

30 October 1970

Mr Richard Bernabei
Department of Classics
Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario

Dear Dick,

Although I am not yet over my upper respiratory problem, I am anxious to try to comment on your letters to Paul Hoch before I confront the backlog of urgent work that will be waiting for me when I return to the office and which is certain to impede for an inordinate time any correspondence on the assassination. So please take into account that I am still under medication and not up to scratch if this letter is not well organized or well written.

I was struck in reading your three letters by the evolution in your reaction to Hoch's memo, from troubled perplexity through escalated shock and outrage to ultimate full disillusion, disgust, and unflinching recognition of the ugly if unwelcome truth about the melon experiments. A number of us experienced the same succession of emotions, although over varying spans of time--a few hours for some, a few days or even weeks for others.

Had the Hoch paper come to us from a stranger or from a known propagandist for the WR, the painful series of realizations we all experienced would have been obviated. The shock and dismay which we each seem to have felt bear an inverse relationship to the respect and trust we invested over many years, and with every apparent reason to do so, in a colleague who was helpful, honorable, responsible, constructive, and seemingly committed morally and intellectually to the destruction of a monumental fraud and injustice. Suddenly, out of the blue, the mask of an ally has been self-removed and in its place we find a pusillanimous demi-Judas, lacking the courage of his own treachery and unbelievably feeble in his attempts at self-justification and "clarification" of his "real position."

Poor Harold Weisberg, who had perhaps the closest relationship with Hoch of all of us, suffered the worst shock trauma, I imagine, and sought by frantic rationalizations, for a while at least, to keep intact his image of Hoch--though in the end, he was helpless and forced to give up the ghost of any exoneration. I will admit to considerable trauma too, and even sleepless nights, over this wholly unforeseeable and wholly undeserved blow at the position of the critics--such as it was, in the aftermath of the foreseeable Garrison disaster and other defections and foul blows--from what seemed the least likely of all sources. It would be all too easy to leap to facile theories and accusations--individuals have been accused on much less evidence of being CIA agents and double agents and the like--but I suspect that what we have here is a much more complex tragedy, that of gradual corruption, self-deception, and sell-out.

You refer in your handwritten letter to me to Hoch's reactions to criticism and imperviousness to any influence that might change his present course. I hope

that his circulation of his paper and solicitation of comments and criticisms involves nothing more sinister than his disappointing response. I see some reason to fear that we may have been systematically conned into telegraphing our arguments against this dirty and spurious "study" so that the author(s) can look for dirty and spurious counter-arguments to anticipated attacks.

For that reason, I had mixed feelings about your third letter to Hoch, detailing your impressive and most important findings on the dust-like metal fragments described by the Russell Fisher panel. Your case certainly appears conclusive and I cannot foresee any line of refutation by Hoch or by Alvarez, even with the latter's resources of cunning and deceit. But they might conceivably create a cloud of confusion and ambiguity, not on legitimate grounds but in service to the illegitimate purpose they are pursuing.

The cardinal importance of your demonstration that the fatal head shot entered the front and right side is self-evident. Regardless of the Hoch paper, whether it is published or withdrawn, your findings should come before the public as quickly and effectively as possible. What are your plans? Will you try to publish? I am happy to see that far from maintaining secrecy, you have already circulated your findings to a number of us and that you give me the option of transmitting copies to others. I would like to make copies available to Cyril Wecht, Tink Thompson, and Tom Stamm --all of whom have had the Hoch memo as well as copies of my letters on the subject to Hoch--but for the moment the preparation of copies is a mechanical impossibility. In any case, I would await your consent to such a circulation, if and when I can make xeroxes.

Unhappily, some critics are unwilling to share or to publish findings which they claim are explosive, conclusive, sensational, etc., for a variety of asserted reasons. If they really have material of the importance they claim, yet sit on it literally for years, then it seems to me that they no less than the government are suppressing vital information from the public and must carry a heavy responsibility for the course of events that is increasingly ominous and which might be altered by disclosure of the evidence kept secret year after year and in one instance, I hear, literally barricaded behind multiple locks and theft-prevention devices.

I did enjoy the last page of your third letter to Hoch--your "magic memo!" and your "single-memo theory!" When I can get to a xerox, I will send you his reply (such as it was) to my first letter, and my further response, as well as a copy of Thompson's letter to Hoch, which most effectively attacks the physics ("high-momentum forward jet," "pressure build-up" etc.) of the melon-recoil hypothesis. Copies of those letters have already been fairly widely circulated and you may feel free to share them, as well as this present letter, with others.

Fatigue is closing in on me and I should perhaps close now, even though I have scarcely done justice to the substance of your three letters. Please keep in touch and I will share any new developments with you if and when they occur.

Thanks again,

Sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12 St
NYC NY 10014