

8/13/68

Dear Sylvia,

Vince was here a week ago. He told me what I had heard and then forgotten, that you had made a \$100 contribution to the so-called "Thornley Defense Fund" or, as it has also been described, "Fair Play For Thornley". I was busy when Vince left and it slipped my mind until today, when I was sent a clipping from Open City, in which Thornley mentions you in what he intends as a flattering way.

You do what your conscience tells you to, and please do not misinterpret this letter as an effort to deter you. I have heard rumors that both Thornley and Lifton plan suits against me, and I assure you the day cannot come to soon. However, because of the relationship that has existed between us, I feel I must suggest that you think as perhaps you have not about this. It is because of the position you have taken only that I cannot share with you that evidence I have that is relevant.

From the time he was working on the Ramparts "story" on the assassination, when he placed long phone calls to me, I have had the deepest misgivings about Dave. His own work, when I saw it, magnified these. His abuse of Maggie, well, you know how I feel about this and her. His intrusion on Liebler's behalf, which he lies about, when a debate between Liebler and me had been agreed upon, found me wondering even more about him, really whether he is entirely without psychiatric problems.

What you know about Thornley, I presume, you know from Dave. What Dave knows about Thornley, again I must presume, comes only from the same and not dispassionate source. Why not, in your own interest, begin with the presumption that I cannot share, that everything you have been told about Thornley is true, that Dave has every reason to believe he is really an fine and persecuted guy. Is this enough? Assume, if you'd like, that Garrison, for reasons of his own, is out to "get" Thornley, and again I would not agree. Is this, still, enough? Is it possible that there are things about him, things in his writings, things in his beliefs, you cannot associate yourself with? Is it possible that he has done, said and written things you would find intolerable and could not associate yourself with?

Perhaps, were you to decide this is the case, you might still feel impelled to do what you can to help him, thinking even that it is genuine help. By all means do. I have no desire to intrude into what your conscience demands of you. However, because we are all sometimes motivated by emotions rather than logic and reason, I also suggest that you ask yourself whether in what you have done you were really fighting Garrison (also your right) and not, by intent, affirmatively associating yourself with Thornley.

I do not mince words, so I give you my opinion. I tell you my opinion of Thornley comes from original materials, not conversations with his enemies, none of whom I have ever sought out or spoken to (and I know who some are). He is a liar, a man of violence not a flower boy (and believe me, my documentation here is solid and both original and unpublished) but a woman beater, with political beliefs he misrepresents that in actuality border on fascist (he seem to be an Ayn Rand), and he regularly misrepresents, both himself and others. By now you should be in a position to know that even if what he said in pretended response to my answers to Open City were truthful which they were not, they are not answers. He is and was part of the frame on Oswald, and I have his own repetitive writings, aside from his testimony. He made major and substantive changes in his testimony when he printed it in his "book" (and here he deliberately and grossly

misrepresents what I said of its size, in an unoriginal way indicative of earlier, similar comment, and before his Open City writing had acknowledged this publicly, on radio, and I have the tape and the transcription, so there is no possibility of accidental error), and these are not merely editorial. They include liberties with Jenner's questions and the elimination of subjects in their entirety, up to perhaps two pages at a hunk.

He entirely misrepresents his own relationship with Barbara Reid, who had been his trusted friend and defender. So extreme was her defense of him, that when Clint Bolton was telling me just how much Thornley hated Kennedy she was signalling over his back that it wasn't true. Afterward, when we left, she assured me Bolton could not be right. He trusted Barbara very much, liked her, borrowed from her, and wrote her. A year ago I had one of the letters he wrote, and it is entirely inconsistent with his present statements, yet I do not believe he has seen here since. She was his defender until he left her no alternative.

He and Lifton entirely misrepresent my interest in Thornley, what I did (and didn't) do, what its purpose, what result, etc. I cannot here give you detail, but I give you assurances that everything I did, without exception, was motivated by anything but an effort to frame him. I did not know where he lived, I did not know anyone who did, and I wasn't about to go to a lot of trouble to find out when I could speak to Bolton. You will note that despite his nastiness, Bolton joined in what he represented of what I had suggested. I had nothing at all to do with Kerry's "arrest", and I am not aware on any arrest that didn't follow a grand-jury indictment, with which I had nothing to do, not having been even a witness on it. There is, in fact, nothing that comes to mind of all they have written in Open City and said that has come back to me that is a really honest representation of what I have done and said. From this I take comfort, for it would seem to eliminate the possibility I made accidental error.

I have never so said, but I would not be hard put to present what I think a court would accept as admissible evidence that he might have been a "False Oswald". What might not be admissible is interesting, and it, too, exists.

Well, I've got other things to do, and I do not want to take your time. You need not answer, for I ask nothing of you, no change in your beliefs or actions. I do not claim omniscience or infallibility. I do tell you that from what I know that I have every reason to believe is entirely authentic and beyond any possibility of refutation you may have made for yourself associations that are other than you believe them to be.

Despite the threats, I think it highly unlikely that there will be any kind of suit. Thornley may be able to con Lifton, maybe he'll be able to give one side to a lawyer and deceive him into an action, but unless he is insane he ought know better than do this. And the magnitude of this operation, too, makes one wonder of the resources at Davy and Kerry's disposal. They seem to include, from the boasting, those who would not be interested in what you and I believe to be essential truth.

Sorry I have to be indirect, but I think the need is obvious. Whatever you do, personally, makes no difference to me, ~~personally~~ I don't care how much financial help you elect to give them. While I can think of uses with which we could all agree to which this money could be put (like buying 500 copies of documents in the Archives), I do not think it will be used in any way that will really hurt me. Unless it was already used to finance the dissemination of a rather large crop of lies, misrepresentations and defamations. This seems to have happened. I have ignored it. If this is the way your money was used, I am sorry for you, for I think it is not what you would have wanted.

Sincerely,

Barack

19 August 1968

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Route 7
Frederick, Md. 21701

Dear Harold,

Upon returning from a week's absence, I found your letter waiting. I appreciate its tone and spirit, although I am all the more regretful that we remain in fundamental disagreement on the basic issue of the Garrison campaign and its offspring questions.

As regards Lifton: He is not my sole source of information on Thornley. I agree that he may not be entirely free from psychiatric problems, but perhaps none of us are, living as we do in a negative, frustrating, and sometimes mutilating environment. Some time has gone by, and perhaps you have understandably forgotten that I took a very uncompromising stand on Lifton's fraternization with Liebeler as well as on his reported abuse of our colleague. Indeed, I terminated contact with Lifton in the summer of 1966 on that very question, for which I earned rather unpleasant reproaches—not only from Lifton but also from Vince, who then defended Dave quite warmly. I have in no way changed my mind about fraternization with Liebeler; but this does not mean that I automatically reject any information that comes from Lifton—the more so when he can and does document it.

As regards Thornley: my assistance to him was for the limited and specific purpose of obtaining legal assistance in defending himself against a perjury charge which I have reason to consider cynical, unfounded, and persecutory, on the basis of information from a source other than Lifton and quite independent of him. Even if I believed that Thornley might be guilty of perjury as charged—which I do not believe—I would still regard him as entitled to the best possible legal representation, in the same way as any other accused person is so entitled. I cannot ever forget that Lee Oswald was deprived of legal counsel and that many people were ready, on the basis of the apparently damning "evidence" to see him executed without a hearing and to applaud the crime.

Let me emphasize that in assisting Thornley, or anyone else in his position, I do not in any way "associate" myself with his beliefs, writings, or activities, and that I am rather surprised that such an assumption should be made. The more I dislike his political views, the more I am impelled as a matter of conscience to extend support for the explicit and circumscribed purpose of legal representation against a charge which may or may not be warranted ~~and~~ which I have reason to regard as false, knowingly false, and based on the very fact that Thornley lacks funds to secure an able legal counsel. And, Harold, there is no need for inference on your part, or self-scrutiny on my part, to determine that "in what I have done I was really fighting Garrison": I am an avowed critic and adversary of Garrison, which I have openly declared in conversation and in writing and in print for over a year. There is nothing subtle, secret, subconscious, or Freudian in that—and I have also made it clear that I am fighting Garrison for the very same reasons that I am fighting the Warren Commission, and regard him with perhaps greater loathing for his unctuous pretense to be on the side of the critics. Incidentally, since you suggest that Thornley's sins include his being an Ayn Rander, I think you should know that Garrison, too, is an ardent Rander, according to a number of Garrison's supporters and admirers who took note of this when they visited his office and/or home. Thornley may be all the unpleasant things you suggest (Oswald was supposedly a wife-beater), but he is still entitled to legal defense, and I absolutely refuse to entertain the notion that in assisting him to secure a lawyer I am thereby an advocate of woman-beating or of Ayn Rand or any other Thornley proclivity.

I am frankly surprised by your discussion of how my money might better have been used and appalled by the innuendo that it may have been used to injure you. It never occurred to me that I required approval from anyone on how to dispose of my own money—which is sufficient,

fortunately, to provide for research tools as well as for purposes of conscience. Even less did it occur to me that my unsolicited contribution to Thornley for his legal defense might be utilized for any other purpose whatsoever. I made this donation in good faith and unless I find any substantial evidence to the contrary I will take it for granted that it was received and used in good faith.

I will say again, in order to be as clear and definite as humanly possible and to eliminate any risk of misunderstanding, that the more I may dislike the Shaws, Bradleys, Thornleys, etc., the more I feel obliged as a matter of plain decency to lean over backward to be fair and if necessary to provide support when such an individual, largely because of his unpopular or repulsive ideas and activities, becomes the victim of manufactured and unconscionable charges. It is tragic that this country of robotic anti-Communists did not have the fairness and decency to insist all the more on the physical and legal protection of Lee Harvey Oswald, because his alleged political coloration was offensive, and still permits the dirty fraud of the Warren Report to sit as "history," in large part because of prejudice against the falsely accused Oswald.

I have no intention of becoming the mirror-image of such a school of ethics and morals, and no intention of depriving any right-winger of a single iota of the legal rights or the presumption of innocence which Oswald should have received and which I myself would wish to receive if ever the subject of an accusation. And I have no intention of accepting or supporting any "investigation," however much it may parallel my own conclusions about the nature of the conspiracy that engineered the events of Dallas, which resorts to methods as bad as those of the Warren Commission or worse.

While I am no less alert than you to signs of insanity and to indications of the fascist mentality, I see the site of those dangers as New Orleans primarily, in the context of your letter, and it remains incomprehensible to me that any critic of the Warren Report can endow an unscrupulous charlatan like Garrison, clumsy and transparent as he is, with the attributes of heroism and sanctity.

This letter, too, demands no reply. As you say, we are both occupied with other things, and should not belabor this question if it is to be of no avail. I am sending this reply, despite your thoughtful stipulation that it was not necessary, because some of your assumptions were unfounded and a clarification seemed essential lest those assumptions should seem, by default, to be valid.

With personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

8/20/68

Dear Sylvia,

Thank you for answering my letter, which was not intended to elicit a response or to provoke you into reaction. I do not know the source of your Thornley information, aside from Dave or him, but on the basis of what you say, I have no reason to credit it. You begin with the basic assumption of his innocence (with is legally proper) and of his having no connections whereas I do not. I did, until I conducted my own investigation. I tried in what ways I could to prevent his making the mess for himself that he did. I cannot now tell you what this investigation discloses, but it is not in accord with what you believe and what you have been told. I tell you, for whatever it is worth to you, that he occupies a position in this you appear not to understand. If you are in touch with him, why not ask him what he overheard when he was with federal agents? I, of course, do not know it from him. I do from those he spoke to - and I must have spoken to a dozen people in New Orleans who were his personal friends, including some who still are.

Your concern for his legal needs is fine. I wish some of my colleagues had the same concern for mine. I have been the victim of endless harassment by Pringuier. It alleges no error on my part, is frivolous, is merely aimed at me because financially I am the weakest of all of us, has ulterior purpose that to date I have been able to frustrate (but may not be able to indefinitely -and if they fail, then believe me, we will all be hurt), and have put me more than \$4,000 in debt. Unlike the Thornleys, who have an income, we have none. What you do with you money is, indeed, your own affair, and I ask none of it. I do, for you, not for me, ask you to examine what may be a motive you do not understand. I do not want you to hurt yourself without be aware you might be. You realize, what I am telling you about is past, and there is nothing you can now do about it. It must be obvious I seek nothing except that you understand what you may be doing without realizing, something you may later have trouble with yourself about? But on poor Thornley's financial and legal problems, I was in New Orleans when he was arraigned, though I was not in court. I was working there that period. There seemed to be no financial problem that precluded his lawyer spending a week or so there, with his wife. The proceeding took but a day.

I did not recall, if I knew, of your disagreement withince over Lifton, but you are right in telling me that I had forgotten your disagreement with him over his Liebler associations. They continue. I find them not inconsistent with his Thornley contacts and activities, which include the foulest slanders that I find no one objecting to.

If you trust Thornley's integrity and assume he is using your money only for legal purposes, fine. I tell you from what I know of him I'd assume the opposite. I also tell you I have reason to presume he has no financial problems with a ~~fixx~~ lawyer or legal expenses. I assume he is using such contributions for other purposes. Among these is a fairly large-scale campaign against me. At the same time, I tell you it does not trouble me. In some ways I rather welcome it, as perhaps the future will show.

Think what you will of Garrison personally (and may I suggest you do not know what I do?), I think, when you learn all, when this period is past and written about, you will learn the genuine effort he has made to protect the rights of those he was accused. Just recently he refused to prosecute Layton Martens for attempted murder when he had nothing to do with the arrest and charges. I happened to be in New Orleans early the morning after the arrest of the night before. I started checking on it before Garrison even knew about it, before anyone in the office did. It is I who learned the essentials, who the girl is, even, what the relationships were. I tell you Garrison had available witnesses who would have sworn that for a month Martens

had been going around saying he would have to kill Darryl. Garrison had Louis Ivon make his own investigation. Louis was satisfied that at the moment Martens did try to kill Darryl there was a fight and it could have been self-defense. Therefore, there is no additional prosecution of Layton Martens, though he did almost kill Darryl by going away and coming back with a knife from the kitchen and plunging it deep into Darryl's gut. Further, last November Martens sought me out and twice asked me to arrange for him to cop a plea on the perjury charge. There is no doubt about his guilt and the DA's office leaned over backward to help him avoid it. Martens' lawyer did not give him permission to talk to me, which I demanded Layton get, and he did not give permission to talk to Jim, which I also demanded he do. Neither Jim nor I would have anything to do with him. This was in the presence of a witness. Need I tell you that it would have been helpful to Jim had Martens walked in and confessed guilt? He would have nothing to do with it.

You have no idea what there is that could have been "leaked", on all those charged, and none has been. Jim himself has never said a word about the evidence against those he has charged. Stop and think, and I am confident you will find this so. Had he leaked what I gave him about Thornley and what he says about his own ideas of murdering people, he could have damaged Thornley very much. He and I have been silent on this and will be. You will eventually learn of the sizeable effort to protect Thornley from himself. Until then, whether or not you accept my assurance, I do offer it. It is wrong to accept the lies and distortions that he, Dave and their considerable pr associations are spreading. The answer will await court, for reports keep reaching me that both plan suits against me. Though I cannot afford lawyers, I will welcome it, as you also will see. You really have no concept of what can be fairly said of Thornley and what he is said, by credible witnesses (not the one he deceptively isolates), about what he did.

Again, if you are in touch with him, why not ask him why he had the need for a post-office box, exactly where Oswald and others had theirs, and at the same time? If he tells you it was to receive mail, then I tell you I have some of his letters and this was not his return address. I am talking about original letters, in the original envelopes.

Sylvia, believe me or not, trust the result or not, I have made extensive, personal investigations in New Orleans and elsewhere. I have never asked Garrison what he has on anything. I am my own cat. I give him part of what I develop. I know what I have, what witnesses I have, what they say, whether they seem credible or not, whether they have animus or not (and not one is his enemy-those I have eschewed), and in almost every case I have substantiation of what I am suggesting from dispassionate people. My work is so independent of Jim that the last two weeks I was there I saw him once by accident and once we had a drink together. I have opened whole new areas, established connections between seemingly independent parts of the assassination story. I have made contacts and friends outside his office, including his enemies, who have frankly told me of the legal improprieties of the other side, in detail; things that will really shock you when you learn them. Quite obviously, I cannot talk of them. None of this has been without some hazard. These are things of which you can have no glimmer from the report of the 26 volumes. I have established, independently, perjury and subornation of perjury.

There is absolutely no doubt about federal intervention in New Orleans, from before the time the Garrison case was publicly known. I have been told by some of the characters that they are under federal protection. There is a prime facie case of others being cared for financially by the government. One, who has no income, is so indiscreet as to regularly lose in the neighborhood of \$35.00 nightly playing cards. Believe me or not, these are things Garrison does not know, did not tell me, that I developed on my own. I have a surprising amount of this on tape, too, for most of the witnesses are willing. The magnitude of the Liebelier evil neither of us initially suspected.

As a contributor to Thornley's fund, do you think it would be presumptuous to ask him to lend you a set of his writing? Perhaps you might even want to limit it to Oswald. Read this guck and ask yourself whether or not he has not been part of the framing of Oswald. There is other relevant evidence I do not cite, but what is public he should have no reluctance to let you see. I have, only a few days ago, to let you know if he did not send you a complete file, should you have any interest. It seems to me that whether or not he was part of an Oswald frame-up would be of interest to you. While I have not said so, perhaps you might ask him if he has ever been a "False Oswald" or so suspected.

What you think of Garrison is of no concern to ~~me~~^{us}. What you have done is beyond recall. What you might do will be no problem to me. What you can say can hardly be more than you already have. I seek nothing personal in writing you. I take this time for no selfish motive. I now have three unpublished books on which I am working, one quite topical that is behind schedule because it has grown to twice its projected size. I take this time because despite what you wrote, I believe, as I have for some time, that you are motivated not by logic or fact but by emotional considerations. Certainly this is at least partly true of all of us, and I say it without intended criticism.

I do not want to prolong this correspondence. I just do not want you to hurt yourself, to later look back with regrets and the wisdom of hindsight.

Sincerely,

