

31 January 1967

Dear Maggie,

Last night I spoke to Ray, to ask him if he could supply some photographs for the photo appendix of my book; and he, too, filled me in on the Lane/Liebeler affair with special reference to Lifton-the-Fink. Giving him the greatest benefit of doubt, I regard him as sick in the mind, disabled, as if with pneumonia or smallpox. But while recognizing that he is sick (rather than "evil"), I don't want to be infected nor to provide nursing services. Actually, I think the analogy does him too much honor—he is appallingly immature for his age, obsessed with his own importance—with the case taking second or third place—and an insufferable pest and bore. So much for this cross among many crosses we have to bear: I say, force him to the other side, and let him badger and annoy the Liebelers, not us, but make sure he is cut off from any material for raving and informing and cannot serve as a pipeline to the Liebeler-Schiller-Lewis axis.

Jones Harris is a different kind of problem but I have reached the conclusion (and I think that Vince has, too) that I can no longer be bothered with him. He, too, has caused me needless emotional turmoil; and while he is not as transparent as Fink Lifton, he too is motivated by a compulsion to be the grand strategist—and yet too lazy to do his own research. I know that he has used me to do his spade-work and the only reason I did it was that it was helpful to my own work to be stimulated to explore some of his freak ideas. For example, after the Philadelphia story was published, he asked me by phone to read aloud the Benavides testimony—in the course of which we both suddenly realized how significant was his reference to a red car that pulled up ahead of him on 10th. However, I cannot forgive Harris for his blind hatred of and assaults upon Lane. It ill becomes a so-called "critic" or "researcher" to obstruct Lane while fraternizing with Liebeler. My letter to Harris mailed Saturday was a real scorcher; but unfortunately he phoned me at midnight, despite a verbal request earlier in the week that he discontinue his calls to me. He has thechutzpah not only to disregard my request but to phone at that late hour, wailing that he had a "problem." You have a problem? said I, well, you can jolly well call your friend Epstein, or call your friend Liebeler, or call your friend Felker, BUT DON'T CALL ME ANY MORE.

Having received your special delivery this morning, let me hasten to reassure you that Vince told me that he was withholding from Harris and Berendt everything he has on "B" and they have only what was in the Gr. Phil. Magazine. I asked Vince out of the same apprehension you felt when it became apparent that Harris and Berendt were sticking their fingers into this highly sensitive affair.

FFROM HERE ONWARD, CONFIDENTIAL

Yes, the "B" thing is extremely important and significant. Vince is certain now that "B" was in the 10th Street business. I too questioned why he was still at large; maybe he took out insurance in advance, ie, document to be opened only in event of certain contingencies. But, as important as "B" seems to be, he is not linked to Deadly Plaza—and that is why I am much more impressed by the information I got from X. X is the man who was staying with Penn. Let me try to tell you as much as I can tell you about this, relying upon your ingenuity in understanding veiled references. X brought the electrifying information that an official (not federal) agency is quietly pursuing the events, because they are not satisfied with the WR at all but they feel, as we do, that it was a bigger thing, and they incline toward the very same groups that we have felt were exiled in their cloaks and daggers. They have under active consideration one individual, definitely linked with LHO in the mid-1950s per H & E but as X told me, also linked with him in the summer of 1963 and in Texas at the right time. The piece of mosaic I was able to supply was something that placed him in the right city, where he had denied being. He is mentioned phonetically in Whitewash II page 19 (I think p. 19, I don't have my copy here) and in my S.Ind. p. 116, where he is mentioned twice—once by his real name, and once phonetically as a different individual.

2/2/67

Dear Maggie,

I tried to phone you from a public booth a while ago but you were not expected until evening-NY time, and I don't know whether or not we will be able to talk tonight. Let me try to fill you in on what has happened in the last 24 hours. This too is confidential, except for the general outlines, which I feel you and the others must know in case the epidemic of Xs Ys and Zs extends to your part of the country.

Yesterday I had just finished writing you a report on the Lane/Nizer Jenner Seobey taping when I got a call from Arnoni. V had just called him, in a state of hysteria, to ask both of us to drop everything and come to Ph. A completely new person had presented herself the night before, talking to 4 a.m. and giving names dates places. We will call her Mme. R or just R. She was in a state of absolute terror, about to leave our happy little land, but wanted to tell, after reading the McGinnis column on V's conclusions (the one Mort read on the air). V was CERTAIN that this was the real thing, the final answer: it converged at many points with data in the H&E.

I literally dropped what I was doing and left the office without a word of explanation, disappearing for the rest of the day. I took a train and was joined by Arnoni en route. This I did because I felt from the content of the story that it had to be worthwhile to go—if it was true, it was "it," but if it was NOT true, it was "it" just the same, because this was no random, casual fabrication, but a very carefully thought-out operation, a real professional caper. As I told Arnoni on the train, I was almost certain that it was a fake, for the simple reason that it was part of an epidemic. There were just too many breakthroughs tumbling over each other, in the space of some ten or 12 days.

At the same time, B had suddenly made some approaches to V. Now he was more talkative, or would be, if he got \$20 and safe passage out. R appeared on the scene while JonesH and Berendt were there on the B affair; and they saw R but V insisted they knew nothing else whatsoever—just that R had appeared, not a word of her story. He said he had told JonesH to leave; and that Jones had been furious and abusive but had left and knew nothing. Frankly, I doubt that—I think he knows at least some part of it, and I am damned sorry if he does.

Despite my strong predisposition to regard R as a fake, she very soon had me completely sold. We listened for almost three hours. As it progressed, I was increasingly certain that she could not be giving a performance; but Arnoni, being a supergenius, was increasingly sceptical. R addressed herself more and more to me, with greater and greater warmth; at the same time, she became more and more cold and suspicious of Arnoni. When V, Arnoni and I left (V to drive us to the rr station), we had a real hassle: V remained certain that she was legitimate and had the ultimate answers; I was certain that either (a) she was legitimate, or (b) she nevertheless was a definite link to the ultimate answers for the simple reason that she was so skillful, the story so elaborate, the whole caper so professional, that it was a carefully prepared trap of some kind in which R was fulfilling an assignment. Arnoni, however, rejected both (a) and (b), claiming that she was just a lone researcher who had a lot of hearsay and had embroidered and inflated speculations and/or a few real clues for innocent reasons—to capture interest, persuade, and set some wheels in motion that she could not herself aspire to do, for the same motive we all have—to find the truth. I considered Arnoni's hypothesis absolutely idiotic; and we had a real good scrap. We missed the train; and the three of us had to return to await the next and last train, two hours later.

Now I was determined to satisfy myself as to whether my (a) or my (b) was correct, and my questions got a little sharper and trickier. Now this woman is GOOD, not to say brilliant—but she did trip herself up on one point, in a way that resolved my indecision at once—I became certain again, as I had been almost sure before meeting her, that she was a fake who had been extremely well primed for the assignment and was doing a magnificent, an almost perfect performance. Let me say here that R is not white—imagine how much more disarming her story, by that virtue. And she was fingering other non-whites, selling it as an integrated operation carried out by some of each hue.

Armeni too began to press and stated his scepticism bluntly. She did not pass that test either. Now we had to leave, to make the last train. She decided to leave also and was in the car, so that we could not communicate with V at all. Her could I reach him this morning. I am sure he is still sold on her and I am getting worried again about his rashness, talkativeness, and gullibility. I will try again tonight to reach him and convince him that he is walking into a dangerous trap.

I am groping in the dark—very much in the dark. I can't figure out what the trap is; but my bones and cells tell me that we are walking on a road that has been mined and that while R's story is a clever fake, we are nevertheless making contact with those we are trying to find.

I hope that some of this does make sense to you, vague as it is. My main purpose is to forewarn you and Ray and Lillian and the others—if you are contacted by a stranger or strangers, exercise utmost scepticism and say as little as possible about what you believe or what you know. At the least, the R affair is a stratagem to find out if we are getting close; but I think it is something more than that—maybe a set-up aimed at ~~the~~ double-jeopardy, an "expose" that falls flat on its face, so that ~~my~~ later suggestions along the same lines will be laughed into silence.