

Dear Jim,

1/11/74

Somehow "Operation Phoenix" stayed in my mind, which may have manufactured it, and thus late yesterday afternoon, just before leaving for Lil, I typed a note on it. On the slight chance there was a basis for it, I have not destroyed it.

Project Odessa is probably what I had in mind, and some of the comment I'd make on it I have made on "Phoenix."

Before going to bed I cleaned up the accumulated clippings I'd not had a chance to read. (The LA Times one on Ray is very helpful, having quotes I'd not seen elsewhere that we'll have to confront if we continue with him. There will be more on this.)

The first Hersh piece is very helpful and makes a confusing uncertainty more confusing and uncertain. I was correct in recalling that the alleged leak to the USSR was after publication of the Pentagon Papers began. Now why should anyone want to leak them after they are being published?

Of course it is possible that there were individual papers not included in what was given to the papers. But that would eliminate Ellsberg as the source and with it eliminate the whole White House rationale.

One of two other alternatives seems more likely: the whole thing was made up and there was no leak to the USSR or it was a deliberate leak, like by the Plumbers, for just this misuse. There is a broad hint of this in the writing I did about June, in advance and to be incorporated when I reached that point in the writing.

Hersh's conjecture that Odessa and Special Project M-1 may have related to the Ellsberg job seem reasonable. He attributes to "federal investigators."

However, he describes the missing graf of the 8/11/71 memo other than it had been, the earlier explanation being of the interception of the personal conversations between the top USSR leaders.

The peek into Kissinger's mind I'm inclined to believe political paranoid. One of the qualities that would attract it and him to Nixon.

I do find it hard to believe that the USSR would have a single man assigned for all the alleged years to Washington, have him be a US agent and not detected him.

The Szulc leak, the third page as you pasted this up, is another fascinating suggestion that he had a CIA hookup. Possible sources seemingly limited to CIA and WH and it was a payoff type of leak. Plus a policy-influencing one.

4th col, 3rd full graf, refers to use satellites in bugging. This was in the Chicago stories I sent you. Prior to seeing them I was unaware that there is this kind of use. It tends to make more credible what that source said about McCord's equipment.

Forgetting for the moment that any kind of contradiction serves GL's personal interest and that there are within it and with others some contradictions, this and the companion piece would seem to indicate all over again that there are many people in important positions who are willing to talk and that they include a fair percentage who are more than willing to say what GL and his remaining closer, like Kissinger, Haig, etc. do not want said. And if these kinds of people are willing to go farthur and debunk the essence of the Nixonian defense, I think it is a very good sign. Not that too much be made of it. Rather that too little not be. Among the things to can betoken is the willingness of some of these people to be witnesses in trials. This, of course, assumes a real investigation prior to any trials, the only way the willing can be located other than by their volunteering. Here I believe that what was already in the works before Cox was axed is irreversible, so there are possibilities. The radio and TV news reports today of a deal offered to Ehrlichman, not in the Post, may bear on this theorizing.