

April 7, 1997

Dr. Paul Hoch
1525 Acton Street
Berkeley, CA 94702

Dear Paul:

I just received your March 26, 1997 letter. It is always a pleasure to hear your thoughts. Let me try to give you a quick response on some of the steps we have taken related to your concerns about Silvia Odio, William Walter, and Cuba.

First, we are overseeing the process of having Odio's INS file included within the JFK Collection. (By the way, her name is spelled "Silvia" in that file.)

Second, we have requested review of the FBI DRE files from several field offices, including Dallas, New Orleans, Miami, and Tampa. I do not believe it is appropriate, as you suggested, to automatically have "all FBI records on the DRE . . . treated as assassination-related." The FBI's DRE records may contain reference to hundreds of matters that have nothing to do with the assassination and that would go far beyond the Review Board's mandate. We will, however, review the appropriate files to make our best judgment call as to whether the records help enhance the historical understanding of the assassination.

Third, we are attempting to ensure that all FBI records related to the Walter telegram will be made public.

Fourth, with regard to "Project Freedom," we have reviewed a significant number of records from the State Department, Defense Department, CIA, and FBI (including records in the RFK and JFK collections at the Kennedy Library and in the LBJ Library) related to US activities directed at Cuba in 1963. The vast majority of high level decision-making documents, as well as records that show what was happening on the ground (or on the sea) will be made available to the public. Without my commenting on the accuracy of Waldron's allegations about an invasion plan, I can say that I have attempted to identify all documents that I can that are probative on this issue so that they will be released. (Incidentally, you might be interested in seeing the State Department's two new *Foreign Relations of the United States* volumes on Cuba from 1960 to 1963 that are scheduled for release this

week.)

You suggest that, after we review files on Odio, we conduct interviews with an eye to determining whether in fact Oswald met with some Cubans in Dallas. Although I fully believe that the Warren Commission and the FBI should have pursued this issue vigorously in 1963-64, the Review Board, in my judgment, should *not* be attempting to reach any conclusions on the question whether Oswald met with any Cubans in Dallas and we should not be conducting interviews with that being a goal. To the extent that we can pry loose records from the agencies or from the public, we are trying to do so. People's recollections on issues like this can be so vague and uncertain that I believe that we do not advance the ball by having a witness say "Oswald did meet with Cubans" or "Oswald did not meet with Cubans." Thirty-year-old observations of this type are, in my experience, unreliable and reflect more what the individual has come to believe rather than what the witness accurately recalls.

In our pursuit of records I have spoken with many people about circumstances surrounding the assassination, and I have become progressively disenchanted with the value of eye-witness testimony -- even on an event as riveting as the Kennedy assassination. One treating physician at Parkland Hospital told me, for example, that he remembers that President Kennedy was shot at around 11:30 a.m. and that Jackie was in Trauma Room 1 wearing a white dress. If he is going to get those obvious parts of the story wrong, how can we trust the memories of people in Dallas about what Oswald was up to? I believe that the Review Board's goal should be to lift the secrecy from the files and pursue the records, not to seek out what people *believe* that they remember about Oswald, the Cubans, or the assassination. Thus, our goal is not to reach conclusions about whether Hosty went to see Odio on the basis of a second lead. If this were 1963, the question should be pursued vigorously. But, given the frailty of human memory, we are not now capable of properly investigating such matters, let alone reaching conclusions based upon witnesses' current recollections.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn
General Counsel and
Associate Director for Research and Analysis