

27 Oct 1971

Dear Sylvia:

Thanks for your recent letter with compliments about my monograph. As I expected, the NRA sent it back. I had hoped, however, that they would issue some comment, favorable or unfavorable, that might help me to spot and straighten out any kinks in it. Ashley Halsey (NRA big shot--no pun intended merely said: "Colonel Harrison (NRA's top technical expert) and others of the staff have given full consideration to your monograph concerning certain ballistic aspects of the John F. Kennedy assassination, and the consensus is that it must be returned to you." Which is, in a way, very encouraging, since they have the means whereby to smash me soundly if they thought that I was wrong. Halsey included a short article which, he says, "may have some bearing on some of your conclusions." It deals with so-called knock-down power of ammunition, and describes wherein bullets were fired into a 175 lb. wooden dummy, showing that the power of the ammo was not sufficient to move the dummy more than a fraction of an inch. Big deal. I could have told them that. All this refers, of course, to my description of JFK's head movements. Ah well; in some ways I am greatly cheered by what Halsey wrote and sent-- and by what he failed to write and send.

The sending of the piece in ~~knock~~ knock-down power did, however, ~~strengthen~~ strengthen my belief that I should delete the parts about JFK's movements. I was looking for ways to shorten the monograph, and had considered cutting out the last few pages. Not only did I want a shorter piece, but I did not want to set forth something that could be used as a diversion from the central matter, the disposition of the fragments. I did not think that the NRA would pull that one, but I knew that it was there to be pulled. I shall probably remove the last few pages and rewrite a concluding paragraph.

What you say about Harold is alarming, but not surprising; in fact, I agree with you in nearly every way. Because I have been busy with other things, I have not been in frequent touch with Harold lately. Even so, I know of the problems that you mention. He asked me my views about Wecht seeing the pix and X-rays. I agree with Harold that Wecht ought to be properly cautioned, for although he is an expert in forensic medicine, he is not an expert in the assassination, and may fall greatly under the influence of whoever gives him information and advice about it. His vision is narrow, very restricted, and he does not have the time or the energy to learn all the things necessary to broaden his view. Notwithstanding his shortcomings, we need him badly, and if Harold has offended him, he has done us all a great disservice. When I write to him, I'll try to straighten him out-- right now, I don't know how, but I'll think of something. The problem is that Harold's difficulties do not stem from any particular issue or from any particular person-- they are in him. It may not help much to set him straight about one matter, for others will come up.

Further on Wecht, in case you see him, and have any influence on him. I think that he should insist on seeing all of the pictures and X-rays that were made. If he sees only what "they" want him to see, then he is their prisoner, and will say what they want him to say. This is what happened with the Clark panel. I feel certain that the material was screened beforehand-- probably by Fisher-- and that all or some of the other three were duped. I feel sure that that is the case with Dr. Morgan, and it may apply to Moritz and the other one, too. There ~~may be~~ were some very important clues in the material that the Panel was allowed to see, but I'll bet my ass that the solution itself is in the pictures that the Panel did not see.

Also, Wecht should be accompanied by a photo expert good enough to spot a fake. This, I think, is most important. Judging from what the Panel saw, I do not now think that the pix and X-rays were doctored, but they can be, and, I think, will be doctored if they reveal evidence of more than one gunman.

It would be helpful, too, if someone went with him who really knows what to look for-- ~~and~~ an assassination "buff", I mean. This may be what miffs Harold. He probably wants to be in on it with Wecht, may even have told Wecht so, and Wecht refused. Nevertheless, Wecht should have somebody who understands the medical and ballistic matters involved-- not medical and ballistic matters in general, but as they pertain specifically to the assassination. Roffman, to me, would seem the best bet. Even if the buff could not get to see the pix and X-rays, he could do much good simply by being near Wecht before and after Wecht sees the material.

Further on Harold. This you may share with Roffman, since we are very close, and I have told him my feelings. When I visited Harold last spring (Roffman was there, too), I realized, to my dismay, that I do not like Harold-- as a person, I mean-- and that I could not get along with him for long in face-to-face relations. This will have little bearing on our association with Harold, since I deal with him mainly through the mail. It has, needless to say, affected me greatly, for I feel an overwhelming sense of admiration for much that he has done, and a compelling sense of loyalty. Neither of those have been shaken. It's just that I know I shall never be able to get along with him except by mail. I have not in the past failed to understand the origin of the difficulties that surround him-- that is, that many of the difficulties are with himself. At the same time, it is clear that others have dealt with him badly, and that in many cases he was fully justified in his responses, many of which are bound to seem irrational to those who do not know the background of those responses.

Part of the problem is this: In the past, Harold has so frequently been right in his premonitions of disaster, and in his assessments of various persons and events, that that he may now trust his instincts more than he trusts his reasoning. Whatever paranoiac tendencies he may possess (like the rest of us) have been aggravated by the double

dealing, or even sheer stupidity, of many persons in whom he once trusted implicitly. Sometimes out of meanness, sometimes out of stupidity, and sometimes out of simple lack of compassion, they have gradually worked his ruin-- or at least have effected a series of small disasters for him that occasionally causes him to distrust everybody.

He should know better about Wecht, that's for sure. I would guess that his feelings toward Wecht are very ambivalent and excruciating. On the one hand, I think he fears that Wecht will be badly used by people whose motives and ~~methods~~ methods Wecht does not understand. On the other hand, Harold may well be afraid that Wecht will break the case (as though it has not already been broken), and will enjoy the kind of recognition that Harold thinks he deserves. He's afraid not merely of losing the glory to a basically uninformed upstart who has not troubled himself greatly with this matter in the past (never mind that he has done immensely more than ~~most~~ any eminent pathologist), -- not merely is he afraid of that, but even that he himself will be cast into the background.

I don't sympathize with Harold if he feels that way, but I think I understand him. His investment in the matter of the assassination has been far greater than that of any of us-- and greater than most of us put together. He wants a return on his investment, a financial return (although I think that he would forego even this if he had to), and ~~especially~~ especially a return in recognition. Part of this accounts for his urge to see people mounted in his orbit. That does not bother me, for I can fit there neatly and profitably as long as he does not try to make me like himself. But it bothers others-- it bothers them greatly, and they are right to be bothered.

The worst aspect of Harold's problems is that I see no end to them-- in fact I suspect that they will get worse as more and more people, for various good and bad reasons, fall out of his orbit. In every substantial way, Gary Schoener is lost; he appears to have thrown in the towel, and just doesn't do anything anymore. I haven't come forth with anything decent in a year, and seem to have nothing substantial to do, so I feel myself going the same way as Gary-- the more so since, like Gary, other matters keep me continually more busy and impinge in my ability to do anything. I feel now like I have shot my load, and search as I might, I just can't clamp onto anything solid-- or if I get into something solid it turns out to be unimportant. Out whole "thing" needs a boost, a shot in the arm of some sort. It could come at any time, from any source (e.g., Wecht). I wish I knew what.

Sorry. I'm beginning to sound desperate and incoherent. I don't mean to be either. My problem is that I have been idle for too long-- or rather, busy with other things.

Stay well.

*Dick*