10/26/71

Dear Js,

Your long letter of the 20th and the copious enclosures could not have come at a better time, for while I've too much to do, I'm really too tired and for me disspirited (always passes off fast) to address any of it rqquiring close attention.

In summary, you understood well and explain the same way. My purposes in sending you an extra carbon of some of these thing are usually to inform you, just so you'll know what you can from them, and also because should something come to pass, you are the ones out there with political understanding and deep matureity to whom a few might turn.

Perhaps it will help your understanding of my concern if I add these things: of all those who can apply for the film, Cyril is the only one who can be really used against what we seek. And he'd most mess it up. He'd likely miss much, but it is of such a nature than, unless contaminated, it can't be messed up. I have the essence already written, and he knows the essence of that. Oartly, as I put it explicitly, the Kennedys will be hurt, but my greater concern is that truth be that much more difficult to establish. Nobody really believes LHO did it or did it alone any more, so official acknolwedgement of that, valuab le as that would be, would no longer be a big thing. My fear is that it could and would be used to exculpate those really responsible for what happened once the shorts were fired it not those who did the shooting.

I am in general agreement with your estimate of the odds. It is simply that I feel the potential is so terrible that no odds are long enough. I see what you do not as a counterforce: the need of the lower-level bastards to continue to hide what they did. These are the same as all those in the past have depended upon for their information. So, I think I see both sides, but I also see a terrible possibility, and that we should bring it on ourselves is the worst of all the possibilities.

I have not yet made a direct approach to the Kennedys. I may still. I have spoken to a Senator friend, whos adm. asst was to speak to his counterpart. I've heard nothing and I've not made up my mind whether I'll try further.

Although I was well aware that they might double-cross me, I did not anticipate the magnitude of the really dirsty business they pulled on my suit for damages going back to the ruin of our farming and of our helath, esp. Lil's. I went to bed a little before 11 last night, got up at 12:30, couldn't go back to sleep, so I dressed and worked until sometime after five, laid down and dozen about an hour and a half, and I've been working since, too wide awake to think of sleeping and too tired for much useful work. I did write the bastard a long letter, of which I made a carbon for you. I will make a record and seekx to use it in court. I think it will open the judge's mind, but it laos means two more years of wasted time and an enormous amount of new work to do, finding old witnesses who are god knows where, locating new expert witnesses without the funds for paying them, etc. I've made a few slight attempts to interest the ecologists, but they all do and have their own things. I'm getting the notion that with most of them a major part is personal attention.

The Jackson stuff is helpful. I didn't know he had started another book, and the Binghmm conjectures contain fact that interests and is new and is inconsistent with his going on the lam voluntarily.

One of the things that I hope distinguishes my work from almost all other is that I am never just talking about the crime committed. I think this was one of the initial hurdles never really scaled. If one adds thatto your faithful picture of the national character, you see the magnitude of the problem. Meanwhile, always hoping, I'm finished repaging all the but the last six of the first part of PH and Lil has finished posting, that is, typing for me to burnish in, the corrections in what will be the second. I&ll have to work backward from the last pages, where I finished mounting the corrections earlier, because of the flexibility permitted by a planned facsimile on the chance that it

can save a page. A younger man of means is due here Thursday. He is condensing the entire work in the hope of commercial possibility, and if that comes to pass will pay the cost of a private printing of the complete one. This is only one of the reasons I am anxious to get it all done. That is, ready for the camera.

With Cyril, I am aware that I went into great length because I was trying to give him an overall understanding of many things and I wanted him to do his own thinking. He appears not only not to have answered me but not to have consulted any others about the problem. Not to the best of my knowledge, anyway. It is only by means of using him that the c per can be pulled. All the other ways would have to be ruinous to the government. So much so that I think not even Nixon would do it for the immediate gain. And I think that under other circumstances, the DJ bureaucrats would lean on Mitchell enough to block it.

This is a new ribbon. I'll send you the carbon.

So, the danger has nothing to do with whether or not Cyril would flub the job, as I think he would not. The greater hazard would be if he didn't. He might miss much, but the essence I have already given him, and that he can't miss.

But can you imagine how this newest of an unending series of breaches of trust trouble me? I am constantly face with a choice between being a hermit or helping a self-seeker, always in the face of financial disaster. It gets pretty rough sometimes.

Excelsior: I know no one here I could get to translate. That part also interested me, but I didn't get the translation I asked for. I'll hang on until your friend returns. I thought the rest of the Chou comments might interest you, but I confess recalling nothing of what did appear in the papers here.

We also seem to stay pretty immune to colds. Long ago, when I saw the first add for the Dristan kind of thing, I decided to try the anti-histamine I'm to take for the bites of insects to which I react. Take at the first sign, they are about 100% effective. When I was young I always had both colds and headaches. Now I rarely have either.

Don't ake more time looking for the story on Garrison saying the government had made his DC suit moot. I have enough to cover what I've written and I know it is here, probably just misfiled in haste.

From the files you keep alone I have an indication of how busy you stay. Don't worry about the PH's, and if I do not get the thing printed, I now do have a supply of the two earlier parts and one of the new last that youmcan always have. I haven't yet sent it to PH and with my Cyril experiences, I think I may not now. It isn't that I don't trust PH, it is that I do not trust those he does.

Whether or not it is Rap Brown captured in NYC, the official stories there, as I get them from Post and radio, are changing. Radically.

Gota get to other things. Many thanks and hopes for quick end to sniffling.

20 October 1971

Dear Harold:

We have your mailings of the 9th, 12, 13, and 16th, and the main thing we wish to do is to say that there is much in your various letters and notes about Wecht and what he proposes to do; we understand your concern and depression.

If we don't share it to the same depth as yours, it may be due partly to our imperfect understanding of the situation. We gather that Wecht is about to take some legal action to gain access to the autopsy material and that you not only think this will be counter-productive at this stage but may be used politically against the Kennedy family, the Democrats in general, the researchers and investigators and the truth itself. None of this is spelled out very clearly in your various communications, many of them to people whose identity we can only guess, but this is the central impression we get. Your letter to Wecht, for instance, is so long that I can hardly imagine him paying it too much attention, and the copy sent here was so dim that we read it only with difficulty. This is not a complaint; the remarkable thing is that you find the time and energy to do all this and keep us clued in. I am simply trying to say that if the following comment is off base, it may be due partly to our not knowing precisely what is involved.

Having said that, I think the first thing to be said is that if there is a decision to use this politically, nothing you or anyone else can do can stop it. So fundamentally it is out of your hands. All you can do is what you have done -- try to stop the apparent central figure in the present move -- Wecht -- and do what you can to get word to the Kennedys. That, and keep your eye peeled for any other opportunity to influence any thing that may happen.

In our mind, Nixon is entirely capable of using a general revelation -- it won't be that, of course, but that's what it will be called -- as a campaign issue. His reversal on China demonstrates his extreme flexibility when it comes to principle, his fondness for government by headlines, and his tendency to plunge at times. (It's true that the China business is not, realistically or historically, as genuine a reversal of long-term American policy as it's made out to be; it's more like one faction of the ruling class regaining the upper hand in a sense and Nixon responding to that shift in control, for his own purposes.)

And in our mind it is also true that a general discrediting of the official assassination story could be used to clobber a great many targets -- The Kennedy mystique (what's left of it), Warren, Democrats in general, and even Hoover, although we tend to agree with you that he could be made to look good if the blame can be placed heavily on the Kennedy family. Even so, the word seems to have gone out that he's an embarrassment to the administration and more and more he seems to be coming in for open criticism by such fence-straddlers as columnists Evans and Novak.

And since 1963 we have felt that any candidate who wanted to respond to public feeling and satisfy the deep longing for just a morsel of truth now and then could win in a walk if he would seriously go into the most monstrous public lie of our times and expose the cover-up of the JFK assassination. We still feel this is possible, but less so with the passage of time.

And while we would be the last ones to give Nixon credit for more than the minimum, it would be naive to assume that this hack politician has not seriously considered the possibilities of using an expose for his own purposes, just as he has "saved" the China issue all these years for use as his very own.

We think one very important question is how much his political confidantes and advisers like Chotiner and Mitchell would go along with such a gamble -- and I think that is exactly what they'd consider it. He or they estimated correctly that the China thing was no gamble -- that fundamentally it would be welcomed both by the conservative right and the radical left, as it was, for entirely different reasons, of course. But we are not sure his advisers would come to the same conclusion about blowing the lid off the assassination, partly because they've have been a great many assassinations, some of which we are fairly sure about and some at which we can only guess.

The problem with such a gamble is -- where does it stop ? Who can say ? To be sure, there could be some control, but no one knows how much because no one knows, literally, how broad the field is.

But this is not the only problem. Blowing the lid off runs smack into something peculiar about Americans. How deeply this is rooted in our Puritan subciousness, our frontier experiences, our treatment of the Indians and the Negroes, and our earlier assassinations, no one can say. But to deny it's there is to deny one of the hardest realities about this country. We simply refuse to examine our past objectively and learn from it. Instead we force it out of our mind, probably because if we dealt with it we would dminish our own individual egos. Most Americans of our age know that several people were tried, convicted and executed for conspiracy after the Lincoln assassination, and that checks to John Wilkes Booth were paid out of a Confederate account in a Montreal bank, but these same Americans tolerate a school system which still teaches that John Wilkes Booth was the lone nut assassin.

This is a stainless steel curtain in the way of any great revelation. Certainly a lot of the books that have been written about the JF K assassination are faulty, but do you think for one moment that if there were any deepseated desire among the public to look at this thing as it is it would not have happened long ago ? Certainly not. As a people, we are adamantly determined not to look at these things long enough to do anything about them. We refuse the truth. We dare not, in other words, take a good look at ourselves.

This is a profound and universal thing about us. It accounts for the ease with which the establishment has smothered the truth and sold us a lie we find more comfortable to live with. Even a fink book like Epstein's raised enough doubts to set a normal adult population off on a tirade of demand that the truth be exposed, but no. Even sloppy jobs like Lane's enjoyed best-seller success -- and nothing happened. The true measure of the wall of public refusal to face the truth lies in the utter frustration the really good books -- like yours and Mrs. Meagher's -- encountered. In other words, the more effective the argument to get at the truth, the flatter it fell, the more completely it was ignored.

This is not an accident; it's a manifestation of something very powerful in American political life and I cannot imagine any realistic politician failing to take it into account. For that reason, we feel that even if Nixon wanted to take the plunge, his advisers probably would find ways to talk him out of it. No matter how superb a case could be made, I believe the instincts of a Chotiner would be to stay away from such a can of worms -- and no one is more ruthless or aware of the subtlest political breezes.

So it could boil down to just how desperate Nixon thinks he is going to be to find an issue on which to ride to re-election. At this writing, he's obviously not in good shape, but is in far better shape than any Democrat in sight. Our guess would be that if he does decide to use it, it would be to attract the youth vote, and there he would be on sound ground because the young people all know without being told that the assassination story is phony simply because it's a government story.

So as I suggested at the beginning, if Nixon decides to use it, he'll do so, and nothing can stop him. My guess as of now is that he won't feel the need, and therefore won't.

Wecht himself is another matter, about which we really can't have an intelligent opinion. All we can say is that if your indication of his motive is accurate, he is likely to flub the job, or at least come up with such an ineffective one that the establishment can, if it wants to, discredit it without too much trouble. If it's on its toes it may not even let him get started.

October 21 -- Time ran out on the above and I got sidetracked without finishing it. On reading it over, I'm astonished that I venture to comment on something I know so little about -- I mean the particulars of the situation that confronts you. It is just that neither of us here, on the basis of what we know, feel quite as concerned as you obviously do in spite of the fact that we do understand very well the general reasons for your concern.

There's only one other small item -- you say you've got the articles in Spanish from Excelsior on an interview with Chou En-lai. Our only interest in that was that Chou was quoted as commenting on the JFK assassination.... something to the effect that full story has not yet been told. If some Spanish-reading persons finds he said anything beyond that we would like to know it, but only if this should happen without any further effort on your part.

We have a Spanish teacher friend who at present is out of the country and who might possibly be interested in translating all or part of it when she returns. Hang on to it, if you will, and we'll let you know how she feels about it. We're not sure just when she'll show up. Anyway, thanks for letting us know it's been rescued from oblivion.

If all this sounds pretty dopey, it is. We both have turned up with verystuffy colds -- very unusual for us and we're ill-prepared to cope with such unaccustomed discomfort. We sound strange, even to ourselves, and I have no doubt all this will sound even stranger to you.

Various enclosures herewith are supposed to be self-explanatory.

Best from us both,

jdw

HW

A couple of times, at least, you have mentioned the possibility of sending us a draft of PM so we could read it and return it as soon as possible. We haven't taken you up on it for the simple reason that we have no time to do any extended reading on one subject in a hurry, and it would only subject PM to risk in the mails and further risk of delay.

We would love to read it, of course, but you'll realize how pressed we are for time and eye-energy when we tell you that never have finished the first draft of the first part you sent us, nor have we even been able to finish reading FU. Our problem is to try to keep on top of constantly arising questions with which we must deal immediately or watch them slip forever away. It's a hard choice to make, but one I'm sure you're most familiar with.

Thanks very much anyway for your thought, but we'd just be wasting your time and tieing up a copy and probably not be able to read it with enough attention. Perhaps the best thing would be to get a copy from PH if and when he reproduces it half-size. Toward this end, please give us the address we have for him, as I doubt if the one we have is current.

Again, many thanks.

jdw 21Oct71