

O'Toole/Fensterwald NYReview promo for O'Toole's book HW 3/26/75

Not until tonight did I see the AP story as printed in an unidentified Chicago paper March 19. I have not yet seen the NYReview piece.

The head is faithful to the story: Bare photos of fake 'Oswald."

The story says this is a fake Oswald: "a man who identified himself as Lee Oswald [when he] contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City."

The story also says O'Toole was part of the FPI suit.

What the story and I presume the article on which it is based do not say is that the faking was by the CIA, which originally represented this as a picture of Oswald and as I recall later said it was an error.

I recall no statement in any record saying that this man represented himself as Oswald.

Nor can I imagine a man so unlike in every way, obviously looking nothing like Oswald save that both are not women or dogs, even dreaming of pretending he was Oswald.

So we have what can only be help for the CIA, regardless of what the original NYReview article says.

The major national attention was to a fake that exculpates the CIA. Did it ever need this more?

And what else does O'Toole's book and all those appearances I've caught do?

Precisely this.

If the reporters had compared these pictures with those published by the Commission they'd have concluded that what is cropped out of the Commission versions has and can have no relationship to either the identification of the man or his alleged claim to be Oswald.

What might have been of other interest - other than the CIA's misrepresentation - is that the CIA claimed national-security need to crop out what it later gave up without trial, what from examination had nothing to do with any reasonable allegation of national security.

This, naturally, is not in the story.

It is almost impossible to imagine a weaker claim that this "impersonation of Oswald eight weeks before the assassination" is reason "why the case should be reopened."

The effect of this miserable nonsense is to persuade those who might have some influence on a possible reopening that there is no basis for it.

Even with Bud's record this is terrible bad stuff. Despite this incredible record of only stupidity, irrationality and incredible claims it is not impossible to attribute Bud's participation in this awful stuff to his longing for importance on the subject and his hunger to get all this kind of publicity.

With what O'Toole has been doing this generosity can't be extended to him.

This is a story that is good CIA public relations. It is also bad public relations for any criticism of the official fiction on that assassination (and all others by not unreasonable extension.)

It and O'Toole's book and all the attention to it came at the moment of CIA's greatest need.

Attention: Policoff says that the full page NYTimes ad was duplicated in the LA Times and that billboards in both cities are plastered with book promos.

I see no convincing explanation of other than intent for this exculpation of the CIA, this p.r. for it, and if I don't assume the most sinister with regard to Bud, I certainly do not have basis for saying it is impossible.

In the end I decided to phone him yesterday, after much agonizing over it. He was glad I did and when I outlined how I've arranged to handle the transcript he agrees it is the one way that could serve all interests and that it preserves their options for them. They are bound to nothing and open to everything except the initial break.

I'm to hear from him on when he'll begin the interviewing and fact collecting some time this week. Balt. Sun to come for photos also this week. (Interesting reaction/response from this previously unknown reporter who had some of my dim past in mind to ask me about when I asked him if after thinking about the interview there remains anything else he needs. It is that "I got exactly what I wanted. However, I do not anticipate an ax job.) A large Sunday play at about the time of the break on this transcript will be helpful if it is a good one.

Jim is upset about being foreclosed from so legal moves he'd planned on the Ray case, a motion for a rehearing. It is attributable to two problems: his lack of experience and familiarity with all the aspects of appeals procedures and the total abdication of publicity-hogging senior counsel who have never done any of the real legal work. Bud is off vacationing again, having found he needed a vacation after doing a long brief for a millionaire client. He did nothing before the hearing (his then vacation was Russia) and nothing after it in preparation for the decision. There were then moments to think it through, do some work and guide Jim.

Instead he was having fun after each burst of work and defeating all the arrangements I'd made. It has taken me until now to undo that, a considerable waste of my time, hurt to Ray and interference in what we could have accomplished. I had it set up in October. It is now the end of March. You have some idea of the amount of time and emotion it required just to get back to where we were. And so much else could have been advanced by that going well, as it then should have.

Reur 3/17 attached to the extra copy of the ChiTrib Squires piece: I see more in it that you suggest. Squires, remember, was part of the Seigenthaler team and that kooky book. In addition, I see what had as its most probable source Oswald in New Orleans and awareness of WW IV in that piece. I thus also find the timing interesting, as I do the extensive Potomac mishmash of yesterday. Potomac's handling was in the works for months. Paul Valentine was originally part of it. He then told me that Henry Allen would be in touch with me on it. Since silence. If the Squires thing can be laid to the current Gregorian chants and what interest they have generated, Potomac can't be.

I'm toying with writing Bradlee again.

Thanks again and best,

3/24/75
to JAW