

Dear Marc and Ralph,

12/26/71

In my earlier enclosed memo I raised a question about the completeness of the historical material available to or drawn upon by the historians who compiled The Pentagon Papers, of the commentary thereon, etc. I have since writing that read Chapter 5, on the Gulf of Tonkin affair, not the appended documents. Not knowing the state of your knowledge (but assuming it to be greater than mine), I add these notes I make no effort to organize. Several things from my own past come to mind.

In my work on the political assassinations, it has become clear to me that the major media have become, in effect, another branch of government. Bearing on this is a piece this past summer by Dick Harwood which makes clear that Wiggins ordained what could and could not be considered by the staff of the Post with respect to the SEAsia situation. Remnants linger in The Pentagon Papers.

The commentary is entirely inadequate and is, I think, knowingly inaccurate. It not knowing, then the editors didn't know their business and didn't do proper collateral reading.

Somewhere in my own notes made before we moved here more than four years ago and not since unpacked I have contemporaneous memos on the Gulf of Tonkin incident. It was, from what was in the press, obviously contrived for the now-clear purpose. The press reported enough fact for me to make this analysis. If I could see it, the big brains of the big papers, with their personal sources, should have seen it. I recall two of the factors that formed my opinion, the similarity in the appearance of the SVN boats now identified as 34A boats and of our own De Soto boats; and considerable doubt that the second attack actually occurred. With the second, as I now recall, after more than seven years (my notes were contemporaneous) one of the bits of evidence that formed my opinion was radical differences in official releases of exactly the same material having to do with the alleged second attack. Since then, of the books that have appeared, I have read only Joe Goulden's Truth Is the First Casualty. If understated to the point of obscuring, it still leaves little doubt, from what was available to the Times and Post staffs, that the second attack did not occur. Yet in the chapter I've just read it is alleged to have happened.

Also missing in any reference to CIA involvement in these marine expeditions north. It is fact, it was known, and if it hadn't been known, it could have been assumed.

A casual reading of this chapter would lead one to believe that it is a thorough exposure, for it makes clear the USG preparations for exactly what happened, for months earlier, then says that events eliminated the need to contrive it. Actually, the reality is much worse. For another example, the study to show Northern intrusion into the south. I have it. It was released by State with great fanfare saying it proved the case. The reality is the opposite. That study proves that as of that time there was no case. Virtually no single NVN soldier was found in the South. There were some from the South who returned, no more.

Also lost in this seeming honesty is a broader objective hoped for but not accomplished, Chinese reaction. I can discuss this with you some time. There is passing indication in Ch.5.

What I am saying includes that disclosures by the historians and The Pentagon Papers are not nearly as full or definitive as has been broadly assumed, are much less than they could and should have been, and that evidence that should have been available for the study seems not to have been from this book.

One of the more fascinating elements to me is McGeorge Bundy, particularly in the light of a subsequent task he undertook, getting wide attention to criticism of those who criticized "critics" of the Warren Report, including me. He insisted upon the publication of blatantly libellous material by an incompetent partisan and was seemingly infuriated



when a) no major magazine would touch it and b) even The American Scholar insisted that the demands of its lawyer with regard to libel be met as a precondition to consideration for publication. This is the work of a young friend, not my own investigation. I find myself wondering why McG Bundy should have been so insistent on the crediting of the incredible about how JFK got killed, and bracketting it in my own mind with his role in JFK's Southeast Asia policies.

Despite the fact that McNamara ordered this study, there is no reason to assume that all files were open to his historians and there is reason to assume that some, by then, might no longer have existed in the customary repositories. Again I draw upon my experience of the past, in part to illuminate the military mind.

One of my roles in intelligence in World War II was an outpost job. Captured German and Italian documents passed through my hands in D.C. They started disappearing as fast as they were captured. Some started disappearing before they could be taken. Of the latter, with due allowance for the passing of so many years, I am pretty confident this includes Nazi Party files captured by American forces in what had been agreed to be Soviet territory inside Germany. Rather than let the Soviets have these valuable files, our military burned them. Immediately it began telling State it could not find certain Foreign Office files. I remember one case when I was away for the weekend, was first reached by phone and then rushed back to Washington. Someone in Intelligence at State, as I recall, Sam Klause, sought some of this captured Nazi Foreign Office material. The US Army actually reported the files had not been captured. They had been and I was able to pinpoint where they then were, I think in a salt mine at Warburg.

Pursuant to subsequent US policy, some of the Italian files have never been publicly disclosed, although by now they should have been. There is the alternative that they attracted no attention. One I recall clearly is a letter from the Italian ambassador in Rioaragua in which he reported Garona calling him in to request an exposition from Mussolini on how he did it. Another is the disappearance of some 25 suitcases of material captured with him when the partisans took Mussolini. I traced the microfilm of this to the Pentagon. There it disappeared. There was an economist on a regular government agency who had some knowledge of this, a Frenchman whose name, if I can recall it accurately after the passing of so much time, is Jean Pajus.

If this kind of thing could happen with an enemy's files, what cannot with the military's own?

The Gulf of Tonkin affair bears so strong a resemblance to the Nazi S.O.F. I would hope that at some point some scholar might devote himself to a study of how our military benefitted from the precepts of Adolph I.

Reading this stuff reminds of of the nicknames my wife long had for Rusk and LBJ when she saw them on TV: Porky Pig and Uriah Heap.

With the seeming intent to expose, I find myself wondering why the original scholars and then the papers felt it necessary to hide so much of the quintessential Gulf of Tonkin affair when they simultaneously made so much available and what is now available is so clear. I suppose with the scholars the simplest explanation is that this was so new and startling to them, so radical a departure from their pasts, that they just failed to grasp all of it. But the truth is much worse than their exposure of it. With the editors it is less easy to believe this. Remember Clifton Daniels and the Bay of Pigs? He never would give me the full text of that speech. Didn't even answer my letter.