

24 May 1976

Dear Paul,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 19th and for the enclosures—your CIA notes and subject guide, which I read with real interest, and your letter to Bethell. I was not aware of his article in the Washington Monthly, and I prefer not to see it since it is obviously stupid and malicious. I used to have friendly feelings toward Tom because he did not swallow the Garrison fictions and because he tried to avert a flagrant injustice to Clay Shaw. But apparently he is of the simplistic (or is it disingenuous?) school that believes one must accept either Garrison or the Warren Commission and does not understand that both must be rejected. By the same token, he apparently believes that the presence of some nuts and self-seekers who designate themselves as "critics" cancels out those critics who have been credible and responsible at all times. Up his, if I may resort to vulgarity.

Speaking of pseudo-critics, I was recently trapped into a lunch with Mae Brussell, whom I had managed never before to meet and whom I would greatly have preferred not to meet now. I must admit that she was very subdued, even if she looked a bit like a wild-woman and let loose a quiet stream-of-consciousness that predicated one immense conspiracy that encompassed Howard Hughes, Watergateniks, and everything that has happened in this country in the last two decades. I think she honestly believes everything she spouts and that she must be rather sick in the head. Very sad.

I hope that Schweiker and the rest of us do not get too marooned in what the CIA and the FBI did to confuse and mislead the Warren Commission. It is true that they have been highly sinister but the principal villain is still the Commission. We must not get trapped into a debate on whether or not Castro recruited Oswald but must keep hammering at the fact that Oswald was innocent—that he had no motive, no means, and no opportunity. Moreover, at the risk of being old-fashioned, we must keep the medical, autopsy, and other forensic evidence at the forefront, because it is in that area that we can conclusively demonstrate a conspiracy and the victimization of Oswald. I am really fearful that we will be drawn into arguing on the basis of a wrong premise, where the best possible result will be merely inconclusive. This is not to say that we should not scrutinize the performance of the CIA, as you are doing so capably—we must not let the central, compelling evidence of conspiracy be forgotten or lost in a contrived new controversy about Castro's implication—which has always been the Government's fall-back position.

Perhaps I have not expressed the above very clearly but I think you will know what I mean and I imagine you will even agree in essence.

All the best,

*Aylwin*