

14 September 1967

Dear Tom,

Your letter is the first I hear of any "big break" in November or December. Maybe Phelan will tell me about it if and when he looks me up again, when he gets to New York. I am instinctively dubious about this kind of prognostication, which has been heard in one form or another at various times, from different sources. I do share your impression that Phelan is fundamentally an honest man; but it is possible that he has been taken in by a plausible but untrue story. A rash of phonies and nuts erupted earlier this year with all kinds of "hot" evidence for the critics; none of them had anything authentic, to the best of my knowledge.

I am surprised that Lane elucidated my position vis-a-vis G, since I never communicated my views to Lane. I suppose that some of the California critics briefed him or showed him copies of my letters, e.g., to the editors of the New York Review of Books. If he was objective and accurate, I am glad--as you know, I have made no secret of my disaffection with G, from the time it began to germinate (which was when he unveiled Russo and Bundy).

You are correct about the "collapse" of the Warren Report. It is still "alive" in the sense that it remains the official, governmental solution to the assassination. I used the word in the context of the disenchantment with the WR of some leading members of the academic/intellectual fraternity, under the impact of Epstein's book last year or of subsequent revelations. What still remains to be done is to force the government and/or the ex-members or staff of the Commission to give up the ghost. That would best be achieved by some decisive blow--an admission (or proof) that evidence has been planted--such as you foresee. But I don't think that the stalemate will endure, in any event--there are always so many variables and unpredictable factors, and then there are some three or four new books coming out which singly or collectively may produce a dramatic change. I don't despair, although I am very discouraged and alarmed about the effect of G's activities (as I explained in my letter to Playboy, copy of which I sent you).

As you are already aware, I have little confidence in G. or in the new arrival in his camp, presumably to serve as the resident-critic. I would appreciate it if you regarded my letters as being intended for you alone and to go no further. And I will certainly continue to honor your request to me, in one of your earlier letters, to treat anything you write as confidential. My use of the word "collapse" notwithstanding, I think that you and I use very much the same criteria and that our positions on the case as a whole are very similar. Your objectivity and independent judgment seem unaffected by your position, in the eye of the hurricane, so to speak--which in itself is a considerable achievement. I don't like to be reticent with you on anything, but of course there will be times when I must be, for the reason you suggested or because I am under an obligation of silence to someone. I am sure that you find yourself in the same dilemma on occasion--for example, in expressing your conclusion about the identity of Bertrand--and of course I respect your reasons.

All the best, Tom. Do write again as soon as you can. I hope to send you a copy of my book in four or five weeks, as soon as it arrives from the bindery (the official date of publication will be six weeks later).