

S. F. EXAMINER & CHRONICLE

12/18/77 P. W8

# FBI Records on JFK Released

ALMOST half a ton of documents—40,001 pages' worth—was released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation last week in the latest chapter of the continuing debate over what really happened to President John F. Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas.

The late FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover, apparently had prefigured the findings of the Warren Commission: Lee Harvey Oswald was believed to have shot the President to death from a perch on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository building overlooking the fatal parade route.

That conclusion was reached by Hoover, the surrendered records indicated, as soon as two hours after Kennedy's death had been noted in a Dallas hospital (and before the Warren commission had convened, let alone decided to accept the FBI's findings).

The bureau documents, made public through a suit under the federal Freedom of Information Act, also revealed more ambiguous indications of Hoover's attitude toward the assassination.

In a memo to his chief aides

on Dec. 12, less than three weeks later, Hoover had reported details of a conversation with Lee Rankin, general counsel for the investigating Warren Commission, on the possibility that the killing had been the work of a conspiracy, instead of a single gunman.

"I said I personally believe Oswald was the assassin," the memo read, "that the second

**'Leave nothing  
that could lead  
to your trail'**

aspect as to whether he was the only man gives me great concern; that we have several letters written to him from Cuba referring to the job he was going to do, his good marksmanship and stating when it was all over, he would be brought back to Cuba and presented to the chief.

"We do not know if the chief was (Premier Fidel) Castro and cannot make an investigation because we have no intelligence operation in Cuba."

The letters in question, written to Oswald in Spanish from Cuba, had been obtained by the bureau after their initial conclusion; but, aside from a seemingly incriminating style of reference to Oswald, they offered no real revelations. Although dated 12 days before the assassination, one key letter was postmarked six days after the deed—lending enough doubt to its authenticity that the FBI apparently drew no hard conclusions about it.

Hoover's reaction, as evidenced in the released files, was: "I urged strongly that we not reach the conclusion Oswald was the only man."

The letter in question, translated by FBI agents, had addressed Oswald as "Friend Lee," and read in part: "After the affair, I am going to recommend much to the chief. I told him you could put out a candle at 50 meters. Leave nothing that could lead to your trail and when you receive my letters, destroy them as always. After the affair, I will send you the money and we will see each other in Miami as always."

"(Signed) Pedro Charles"  
Bureau personnel suggested the letters might have been



HOOVER

written after the assassination, by headline-seekers.

The documents released constituted half the Kennedy file, and their availability drew only about 50 persons to an FBI briefing room in the Washington headquarters of the bureau. The other half of the material, in the process of being ordered for viewing, would be tendered for public and the press—who made up the preponderance of the open-night audience—in January.

Said a spokesman: "I really don't think there are going to be any major new revelations from this new material, any more than there were in the material just released." It would relate largely to reports that new "tips" would reveal

new information about Kennedy's death.

"If somebody jumped up out of a rose bush last month—or let's say last year, since these things are becoming more infrequent—and said he knows who did it, we (would) check that out and that will be included in the material," the spokesman added.

Meanwhile, other FBI files forced into the light by the Freedom of Information Act (in this case, a suit brought successfully against the bureau by a host of news organizations) continued to show FBI methods of psychological counterespionage work against the Black Panther party, from 1968 to 1972.

Apparently reasoning that the ends justified the means, FBI tacticians produced such examples as these:

• San Francisco agents reported having persuaded city police to accord an arrested Panther special privileges in jail, so that his party familiars would believe—unfairly—the man was an informant.

• In early 1970, the local office had Washington produce phony Panther stationery in the FBI laboratory; the paper was used to write "expulsion" letters to 60 Panthers in three cities.