Saturday 9 August 1965

Dear Maggie,

I have just received and read your typewritten and handwritten letters of Wednesday and Thursday. I am going to comment without actually looking at the letters, hoping to achieve clarity in my own thoughts and expression. Before beginning, however, I am enclosing an aide memoire of a visit from Salandria. If I did not send it before, it was because it wa written and typed very hastily indeed, with many errors of both recall and mechanics. But I d not want to take the time, after all, to rewrite it, since it does convey most of the essentia information, so please forgive me this time for the sloppiness--which results from the drawing to a close of my "vacation" and the compulsion to get as much accomplished (on the index etc.) as is humanly possible, before going to Miami and then back to the office, where I am without my reference materials and can do little, even if there is time.

One more prefatory remark: please do not misunderstand the nature and purpose of the summaries I send on telephone calls and/or visits like the one from Salandria. They are only an attempt to record what was said, and do not indicate any agreement or sympathy on my part with what is said, unless that is made explicit (nor disagreement, for that matter).

Now, turning to Mark Lane: There are two (at least) distinct sets of critics or denigrators of Lane. One is the pro-Report group, including the official agencies and personalities, which have tried to put Lane out of commission from the very first, because he was a menace to their purpose--that of tranquillizing a passive public into accepting a fraudulent, defective, and utterly implausible "solution" to the assassination. They are out to "get" Lane, for simple and self-evident reasons.

The second group consists mainly of anti-Report people. Some had no taste for Lane from the beginning (ie Sauvage) because of fundamental differences in approach and attitude --not on the case alone but on the whole spectrum of convictions about the world in which we live and the loyalties we feel and differing conceptions of right-and-wrong, or good-and-evil Others, and I am in this faction, started with an overwhelming gratitude to and admiration fo Lane. I attended his public lectures frequently during 1964, including the huge Town Hall meeting at which Marguerite Oswald was on the dais. At that stage, I had little or no thought of doing any independent work or writing on the case. I contributed both money and information unreservedly to Lane or his associates, and I would have been delighted to help in any possible way. At about Christmas time, when I had nearly completed my first reading of the H & E, I spent about three hours one night giving every single "finding" I had made to one of his aides, to send to him in Europe where he was working on his book, with no conditions attached--that is, I did not want any acknowledgment or credit, or anythir but the satisfaction of being able to contribute to the discrediting of the Report.

At that time, I was already uneasy about Lane's allegations on the meeting of Ruby Tippit and Weissman. Lane had said that his informant was a prominent Dallas citizen who "could not sleep nights" but who wanted to stay out of the investigation and avoid personal publicity and risk of his status; he had therefore compromised by turning the information over to Lane, on a pledge that his identity would not be disclosed. I was troubled because it seemed to me that anyone who "could not sleep nights" would not have permitted the story of the conspiratorial meeting to be dismissed as a fraud, and Lane to be subjected to viciou abuse and accusations that the story was an invention, and would not have permitted the official conclusions to stand. A person of conscience would, at that stage, surely have sacrificed his anonymity to prevent a complex of injustices. For those reasons, I was a little unhappy with things. Another thing also bothered me: Lane had said on the platfo one night that Mr. Klein had told him on the telephone that at the time he shipped a rifle t Hidell, Klein's did not yet have in stock the 40.2-inch model Carcano found in the TSBD. Some months later, when I met and began to collaborate with his group, I asked about that and was told that Lane had "exaggerated." But it still seemed to me that one, or even two, irresponsible statements by no means could vitiate Lane's enormous and courageous role. I continued to work with his associates, in real friendship and cooperation. Little incidents occurred occasionally which made me momentarily unhappy or offended but I put them aside as petty and inconsequential, and continued publicly as well as privately to be one of Lane's most ardent supporters.

Then, early this year, WBAI scheduled a debate between Lane and Curtis Crawford. I have had my problems with Crawford; but again, appreciating his personal qualities and his contribution to the case (although by this stage I no longer was in any sympathy with his views and was grieved by his "conversion"), I hoped for an exchange confined to the merits of each one's position. What actually happened was appalling. Lane made a vicious, wholly unfair, and slanderous personal attack on Crawford, whom he had never even met before, and in a most irresponsible way. He made accusations of a very serious nature without even having checked into their validity or giving Crawford a chance to answer the charges privatel before airing them to the public. It was also on this radio broadcast that Lane first spoke of the "CIA report" on Jack Ruby, which in fact was a report TO the CIA by counsel to the Commission, asking for investigation of various rumors and allegations.

The first thing next morning I tried to bring the error to Lane's attention, through Marlene, his researcher (who lives around the corner from me). I won't rehash that story; suffice it to say that I was personally subjected to some abuse for daring to think or suggest that Lane could have made such an error. When he repeated the error in print in Minority of One, I wired him, for fear that Marlene had never even brought my comments to his attention and that he would continue in his misapprehension, courting ridicule from the anti-Lane camp on grounds which could not be dismissed. The response was cold and discourteous.

Curtis Crawford told me the morning after the broadcast that he believed Lane was a ruthless and evil man. I understood his bitterness, but I did not agree with him; and I do not agree, despite subsequent events, including the confiscation of my letter. I think he is ill-mannered. I know that he is unreceptive to other individuals or groups who are working in the same direction; and that his colleagues have developed a certain cultism about Lane----they regard him as above repreach, and anyone who is not equally committed to Lane (not to fighting the Report, mind you) is suspect or an enemy.

This is not to say that Lane is aware of or encourages the cultism. Yet how can his co-workers develop an attitude that Lane has exclusive rights, or competence, or leadership in this field, without his knowledge or tacit consent? It seems to me that such an attitude inevitably must to some degree reflect his own view of things. But--so what? This does not diminish Lane's contribution or his achievement; and even though I am personally dismayed by the several incidents in which I have been involved, I still feel basically the same way as I felt a year ago-----and I am "pro-Lane" if with some reservations.

Sauvage, I agree, has made unwarranted and unpleasant attacks on Buchanan. Many of the same considerations apply to Buchanan as to Lane. Sauvage is indeed a solid figure and has made the most conservative attack on the official case; his animus toward Lane is a fundamental one, based on what he considers demoguogery, irresponsibility, and personal exploitation. A specific complaint by Sauvage is that Lane, on a TV round table, attributed to Sauvage a statement he had never made; now that a source has been provided, he still believes that Lane's use of that source and that claim (ie that the bullet missed Walker by 10 metres, or 30 feet!) exposes Lane's dishonesty and ruthlessness.

Trevor-Roper, by the way, is an unknown quantity to me; but I did write him, very warmly, after his articles were published, calling attention to certain material in the H & E which would strengthen his case against the Report. No reply; not a word.

I am distressed by what you report of Shirley Martin's present views (I have now returned to your letters, to make sure that I do not fail to comment on important points). About the tape recordings you sent me: Bill Crehan, one of the people I met at the New School, is listening to and transcribing (I am not sure how) the tapes and apologizes for taking so long with it. He has access to sophisticated equipment, as his wife has a recording business. By the way, he started by doing volunteer work in the Lane committee and tells me that he was repeatedly subjected to discourtesy and non-cooperation. However, while he has no further contacts with them, Bill (like me) is still "pro-Lane" on fundamental grounds.

Salandria spoke of David Lifton when he was here, with high regard; he also has a working co-operation with Ed Epstein of Cornell, about whose work he is most enthusiastic also. I am perplexed by what you write of David Lifton's dejection and the "different premise" and hope that you will write more about this when you feel that you are able. It is disheartening to find that not only Curtis Crawford but now the Nashes, and perhaps Shirley Martin in a different sense, are deserting. I hope fervently that others will not do so; but if they do, however many, it will not change my mind. I cannot conceive of any harm greater than collusion in covering up---what could possibly harm this country more than the utter moral degradation and disease symbolized by this appalling nightmare? Whoever motivated and arranged this ugly crime and its ugly aftermath--whether at home or abroad --must not be allowed to have immunity; and if it was my own father or son or anyone whom I admire or support, it would change nothing for me.

Let me say clearly, Maggie, that I agree with your assessment of the photographs, wholly and completely. They must not be disregarded; but they must not be used in a way that will provide a means of discrediting the small handful of us around the country in the work to which we are all committed. It is that committment, and not personal manners or other picayune considerations, which must govern our relations among ourselves. I wish that Sauvage, etc. shared that point of view; unfortunately, he does not seem to. Sniping and denunciation, rivalry and proprietary claims, harm all of us and exhaust previous energy.

About the Semmons sign: it may be that Salandria was really referring to David Lifton's "different premise" and that I ~~mmsm~~ misunderstood his remarks. I think that must be it.

Be assured, Maggie, that we will try to be sure that you meet everyone, whether individually or in a group, when you are here in October. I know that I will be tempted to monopolize your time, because there is still so much to discuss that we have not really touched on; but I do believe that all of us should get together, if possible for a whole day, in a somewhat organized exchange of information and points of view, to assess where we are now and what we should concentrate on for most effective results in future. At the same time, let me emphasize that I do not believe in any formal organization or dividion of labor or anything resembling that---I think the degree of voluntary cooperation that we have now is heartwarming and good, and any attempt to formalize these relationships among individuals or small groups of collaborators would be disastrous. Thomas Stamm has several times made suggestions that we should organize or pool in some explicit way; and I am most fearful of the consequences of such a trend.

The dramatic readings could be a great and crucial opening; but success depends on so many factors that one cannot have automatic optimism about it. Thus far, Lobenthal has not yet drawn me into things but he promises that he will at the proper time. I am sure that he will; my worry, in fact, is how I can manage that in addition to the book, the index, and my income-producing job.

One final word (and I am sorry that despite my good intentions this letter is not methodical or in logical sequence): Salandria's case for an Oswald/FBI clandestine relationship (or some nature of undercover-agent role) is a strong case but one which I tend to argue with, on subjective grounds; our discussion the other night provoked me to re-study the business of Oswald's request to see an FBI agent when he was arrested in New Orleans. I have gone over all the testimony and documents on this and I am nearly inclined to wonder if in fact he ever asked to see an FBI agent at all; but one thing I feel almost certain about is that here, too, we have not had the full story or the true story by any means. Maggie, if you have a chance, could you reexamine the relevant material and then perhaps we could compare our assessments? It would be invaluable to have your appraisal, as your judgment is as balanced and objective as one could hope. Forgive me for the patchiness of this letter. With warmest thanks and friendship,

Sincerely,