

Written on 16 April 1966
to be mailed in June

Dear Maggie,

Since early March I have had to exercise a difficult measure of self-restraint and maintain complete silence when I had the strongest impulse to speak. The situation was very unnatural, as I am not secretive by nature. It became so uncomfortable to try to act and speak as I would have done had I not had access to the information I had, with constant calculation as well as inhibition, that I began almost to avoid contact with everyone--especially those to whom I most wanted to talk freely. When you phoned last night and mentioned the possibility of investing some money in RAMPARTS, I felt that I must at least tell you that RAMPARTS was not the only hope and that there would be a definite development, soon, that would make a far greater impact than we could expect from RAMPARTS at best.

Having said that much, which I felt in conscience I had to say lest you or others should risk or sacrifice funds, on top of all the other sacrifices, I felt really rotten to leave you hanging in complete suspense and bewilderment. I did so only because I had made a solemn commitment, which I had to observe and will continue to observe until I am relieved of the obligation. This is what happened.

At the end of February I was astonished to receive a phonecall from Ed Epstein, followed shortly thereafter by a visit on a Sunday night. At that time he told me in confidence that his book had been snatched up by the first publisher who saw it --Viking Press. Viking was so deeply impressed that they gave Ed a very large cash advance on royalties, and they put aside everything else in order to get Ed's book out with utmost urgency. Ed told me that much mainly, I believe, to obtain the loan of the plat map which Lillian had been good enough to send me; unfortunately, it proved too large to be used. Naturally, I was consumed with desire to see Ed's manuscript; he told me that he had no copy available (which turned out to be true); he also cautioned me not to let Jones Harris know that I was even aware that Ed had a publisher, as Viking was insisting on strictest secrecy, fearing that if word leaked out there would be attempts to obstruct, or at least frantic efforts to prepare "alibis" and rebuttals.

However, when I commented that I would have liked the opportunity to check the footnotes for accuracy (and the text), Ed seemed struck, perhaps for the first time, by the desirability of having his ms scrutinized by someone who was fairly expert in knowledge of the case. Suddenly the atmosphere changed; he now offered to have the publisher send me the ms the very next day, so that I would check it for accuracy. Indeed, that is just what happened--Viking sent the ms by messenger to my office, and I spent the next few nights working feverishly--not only checking the accuracy of the text and the footnotes but making some notes for myself on the contents, to be able to look at and give myself new courage during the next months until the book was issued.

As to the contents--Ed has not only included all of the staggering items that he mentioned on that now-historical Sunday, but a great deal more that he had not mentioned that day (at least not in my hearing). All this, or much of it, is thanks to Wesley J Liebeler. We must acknowledge that he not only attempted to do an honorable job during the investigation but fought a one-man battle to introduce some bit of objectivity into the WR, and then provided the ammunition which will be fatal to the WR and the WC--if there is any sanity left in America.

I had four days in which to check the manuscript, after which it was to be returned without fail to the publisher. Four evenings, in practice. There was no index. I pointed that out to Ed, suggesting that if he wished I would prepare the index. That, too, he seized upon with immediate enthusiasm. He consulted the publisher at once, and the publisher too seemed delighted to turn the index over to me. Thus, I am to receive the page proofs tomorrow—including now the introduction by Richard Rovere, which had not been written when I read the ms, and the appendices, consisting of extensive excerpts from the FBI Reports—the four volumes of December 1963, from which Salandria quoted the "no exit," and the fifth volume of January 13, 1964 which is not in the Archives, and which asserts again that the bullet in the back penetrated only to a distance of less than a finger's length and, naturally, did not exit.

No one knows that Ed has the fifth volume; he obtained it from Liebeler. Thus, whatever specious excuses they may think up for the FBI finding of "no exit" in its December report will be completely discredited by the January 13th finding --which by no stretch of the imagination can be excused as a mistake arising from the chaos in the hours immediately after the assassination. Ed's book will also reproduce the photo showing the hole in the back of the shirt, which was deliberately obliterated in the Commission Exhibit version. Seeing the hole in the position it occupies, as opposed to verbal descriptions and measurements, is stunning in impact and makes complete nonsense of the testimony which purports to account for the discrepancy. In truth, one photograph is worth a million words.

The book exposes many other shameful aspects of the behind-the-scenes operations of the WC. There was a general rebellion against accepting Marina's testimony without at least a good cross-examination; Warren laid down the law. There was similar protest against Markham, and Brennan; again, Warren made an arbitrary decision. The reports that Oswald was on the FBI payroll originated with Allan Sweatt, who was Liaison officer with other agencies in anti-subversion activities. The interview with Sweatt was not only suppressed from us, the public—even the lawyers were not permitted to see it. Also suppressed was information in the Soviet file on Oswald, indicating that he was such a poor marksman that when he went hunting other members of the party had to supply him with game.

Redlich played a most contemptible role in slanting the report violently against Oswald, especially on marksmanship and the rifle. So much so that only days before publication of the WR, Liebeler wrote a 26-page single-spaced memo strongly attacking the key chapter (identification of the assassin). He pointed out that there was no evidence that the rifle was in the garage on 11/21/63; he criticized the fingerprint evidence; but his main attack was on the marksmanship and the so-called "easiness" of the shots. He called this part of the chapter a fairy-tale. Rankin first refused to accept the Liebeler memorandum but Liebeler insisted. Redlich was then summoned immediately to Washington; he and Liebeler went at it hammer and tongs. Redlich said that the WC "wanted it interpreted as an easy shot and he was working for the Commission."

But I won't say more, so that you will have the pleasure of reading the book for yourself. I believe that it leaves the WC in utter disgrace, exposed as deliberately dishonest, with the single purpose of forcing the evidence to fit the lone-assassin-thesis regardless of how antithetical it was and despite the fact that the real burden of the evidence was to demonstrate a conspiracy—and one which did not necessarily implicate LHO. If this book does not destroy the WR, we must face the fact that the sickness has spread much further than we suspected—and we must continue without pause. But I cannot really conceive that this book will fail. It will have intensive promotion and advertisement—it will have the stamp

of Richard Rovere's endorsement--it will have hitherto-secret documents of the highest importance--and the style is clinical, non-polemical, and all the more devastating for its seeming detachment.

Because I feel certain that Ed's book will revolutionize the situation, as we have all long hoped, it has seemed to me that whatever RAMPARTS may do in August or December will be anticlimatic and irrelevant--unless they recast their campaign on the basis of Ed's book. Probably they will have time to do that, between publication in June and their August issue. I would have liked to tip them off, but I was bound to secrecy.

Maggie, you really cannot imagine how much I want to mail this letter at once, so that you, and Dave, and Lillian, and Ray, and all the others might be able to have the joy of knowing that we are on the brink of a breakthrough, at long last--that all our labor has been justified--that our reasoning is vindicated--but I will have to lock this away until I am authorized to pull out the stops. When Viking called three days ago to say that I will be getting the page-proofs on Monday, they cautioned me again to say absolutely nothing, until the book is on sale in the bookstores. In a way, the secrecy seems excessive; but I can understand their insistence on taking absolutely no chances of mail interception of telephone eavesdropping, which might only defeat the very purpose which is paramount for all of us.

One way to measure the impact of the book is to realize that the Viking people knew practically nothing about the WR until they read the ms; they were so electrified that they went on red-alert, and I doubt if many books have gone from raw manuscript to page proofs in less than 2 months, as this one has done. From my several conversations with Viking, I have the impression that there has been no precedent for the way in which they are handling Ed's book.

I have been most grateful to have advance knowledge of it, even though I must pretend even with Jones Harris that I know nothing and that I do not comprehend his tantalizing and cryptic remarks, which I do understand, and perfectly; at the same time, the burden of keeping still has been so difficult and oppressive, and the fight against temptation so constant and intense, that I don't know if I would elect to do it again, if I had it to do over.

Even if my most optimistic hopes are realized, it will only mark the end of the first phase of a long battle. If the WR is discredited and discarded, the real work--delayed for almost three years by a bunch of dirty liars and hypocrites--will have to begin. We will all have vital work to contribute, those 20 or 30 of us who have sweated and groaned over the enormity of material and come close to mastering it. At least we can indicate some of the things that remain to be done. Most important, we must all do everything in our power to ensure that if a new investigation is undertaken, it must be in the framework of an adversary proceeding, if we are to have any hope of finding the truth.

Many of the witnesses are dead. That is a great handicap; and those deaths too must be investigated. The greatest part of the work is still before us, stretching into an unseen distance. Personally, I have gone this far and I am ready to continue largely because of the comfort and inspiration of working with people like you, whom I have come to love as well as admire and rely upon, and whom I am very proud to have as friends--and more than friends, for we are sharing an experience that demands special and mutual support, creating ties that I am sure will survive all strains. With deep affection,