

file Russell

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Dear George,

Perhaps you remember that in my FOIA case before Gesell I argued that the manner in which those general releases was staged ~~guaranteed~~ it would be a government media event. I sent Rosenfeld the draft of an oped article about the current releases in which I said the same thing, Pincus's today's story to which you contributed illustrates the point I was making, the problem it becomes for the best reporters and how it is an impediment to real scholarship. *The mass.*

Besides this story all I've seen is what the local paper carried from the AP state wire.

I have no doubt that the phone records were reported with scrupulous ^W accuracy. But that does not mean that Johnson said what he really meant and the phone records are far from all.

There is also in this what the nuts, if they ever do any real research, can use to claim suppression by the Post to cover its own ass. This I think Pincus in particular should know about if I remember correctly, that some time ago you told me he would be working on the anniversary story with CBS. Not anticipating this but for your and the Post's information I suggested to you when you were here on Oliver Stone you should copy what I'd made a separate file of from DeLoach's machinations.

It was rather early Monday morning, 11/25/63 when the FBI knew that the commission proposal had been leaked to the Post, which went along with it. That file is complete enough on that and on DeLoach talking the Post out of that editorial of support. *Friendly & Wiggins*

In all I've seen, and I was interested in the commission ^{creation}, I have no reason to believe that Johnson wanted anything else at all from the time Katzenbach proposed it to him through Moyers. I am also certain that he knew Hoover would oppose it, as he did. But the records I've read indicate that while Johnson was leading Hoover to believe he opposed it he was in fact preparing to rush it alone. I think he used Fortas on that.

Now on the Russell part of the story, the phones would not be complete on that. I know of it only what Russell told me. He did not buy that foreign-threat line a bit. He could not have been more explicit in telling me that he believed Johnson's reason for wanting him on the Commission was to make it impossible for him to lead the fight against the civil-rights proposal(s). He also told me, "But I fooled ol' Lyndon. I ignored the Commission and led that fight."

You will, I think, remember that I learned that the record Russell and Cooper believed they were making of their disagreement with the single bullet theory that is indispensable to the Report's lone-assassin theory was frustrated, prevented by Rankin's

not having the court reporter there, instead having a staff secretary, and that Rankin had faked a transcript, I gave it to Russell. He asked me to ascertain that there was no real or any other transcript, I got that proof from the Archives and a letter so stating from the Archivist, gave that to Russell, and he never again spoke to Johnson and encouraged me until his dying day. *(Some of this in my coming book, NEVER FORGIVEN!)*

In Pincus of the Post wants more on the Russell end of the story today Russell's assistant was a young and bright fellow named as I recall Campbell. His person on the Commission was Alfreda Scobey. Last I heard of her she was of counsel to the State Appeals Court. Either one of them might recall, and then Chip Selby and his brother did examine that archive, or some of it. Chip is now with Unsolved Mysteries, the TV show, in Burbank, CA.

Johnson knew that Texas law required or provided for that Court of Inquiry. But nobody in Washington wanted that. The White House pretended to be all for it while doing all it could to see to that the TWI would amount to nothing. Jaworski helped it from the inside. I am not now clear on what Dea Storey, a member, ~~etc~~ told me about it but from what I saw in his SHW office it amounted to nothing in files, either. They did nothing, period, and their report is a farce.

The ^{White House} concern, about all the Congressional committees that could have gotten into it, some having gone public. Nobody really wanted that.

I am suggesting that from close to the outset Johnson was pretending he did not want a commission ⁱⁿ in fact he did. His real problem was immobilizing Hoover and he did that by pretending not to want the commission he was, with I think Fortas, preparing for.

I'll appreciate copies of these pages of the phone records, not for my writing, but to be able to read ~~and~~ for completion of the files I have on this, for archival purposes.

Best,

Harold

Russell also told me that when he left the White House ^{she thought} he'd talked LBJ out of appointing him and that he ~~was~~ ^{was} shocked to learn the next day he was on it. He told me he could hardly then resign, although he later did consider that several times. ...If there is interest, I think that Sylvia Meagher did more work on the TWI and the White House than anyone else. Her records are at Hood and I think it might permit use of all that has no copyright problem, letters of others.