald" in connection with the "Presidential Commission" idea. I asked if he knew how this had come about. He replied that Jim Clayton, a reporter for the "Washington Post," had contacted him this morning and had referred to an article in today's issue of the "New York Times" by James "Scotty" Reston which specifically recommended a "Presidential Commission" (column attached). Clayton asked for comment from the Department of Justice and Guthman told him he had no comment to make, that the FBI was apparently conducting an intensive investigation and nothing could be said until the FBI investigation had been completed.

Deputy Attorney General Katzenbach was in Guthman's office at the time of my conversation with Guthman. After hearing our conversation, Katzenbach asked my opinion as to whether he should personally call Russ Wiggins. I told him it was entirely up to him. I asked him how well he knew Wiggins. He stated he hardly knew him at all. I outlined briefly to Katzenbach the results of my conversation with Al Friendly, the Managing Editor. Katzenbach stated he knew he could not trust Wiggins but he would give him a call.

Katzenbach called Wiggins at approximately 12:20 PM. He told Wiggins he felt that all facts should be, of course, made available to the public but that the Department of Justice seriously hoped that the "Washington Post" would not encourage any specific means or instrument by which these should be made available to the public.

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Wiggins stated he, of course, could make no commitment to not write an editorial, however, that the conversation that the FBI representative had previously had with Friendly, the Managing Editor, had merit to it and he was inclined to go along. He stated he would give the matter serious consideration.

ACTION:

This matter will be followed closely.

*J.M.*

*[Signature]*

*V.*