

11 January 1972

Dear Harold:

I think some of the enclosures take care of most of the things you bring up in your mailings of Jan. 7 and 8, but there^{are} a couple of things I can add a word or two on.

First of all, I don't know Earl Caldwell well, having barely met him, but it happened I was able to do him a favor at that time, and if he remembers it^{he} might be willing to discuss the Chavez threat. As I mention in a note appended to an AP story (which I had missed), the local press ignored the story and your mentioning of it was the first I'd heard of it.

We share your dismay about Dr. Lattimer, and a couple of early slippings on it are enclosed. Otherwise, the press has ignored it locally. We also agree with your feeling about the timing in relation to your own work, but are not altogether persuaded that this may be the principal factor at work. I may be mistaken, but my feeling is that every now and then the Keepers of the Myth simply feel they have to come up with another blow to the critics in order to demoralize them and refresh public euphoria. I haven't checked, but I would bet anything~~x~~ that these renewed doses coincide with the beginnings of political campaigns, and I seem to have heard somewhere that we are in the early stages of one. The purpose of this is to remind any candidate, in any party, that if ~~sh~~ he should be foolish enough to try to exploit political assassinations in a campaign, he will be running into a myth that is not only well established but which is going to be maintained. I say this partly because this is what I think has happened more than once since 1963 but also because of my conviction, which you well know, that any candidate who choose to exploit the assassinations as a political issue would, if he lived long enough, not only be tapping one of the deepest of all political wellsprings but also would encounter drastic opposition. Too many have a stake in the myth to allow it to be taken from them.

As for Dr. Lattimer, he showed in his early writings for the AMA and so on (copies of which we have, thanks) which side he was on, so he was a natural choice. The only question that really remains about him is whether he actually asked to see the evidence or whether someone suggested it to him. Your remarks about Burke Marshall's stated position on this whole question a few months before serves only to renew the suspicion we have entertained for some time about him, although this can be only a preliminary impression at this stage. The most charitable interpretation is that he was not consulted, or, if he was consulted, was overridden.

Perhaps we are being over-optimistic about Dr. Lattimer, but I think the fact that the Chronicle locally ignored his latest findings may be a fairly accurate index to the importance of his being allowed to see the evidence. The Chronicle has someone high in its policy-making -- who, I don't know -- who is a determined keeper of the myth. It is not like the Chronicle to ignore Lattimer if they think what he says is important.

It also seems to us that the medical profession itself is unlikely to pay too much attention to the pontificating of an urologist on a subject properly reserved for pathologists and ballistics experts and specialists in forensic medicine. There's another factor here that any doctor should realize, and that is that as head of a department of urology in a large hospital like Presbyterian, Dr. Lattimer cannot possibly have kept up with the literature in fields so widely divergent from his own. For 10 years Jenifer was secretary to the head of the department of surgery at the Peking Union Medical College. Herboss was an extremely competent surgeon, a hard-working man, and it was all he could do to try to keep up with the literature in his own field, let alone wander off into others. That was a teaching hospital, although a small one compared with Presbyterian, but if Presbyterian is also a teaching hospital, then the possibility that Dr. Lattimer has been able to make himself expert in fields other than urology is remote indeed. The volume of the literature that has to be kept up with has increased greatly, not diminished, in 30 years.

In any case, we thoroughly understand your feelings and your inclination to isolate yourself from others, something you have discussed before, but don't feel /we are well enough informed to try to advise you what to do.

There's one other thing that I'd like to say a bit about, and that is the phenomenon of the TV industry suddenly standing up for its rights, backing Jack Anderson's disclosures, and openly criticizing the Nixon administration. In the first place, there are only three networks. The industry is more compact in that respect than any other segment of the media, therefore more readily articulate. Tremendous money is involved, so decisions perhaps are required more immediately. And for another thing, TV -- and radio, too, of course -- are subject to FCC regulations which gives the government more leverage than against any other segment of the media. In other words, TV apparently decided that a stand had to be made and was able to get together and do something about it. Perhaps Anderson just came in handy. If it hadn't been he, something else could have been used.

Perhaps the relative immediacy of responsibility to the FCC makes TV somewhat more responsive, but it seemed here that the press gave Anderson surprising play. As you mention, not only the Washington Post used his stuff; so did the New York Times, the AP picked it up, and a conservative rag like the States-Item gave it full play, as did the local SF Chronicle, which, like the S-I, is an Anderson subscriber. Even the Examiner, which is not, used quite a lot.

What interests me is where Anderson got it. I gather you agree with us that it may be more than coincidence that the CIA came off best in the Pentagon Papers. In this connection, it may be recalled that Anderson's assistant, Les Whitten, is a former Hearst man who arranged for Gordon Novel's lie detector test when he turned up, a fugitive from Garrison's subpoena efforts, at McLean, Va. We think we have spotted earlier examples where Anderson's column has been used to float trial balloons from that same neighborhood. One rather important question may be: was this simply a disclosure of a ham-handed attempt to play gunboat diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, or was it a more serious warning, that there could be another side to the Pentagon Papers, or a sequel, and that it could affect someone's campaign?

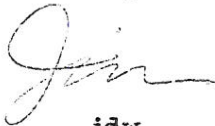
In any event, it appears at this distance to be an interesting commentary on the theory that once again the intelligence services have been unified and brought under control.

Tapes: We haven't yet found time to listen to Martha, but look forward to it, perhaps tomorrow. Thanks for sending it. Do you want it back without erasure, or would you like us to dub on something that might interest you if we happen to run into something? I think of nothing at the moment that could be worth your time that we have on hand.

I gather you have had trouble not only with the record button syndrome, but also with tapes jamming. As nearly as we can tell from three or four years experience and from what the shop tells us, this is caused by tape which stretches unevenly and therefore winds unevenly, running up to one side or the other of its proper alignment and jamming the reel within the cassette. Nothing to be done about this but to run it back and try again. This happens not only with cheap tape but with brands like BASF, the top German brand, and 3M, both of which are as expensive as they come. Sony, with its silicone lubricant, is the only brand we've found which is free of this. As I think I said once before, we use Sony exclusively to record, in order not to miss anything, and dub off on other brands -- those we still have around -- for the record. If tapes jam on playback, that's no tragedy. It's when you're counting on recording something and miss it that causes trouble.

One final note: I've included absolutely every scrap available on the Anthony Russo-Rand Corp. bit. No one present was able to ask him anything further, and the reference received only the barest mention the next day in the Palo Alto Times, and nowhere else. Curious, and under the circumstances I doubt if anyone in LA could find out any more.

We, too, wish you both a good year, with all our heart.



jdw