

8 April 1969

Dear Max,

No mystery at all about Garrison. He is not an agent, single or double, but a rather stupid, vulgar, demagogue who saw in the controversy on the WR as it stood in late 1966 a golden opportunity for fame, power, and--giving him every benefit of doubt--for determining what really happened on 11/22/63 Dallas. He was lusting for publicity at every step of the way and never really expected to bring Shaw or some others he accused to trial. When the Shaw trial unexpectedly seemed about to materialize, he panicked and tried to back out (saying through his chief Asst. DA Jim Alcock that there would be no trial without the autopsy photos and X-rays; later wiring the Justice Department that he no longer wanted them, just as they verged on being made available, thus snatching defeat from the jaws of victory). He knew that he had no case and had never had a case; and left the dirty work to Alcock and other aides, actively advised by Lane, Salandria, Weisberg, etc. It was an unmitigated fiasco and disaster, even the non-Shaw part of the trial in which the prosecution spent days on the Dealey Plaza evidence but allowed the most vulnerable Government witnesses and experts, Marina, etc., to escape unscathed.

The only positive elements were the showings of the Zapruder film and the violent backward thrust of the body upon impact of the head shot, and the admissions forced out of Dr. Finck under cross-examination, thanks to Harold Weisberg's efforts to infuse some knowledge of the case into the prosecution.

As I had been warning and predicting for two years, the mortifying collapse of Garrison's grandiose claims, both as to Shaw and the Dallas evidence, has created a backlash from coast to coast against further discussion of the WR, cancelling out the gain resulting from the Z film and Finck's admissions and destroying, for a long time to come, the prospects for authentic criticism and responsible investigation. The critics' past and present efforts have been virtually destroyed, demolished, and foreclosed. This could never have happened if the other critics had joined me in denouncing Garrison's cheap falsehoods and perversions of known fact. Instead, they literally endowed him with respectability--and funds, and the fruits of their research--and created a Frankenstein's monster who repaid them by handing to the Warren Commission an undreamed-of, inconceivable triumph over their adversaries. A sordid, disgusting, and unforgivable betrayal of everything the critics believed in and worked for, truly shameful and the more so when, even NOW, those muddle-headed handmaidens to this windbag indulge in the most incredible attempts to exonerate and alibi for Garrison and remain steadfast in supporting him. They seem to be under some illusion that he had a brilliant success rather than a humiliating failure, even greater than I myself expected.

Thus far only a California broadcaster, Art Kevin, of whom I had never heard previously, and the authors of the WIN article, have had the decency to acknowledge their mistaken view of Garrison and the bitter disillusion of his performance. The co-authors of the WIN piece (they came to see me last July and impressed me then as unbelievably silly, naive, and brainless) have a commentary in the 4/1/69 WIN in which they agree with the acquittal of Shaw, and say that Garrison's credibility gap is approaching Johnsonian proportions--if it had been a ballgame, they say, they would conclude that the fix is on.

But where are the weekly Penn Jones editorials? I have received nothing from the Midl.Mirror since before the Shaw trial started, and Penn was there for part of the trial at least. Nor has the bi-weekly Joesten newsletter arrived since the issue of 3/1 or 3/2/69, who devoted ONE LINE to the Shaw verdict, characterizing the outcome of the trial as a victory for the newsmakers. Strange silence, in both cases, from those who previously gave passionate reams of print regularly to the deification of Garrison.

I will hold on to my papers and mss. until I die but I would be glad to sign a legal document assigning it all to Boston University upon my decease. If your friend there would prepare such a document, I will sign it. I will be in Boston at the Sheraton-Boston Hotel from 7/6/69 to about 7/25/69, working at the World Health Assembly. If he is in town during that time, I would be happy to get together with him if work permits (I'm told the hours will be 8:30 a.m. to midnight or later and half-days Saturday).

Arnoni is in Israel, to the best of my knowledge. The "contretemps" was something far more serious than that, something irreparable so far as I am concerned. He did not pick on me—I confronted him with very serious facts which had unexpectedly presented themselves and sent me into a state of shock, and his explanation was wholly unacceptable. It was a matter of money, and of course far more than that—a matter of principle, integrity, and genuineness of the person I had taken at face value as THE personification of scrupulousness. Apart from the immediate situation, I had been suffering some erosion of my total admiration of Arnoni during the preceding several months. His "love affair" was the most commonplace, predictable, stereotype, no less vulgar for the eminence of the hero. What offended me and made me indignant was not alone his babbling it like a yenta to all and sundry, but his sadistic selfishness and gratuitous cruelty towards his wife and family, and his expectation that others would pick up after him while he pursued his pleasures and created chaos, for which others were to pick up the check, figuratively and literally. I was, of course, one of those "others" and I did not appreciate it, not one whit.

But don't worry about me, Max. Despite this new and devastating blow, despite the loss of a friendship that was for almost 3 years central to my life and my morale, I am well and stoic and firmly intend to continue to trust and believe everyone until I have reason to distrust and doubt, and not before. Arnoni notwithstanding. Truly, I think he is about as sick and self-destructive as a human being can be while still seeming to function like anyone else. And a large part of that sickness is his inability to face his own responsibility and his own guilt—his insistence on blaming anyone else, everyone else, for his own folly. I'm sorry you and your wife have been having "downs" and trust that things will improve. I have indulged myself by writing at such great length but I did want to respond to your questions—and I hope that I have done that. Consider this a non-precedent! Best wishes and warm regards,