

Pressure on RFK to get  
him to endorse uncommitted  
Report - blackmail

The draft of Robert's reply, also prepared by Willens, is word for word the letter he signed under date of June 12 and later was published, save for a blank in the draft for the date.

The blackmailer gave his receipt. Willens wrote Katzenbach on June 12 enclosing a copy of the letter Warren had signed. He also said:

In light of our discussion on Thursday, June 4, 1964, I have prepared a proposed response to this letter from the Commission. The letter is completely satisfactory to Mr. Rankin and the Chief Justice, and the Chief Justice feels that such a response will eliminate any need to call the Attorney General as a witness before the Commission.

(This barely-visible initialing appears at the left edge of the page: )

Here it is spelled out a little more clearly, for it was never intended that any outside eyes would see it: Robert's signature "will eliminate any need to call" him "as a witness before the Commission".

A "witness" who knew nothing, to the Commission's own knowledge knew nothing - who depended upon the Commission and the FBI for all the hearsay he heard - but possessed of the magical name.

The letter extracted from him by this blackmail has a greatly modified version of what Willens' June 4 memo discloses of Robert's sources. It makes no reference to his having gotten nothing from Hoover, and does not even say that he knew only what he had been told. Instead, that comes out as "I have, however, received periodic reports about the work of the Commission" from Warren, Katzenbach and Willens.

The endorsement lies in this language (from which, if later quoted, the first four words could easily be omitted): "Based on these reports, I am confident that every effort is being made by the President's Commission to fulfill the objectives of Executive Order No. 11130 by conducting a thorough investigation into all the facts relating to the assassination."

Considering that he had no knowledge at all, it was no problem for him to agree to say "that I know of no credible evidence to support the allegations that the assassination of President Kennedy was caused by a domestic or foreign conspiracy."

The Commission was taking no chances. It started getting that Kennedy imprint early. The Commission was anything but "now in the process of completing its investigations" on June 4. It did not take its last testimony until September 15. The sole purpose of this lie was to lean on Robert more heavily.

And even then, he delayed answering until August 4.

Politics and public relations, it seems, were as important as fact or evidence. The Commission wanted acceptability, not solution. To get this, it was willing to do and did do whatever was necessary. If that meant blackmailing Kennedy, was not its pure purpose nobility itself - "solving" the crime of the century?

With regard to the medical evidence in particular, the government has always traded on the Kennedy name. Despite what necessity compelled of them, the Kennedys tried to and did stay away from any involvement in the investigation. Stripped to essentials, what they did say, except for Robert's last words, was no more than that they had confidence in the government and the eminences.

Did not almost everybody else?

Robert cannot now explain the almost two months it took to sign a letter already written for him, especially when the Commission informed him it was practically under the gun. However, whatever apprehensions he may have had, the language arrived at after negotiation by Katzenbach really commits him to nothing - were he around to read it

information have been the Chief Justice, the Deputy Attorney General and myself." It thus becomes obvious that the threat to have him "appear as a witness" is crude blackmail, exploiting the great pain that would have caused.

The letter Willens prepared for Warren's signature reads:

DRAFT

Honorable Robert F. Kennedy  
Attorney General of the United States  
Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C. 20530

Dear General:

Throughout the course of the investigation conducted by this Commission, the Department of Justice has been most helpful in forwarding information relevant to this Commission's inquiry.

The Commission is now in the process of completing its investigation. Prior to the publication of its report, the Commission would like to be advised whether you are aware of any additional information relating to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy which has not been sent to the Commission. In view of the widely circulated allegations on this subject, the Commission would like to be informed in particular whether you have any information suggesting that the assassination of President Kennedy was caused by a domestic or foreign conspiracy. Needless to say, if you have any suggestions to make regarding the investigation of these allegations or any other phase of the Commission's work, we stand ready to act upon them.

On behalf of the Commission I wish to thank you and your representatives for the assistance you have provided to the Commission.

Sincerely,

Chairman

This did not suit Rankin, who wrote on Willens' June 4 memo to him, "Please modify as indicated." Something happened. Were I to guess it is that they tried to take some blood with Robert's flesh and to that he would not agree. Willens annotated his own memorandum returned to him with Rankin's instructions, "Done - HPW 6/8/64." But the letter to Robert was not changed. The undated "DRAFT" in the Commission's files is word for word identical with the copy mailed June 11. The carbon of this letter in the Commission's "GAI Justice" file indicates it was actually written by Willens on June 6, not the 4th, 8th or 11th.

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