

14 September 1970

Dear Mary,

I did not read your airmail special-delivery letter of the 11th until this morning, because under a new post office policy special-deliveries are now treated like ordinary mail. Probably it was placed in my mailbox on Saturday but I did not pick up my mail that day, or I would have written you even faster.

Please, Mary, don't be unduly upset by Harold's paranoid letter to me, or even by the subsequent letter (dated the 11th) which I also found in the mailbox this morning, and copy of which he says he sent to you. True, I was really exasperated by his letter on the Lifton question, but I took it for granted that he had distorted whatever you may have said and I felt sure that anything you did say was said with only the best intentions.

You must make your own decision about your relations with Harold and I would hate to feel that I was involved, however involuntarily and passively, in your ending all contacts with him. His catalogue of accusations, denigrations, and complaints against me ~~is~~ is typical of his obsessive need to attack and denounce others, from his fixed position of perfect virtue, martyrdom, infallibility and omniscience. It is sick, pitifully sick, for a human being to achieve a sense of personal worth only by continuous belittling of others.

On one score, Harold is quite right--I have constantly misjudged people I knew through the case--Epstein, Lifton, and now Hoch, as well as many others, because I took for granted their good faith and their commitment to the truth until such time as I had personal evidence to the contrary. But I have not misjudged Harold, or not very much, for I have been aware almost from the beginning that his personality structure was such that he could not refrain from the kind of manic outburst of which his letter to me is only a mild example. That is why most of his public debates and appearances on the case have been disastrous, as have his relations even with those whom for a period of time he seemed to have a close and good working partnership. Yet he has done invaluable research and made a most meaningful contribution to our knowledge of the evidence. Though I have always recognized this, I found the burden of corresponding with him or occasionally meeting with him in New York, more than I could sustain, on a continuous basis. So I was quite pleased that our letters to each other became quite infrequent--I preferred it that way. Now that you have seen his latest two letters to me, you will understand why.

It will only be another exercise in futility for me to try to respond to the catalogue of his accusations, and I think I simply will ignore both his letters--which no doubt will bring me in due time at least one more frenzied indictment of my lack of brains, character, and fidelity. The combination of Lifton, Hoch and Weisberg are really enough to make anyone quit in plain disgust--although I will not really quit, since there are also the Mary Ferrells to testify to some sanity and dignity still to be found among the critics. So, I repeat, do not blame yourself--some other pretext would have served to bring such a letter from Harold, sooner or later.

My lunch hour expired about 25 minutes ago, so I must end here, with renewed assurances that I do not blame you at all, nor must you blame yourself.