

Wills

you ignore, Rankin stated that if the report of Oswald as an agent were true, people would "think there was a conspiracy" and "nothing the Commission did or anybody could dissipate." [sic]

Before any investigation? Before the Commission was even fully organized?

To former CIA chief, then Commissioner Allen Dulles, the mere thought was "terrible."

"Fantastic," the late Commissioner/Congressman Hale Boggs agreed.

"Terrific," was the rejoinder.

Uniquely in this case Hoover and the FBI reached a "conclusion": A lone "Red" assassin and no conspiracy. This was long before its investigation was completed and, as this Commission transcript shows, when they "have not run out all kinds of leads" besring on conspiracy.

Before the Commission got started, the late Supreme Court Chief Justice/Chairman said Hoover and the FBI "would like to have us fold up and quit."

Boggs saw it: "This closes the case, you see. Don't you see?"

"Yes, I see that," Dulles came back.

This is by no means the only time or place the Commission acknowledged in records it expected to remain forever secret that Hoover had the Commission boxed in from the outset. The fear of Hoover throughout the government and within the Commission is explicit in the January 27 transcript, too.

Following discussion of the FBI's foreclosing on any investigation and its atypical reaching of conclusions when that was not the FBI's practice or function and the bit about deciding there had been no conspiracy without investigation, Dulles said, "I think this record should be destroyed." Other records show that it was. Only someone overlooked the stenotypist's tape.

Illegally, as a federal court held, this transcript and others were classified "TOP SECRET." Where is that good conservatism and its sense of outrage over such official misconduct? Or the falsification by the executive agencies to keep these kinds of records suppressed? To keep them suppressed, the government alleged they held the kind of "national security" secrets that could start a war!

Unlike you, who rushed into print equating your prejudice with fact, I have been working on this for more than 11 years. Those transcripts had been illegally withheld from me since 1967. Do you believe this kind of information should be withheld from the people in a representative society? Or from lawmakers when it is a sui generis insight into how commissions and other bodies work when they believe they will never be found out?

When No less an authority than Allen Dulles (in the January 27 session) said CIA perjury is right and proper, the ultimate in patriotic dedication; that CIA people frame each other; that he would withhold information from the Secretary of Defense; and that the kinds of people the FBI and CIA use are "terrible characters," you libel me for bringing this to light in an entirely unpaid, decade-long effort?

So far am I from your "conspiratorialist" libel that I refused to change my first book to charge what you attribute to me when this was a condition of publication by a respected major publisher. That is what made me my own publisher. It was on precisely the question you raise out of context, too. Instead of yielding to promises of financial reward, I spent another ten years digging.

Five Freedom of Information lawsuits later, when I make the results of this work public without even getting back the cost of xeroxing, you assail me for making freely available only xeroxes of the document?

This is public indecency, not journalism.

C Is the late conservative Senator Richard Russell a "conspiratorialist" to you? He had his own doubts about the Warren Report. He encouraged my efforts to disprove it. One area of his doubt was exactly what these transcripts deal with and you misrepresent. He told me the executive agencies were neither fully informative nor truthful. I have official records in which he also said this, pointedly.

O If your interests included truth and accuracy, you would not have written so malicious and dishonest a column without minimum checking. With someone other than yourself, that is. You might even have read these transcripts.

The timing of this prejudicial column that in so many ways departs from traditional journalism and its norms, while it may be no more than coincidence, is a matter on which I desire to make a record between us.

P In November 1974 there was much more attention to my publication of the January 27 transcript which I had received earlier (C.A.2052-73, federal district court, Washington). AP, UPI and the Washington Post syndicated large and accurate stories. Despite much more extensive attention to the January 27 transcript, you did not find that worthy of your attention or comment, although that is the one transcript which goes into detail about that which you took out of fair context from the AP's accurate reporting of the January 22 transcript.

Y However, the first story broke prior to the disclosures of improper CIA and FBI activity and subsequent investigations.

The story you misuse was printed in the Sunday papers of May 18, after investigations of the FBI and CIA were under way and after an obvious campaign of misdirecting leaks, too.

You ignored wider-spread reporting when there were no charges pending against either agency, reporting based on another verbatim official transcript only. Then you suddenly become a partisan again only after charges against these agencies.

Now only you go into an alleged personal investigation for a book that makes you a partisan. You disguise this in your column. You do not go into any real investigation. If in fact yours was thorough, it had to tell you ~~that~~ neither transcript nor your column includes.

This begins with the certainty that the allegation of Oswald's connections was not fabricated as you say it was. It includes other

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details and the fact that, although the story earlier had been widely printed, the FBI had not given to the Commission reports of inquiries it had made. Or, the Commission lied. Take your choice. With only 10,000,000 words made public in 27 volumes, naturally there was no space for these FBI reports.

It seems to me that any reference to any opinion you hold of me is entirely irrelevant to the actual words of the members of the Warren Commission and the meaning the press independently takes from them.

It also seems to me that you owe me an explanation of this combination of the unusual. If it is only a pro forma denial that your column has no ulterior purpose of any kind. (Part of what you denied your readers is the Warren Commission's decision that it could not accept Hoover's pro forma denials, which is what it did. But no matter; I'll welcome yours.)

I ask that you have your syndicate send a copy of this letter to each of your subscribers. If you have a shred of self-respect, you will apologize to your readers if not to me.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

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