

Vallee File

3/21/69

Dear Russ,

The lingering, tiring effects of a fever have slowed me down and delayed answer to your valuable letter of the 16th. which did arrive promptly.

There is much to the Palmer column. I may quote from it. It is consistent with what I have written and believe. Do you suppose he might develop an interest in this aspect of the case?

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Jerry Pipson's CDN story of 3/11 likewise contains quotes I have not seen in the perhaps half-dozen other sources I check regularly. I know I will be using that. When you see the book, again you will see that this is consistent with what I have thought and still do. (I have heard nothing about when copies will be available. They may not initially be delivered to me. If they go to another, who is in Washington, I have asked that one be sent you immediately.) Any by-line stories like these can be quite valuable. Even the AP stuff is being sliced where it is used. For example, my best source on the good series that where Gavzer is doing is a paper that does not even get the "A" wire. Most of the major papers either suppress or edit.

Before I get into the rest of your letter, I have now read the "Autobiography of Malcolm X". By accident, a copy was sent me with an awful collection of junk by mistake, instead of copies of OSWALD IN NEW ORLEANS. My illness has given me time to read four or five books. I think those who read it in the full flush of guilt-feeling when it first appeared would do well to reread it today. You may find my belief unwelcome, but this man was a philosophical fascist (which has no bearing at all on his assassination or who wanted it and was or was not responsible for it). He is firm, unchanging on this. The only changes he acknowledges are tactical, superficial at best. His mark is only to visible on the current irrationals. They take their doctrine from his. If you doubt me, I ask you to reread the book critically, making every passage that you think at all dubious. You will find the firmest dedication to der Fuehrer prinzip, pure Hitlerism in his attitude to women (which does not change). He tailors fact and history to suit his ^{needs} end and Haley, uncritically, repeats it. I also have and will read "Malcolm X Speaks". If I change my mind, I'll let you know. I do not expect to. That he could ever go for that Elijah Muhammed or his shit is in itself a sufficient indictment, yet he maintains his confidence to the end.

Corley's story sounds more than credible. In those days everybody sought Oswald connections. His recollection of the small arsenal ground in Vallee's car is accurate. I cannot now locate the first two stories I got on this, back in early January 1967, but both, from two different papers, were consistent on it. The license number NY 3110RF means nothing to me, but I'll send it to those who have done an excellent job of isolating numbers. When Mike Hester's father, though a NYC police captain, told him there was "an FBI freeze on information about the license plate", he reported what happened in every similar case of which I know. The FBI foreclosed everybody and thereby kept control of what was and was not developed and reported. While I do not doubt his word, that the FBI told him the "freeze" was at the request of the Secret Service, I do not believe that at the time he spoke to the FBI this could have been true. The FBI was, by then, firmly in charge and the SS performed but minor, subsidiary rôles.

The lawyers who represented Valle could provide leads. And this is the sort of thing in which the Secret Service might have figured, to keep everything the way the government wanted.

I doubt he'll ever find his original Vallee material. That sort of thing was never overlooked, especially with the TV stations. It all seems to have disappeared, everywhere.

Can you get him to go further with his beliefs about the vigilantes? He may very well be right. I would be willing to believe that in Chicago they could be semi-official.

I will be following this further with the Archives and will keep you posted, if anything develops.

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There is an increasing tendency by the right to disassociate from the more extreme elements. I am helping. However, I have for too many years watched the unchanging spots of the leopard to believe he will suddenly make his own "conks". We'll see. My prediction remains that Eastland will try and make this a big, red deal. His own support would not want it. They want justification of what cannot be justified, their insane beliefs. He is true to the culture from which he springs. We'll see. His committee began that way, with Dodd and Butler, as I told you preparatory to your meeting Butler. These unimaginative wretches tend to repeat themselves and they genuinely believe that awful stuff they preach. I have no doubt that Eastland is capable of really believing the hit on King was "red". I would not be at all surprised if, after the Sirhan trial, they come up with Duarte. Nothing is ever bankrupt to them.

If I get to write the Archives in time, I'll include.

Our best to you both, and again thanks.

Sincerely.

3-16-69

Dear Harold,

Got your letter of 3/12 yesterday, and I still haven't answered the one from 3/4. You had asked whether the name in that ~~xxxx~~ CIA story could have been Leichner. It could have been. I expect to get to the library & the newspaper offices this coming week, as I have many things to look up, and I'll look that up. In this envelope I'm sending a few King articles that I've gleaned from the papers I had, and I'll get the rest of them to you by the end of the week.

I talked to Bill Corley from NBC, and it's long. I'll try to be as brief as possible.

Corley had just recently become news director here in November, 1963. Prior to 11-2 he had been extremely busy setting up for JFK's visit and so was very concerned about the cancellation of the trip. As he recalls, the White House issued a cover story saying that JFK had a mild cold. He said his years in Washington had taught him to be very suspicious of mild colds, but his suspicions were allayed, as he recalls, when a few days later there was some large change in the international situation. He said that change explained to his satisfaction why the president had had to remain in Washington; although that wasn't, of course, necessarily true. The first he heard of Vallee was an anonymous tip after the assassination, in which the informant said the real reason JFK hadn't come to Chi. was that someone was going to kill him here, and that he should look into Thomas Vallee. He at first thought the guy was a kook who called him, but as they checked into it he became interested. He felt that ~~xxxxxxif~~ there might be a connection between Vallee and Oswald, but even if there wasn't it was a story of local interest and had the interesting twist that here was a guy from the Right obviously planning to do the same thing Oswald did. He recalls that they devoted so much time and effort to the thing that he became the brunt of several jokes at NBC, other affiliates were joking that he thought he had the solution to the whole assassination.

He recalls that the initial foray for ~~xxxxxxxx~~ information gave him the facts that Vallee had been picked up with the 2,000 rounds of ammunition, a knife, and a small arsenal in his car; that the car had the New York license plate #311ORF, and other information that we have: military service, political affiliation, etc. He called NBC News in New York and asked them to check the license number for him. They apparently forgot to do it, and when he didn't hear from them for a couple days, he asked Luke Hester, who had come from New York, if he knew anyone. Hester's father was a police captain in New York City, and Hester said his father could certainly get it. Hester's father shortly afterward replied that there was an FBI freeze on information about the license plate, and that Luke would probably get a visit from the FBI about it.

Although Corley wasn't sure of the exact day, he remembers that it was a holiday, most like Thanksgiving (11-28), two FBI men went to Luke Hester's home and asked him why he was checking on that license number. Hester said his boss had asked him to do it, and the next day, 11-29-63, the agents went to see Corley.

Corley said that the interview was exactly as the FBI men had presented it in the report, with two exceptions. They did mention names in the interview, that's one. But the other is more intriguing. Corley remembers no such discussion as the freeze being placed on the license # because of some connection with Oswald. He recalls no such thing. As a matter of fact, he says he later talked to Marlin Johnson, FBI chief here, and Johnson only indicated to him that the FBI freeze on the license number was done at the request of the Secret Service. To his recollection there was no reason given for the freeze, and that's what intrigued him about it. He says he feels the statement by the FBI agent about that in the report was merely "him telescoping two or three things into one report."

He could add nothing more up until the time that Vallee went to court. He said that Vallee was represented by two attorneys, and as he remembers it they were not regular Criminal Court type lawyers, although he couldn't remember who they were. He said that when he was asked by the NBC management about the overtime devoted to that case he justified it by saying it was a story of local interest that involved a right winger planning to do the same thing Oswald, the left winger did. So there was no doubt in his mind that Vallee was planning to hit the president.

He said he tried to locate their original information on Vallee, but hadn't been able to find it. He said if they could locate it he'd let me know and I could look at it. He says as far as he's concerned he could find no link between Vallee and Oswald, but it's still an open case for him and if I find anything solid he wants to know about it.

He was not at all surprised at the tales of disappearing files, letters, and break-ins. He suggested I tighten my security. He added a new consideration, though, he said that there are now operating a number of self-styled vigilante groups -- right wing of course -- and that in his opinion they have the capability of breaking into my apartment and tapping my phone. He said he's hoping to catch one of these groups in action so he can nail them.

He said that he has no idea why the story was not reported before he got the tip, but wouldn't speculate about a blackout. When I pointed out that the FBI agent's interview with him was dictated on 2-2-69 and the first newspaper account was the next day, he said what probably happened was that the Daily News had a contact at the FBI office who told them that NBC was devoting a lot of time to this story, and they figured they'd better get on it, too.

That's about all for Corley. I talked to Henry DeSutter, finally, yesterday. DeSutter works for the Daily News. He said he'd try to help but didn't see how he could be much help. He didn't sound very interested, but then he was trying to get the idea over the phone, and I find this whole affair too complicated to explain on the phone. So I wrote him an explanation of what it was all about and a rather angry plea for his help; I think it'll change his mind about the urgency of the matter.


Something else occurred to me. The Daily News article says "Federal agents moved Tuesday to question a North Side man..." Now either they were in fact referring to the Corley questioning, or there is somewhere in the Warren Commission files an interview with Vallee. DeSutter may be ~~xxxx~~ able to supply the answer.

It was very good to hear that you'll be able to send a copy of the book. Do you want it back? I expect I'll be able to make a copy or two of the copy. I think that'll facilitate my talking to Bevel & Co. about it. I regard their whole scene and way of life as a political intrigue and hesitate to get personally involved with them for fear I'll kick one of them in the teeth. So simply lending them a copy of the ~~xx~~ mss. or parts of it would be much safer.

For what it's worth, I would agree with your predictions on Ray, etc., with one exception. It hasn't been played much in the press here, but a radio report that I heard the other day on the Eastland move indicated that he was ~~xx~~ planning to go into the question of a conspiracy ~~xx~~ on the right in the King assassination. So my analysis would be what I predicted to Butler when I spoke with him after the Conway Show and what I said in the revised final article of Who Killed Malcolm X: that perhaps Eastland and these other Right people in Washington have decided it's a propitious time to disaffiliate themselves from the Radical Right, and so now they'll start to hit the "extremists" of both sides while the dummies applaud their good sense.

Hope you're feeling better. We've been lucky. Although we've kept up a pretty brisk pace (not nearly as brisk as yours, though) all winter neither Lita nor I have gotten sick.

That's all for now. Say hello to Lillian for both of us.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Russ". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.