

January 28, 1976

Dear Sylvia,

Susan Bolotin passed the word on to us about the Belin piece in the National Review, and we just got copies yesterday. I think it will be useful to us, but our initial reaction (Russ and I; we haven't discussed it much with Peter) is not to jump right in to a debate on the NR piece. We will be in a much better position discussing your work (as presented in the book) rather than Anson. Anson's book has many errors, and Belin has picked up on some of them.

Belin's position, as usual, is quite ~~x~~ bizarre and indefensible. We can now assume that he had finished this piece shortly before he found out that the Texas Observer exchange was to be reprinted, and that must have freaked him out. Two reasons - first, your presentation of the record, unlike Anson's or various others, is unarguably correct. Second, his current defense edits out some of the most revealing parts of his Texas Observer piece - notably, the testimony which shows that he knew that the FBI had reported a contradictory version of Givens' story. Although it is hard to tell from his reply to Anson, your article is quite precise about the significance of this question.

There is one tactical consideration which Susan may already have discussed with you. Random House is particularly vulnerable to some action by Belin before the books are actually printed (and, to some ~~degree~~ degree, ~~x~~ before they are bound and distributed). We agreed that we would not give the story of the Belin-Random House censorship to the press until we were sure the books were out of everyone's reach - i.e., until we have books in hand. (At least the ~~paperback~~ cloth editions, and probably the paperback - another week or so.) We have been thinking about who would be the best people to get the story - I am inclined towards Cockburn at the Voice, Norman Kempster at the Washington Star (who knows me, and is ~~x~~ exceptionally good at getting facts into his ~~x~~ stories), and David Martin of the AP. It would be ~~xxx~~ better not to have Anson break the story, partly because he is now involved in the dispute, and partly because he is not too reliable on details.

Since I wrote the review of Belin's book (which I sent to you in January 1974), I have gotten a few more Archives documents. One is a very incriminating "Tentative Memorandum" of January 23, 1964 - just a few days after Belin got to Washington, I think - which combines the expected prosecution case with a very superficial ~~attempt~~ attempt to claim that they are not prejudging the case. This is the memo he comments on at the beginning of his big memo, as quoted in the Texas Observer, where he ~~x~~ claims that the second memo substantially ~~differs~~ differs from the first one. A very self-serving statement; all that was done, really, was to clean up the language. The 1/23 memo contains such embarrassing language as "The following tentative conclusions are ~~x~~ made beyond a reasonable doubt" (including that Oswald ~~was~~ was the assassin) and (on the inconsistencies): "Tentative conclusion to date: Whatever inconsistencies seen thus far are not sufficient to rebut conclusions heretofore reached beyond a reasonable doubt." If you would like a copy of this memo, I will send one. Also, let me know if you want the pages I have from the big 2/25 memo: Table of Contents (pp. i-ix), and pp. 1-3, 35-7 (wounds), 49-50, 57, 232-238(*). I would appreciate a copy of the pages on Givens (around p. 105), and ~~other~~ any other pages which you have and could copy easily.

Of course, I am quite willing to make all this documentary material, ~~xxx~~ and my 1974 review, available to Anson, if he is interested. (I don't have his address, so I am not writing him ~~directly~~ directly.)

We are about to start putting together a press packet on the Belin-RH matter, which we will of course send to you. We are inclined to go easy on RH for now, although the Belin article makes them look even worse. For one thing, what he says about you is very close to libel itself. Also, his concern about being called a contributor becomes less serious, now that he is allowing himself to be billed as "Chief Investigator of the Warren Commission!"

Please feel free to call collect if developments warrant. Best, *Paul*
PLH