

28 December 1970

FROM Z TO A

*See Revised letter
sent 1/12/71*

Friend Hoch,

So you have seen the Zapruder motion-picture film of the assassination of President Kennedy! Good! But where? When? Under what circumstances? If not at the National Archives, how can the film be seen?

What was your impression on first viewing? Were you "stunned" like Penn Jones, Jr.? Did you "gasp" like the courtroom during the trial of Clay Shaw in New Orleans for conspiracy to murder Kennedy? Didn't your eye signal your brain that the film, which came first, demolished the official autopsy report, which was compounded later? Didn't the specters of conspiracy and frame-up loom in your consciousness?

Or did your mind boggle at the obvious and refuse to accept the "sensible and true avouch" of your eyes? Did it recoil from the implications which arose with appalling instant force from the lurid film? Is that why you think one cannot "conclude from what direction the shot came from without the most careful examination and logical analysis"? Is that why you saw the film "many times"? Why is your letter so barren of information? What examination did you make of the film? Where is your logical analysis? If you made one, did you circulate it? If not, why do you emphasize its necessity?

If you were genuinely undecided about the direction of the shot, why did you turn to Alvarez, who had made a spurious attempt to align the Zapruder film with its antithesis, the autopsy, which had even then been discredited by forensic scientists beyond the possibility of rehabilitation? If Thompson's foray into "microscience" to refute the Warren Commission was unconvincing, did you imagine that shooting bullets into melons and pineapples would rebut him and validate the Commission findings?

In general, do you think the crucial problems of the Kennedy assassination can be solved by physical and legal evidence? If this kind of evidence could untangle the assassination's mystery-shrouded aspects, would not that result already have been achieved by the company of independent investigators,

researchers, scholars, experts, and critics who for seven years have devoted their considerable talents to the solution of the problem? Make no mistake --cumulatively, they have done yeoman's work in locating overlooked and neglected witnesses, and secured their testimony; demonstrated both the suppression and manufacture of evidence, and the subornation of perjury; discredited the autopsy; and, in sum, impeached the Warren Commission's Report as a monstrous compilation of ambiguities, evasions, distortions, and lies, constituting a frame-up of a dead man. The ineluctable implication of their total work is—government policy conceals the source and motivation of the assassination. Why?

Are not these the crucial problems of Kennedy's murder? Yet students and investigators of the assassination generally have failed to come to grips with these problems. Is it because the assassination is truly an impenetrable mystery? Or because, with the exception of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, they have not approached the assassination as essentially a political murder?

Where do you stand on that point? What do you think of Garrison's theory of the assassination? Can you subscribe to the idea expounded in his recently published A Heritage of Stone—that the assassination was planned and carried out by the "military-intelligence complex"? What is your view? Is Garrison's "military-intelligence complex" a distinct entity, or a component of Eisenhower's "military-industrial complex"? Or of C. Wright Mills' Power Elite? Is Garrison's "complex" compatible or irreconcilable with Buchanan's oil-millionaires' plot? Do you have a theory of the assassination?

Even were we to agree that Garrison's concept is unoriginal and ill-defined, and that his argumentation is a pastiche of familiar clichés and vague formulations of bourgeois libertarian demagogy, must we not nevertheless say with him, "The question of who killed John Kennedy evolved into the more meaningful query of why (his emphasis) he was killed" (A Heritage of Stone, page 22)? And if we have serious reservations about the accuracy of his too-easy linkage of the assassinations of President John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Senator R. F. Kennedy, "which in each instance achieved the elimination of a public figure who opposed our massive military expedition into Asia" (page 23),

should we not inquire, as Garrison does not, whether the murder of President Kennedy was connected with the killing three weeks earlier of South Vietnamese dictator Diem, who is said to have been negotiating secretly, or so he thought, for peace with Hanoi? Was it not connected, also, as Garrison, too, points out, with issues of the cold war?

Must we not, in a word, try to place the Presidential assassination into historical context as an incident in a continuing struggle of giant forces contending for control of government policy? Is not our problem the identification of these forces, one of which was served badly, and the other served well, by the assassination?

How can we do it? Where shall we look for clues if not in the rightward evolution of pre-assassination to post-assassination government policy? What other broad alternative is there to the communist-conspiracy-theory advanced immediately following the assassination by the Dallas-police and press establishments, and to the subsequent government frame-up of a solitary, alienated, working-class, leftist nobody? Incidentally, doesn't that progression from political cause to political anonymity strike you as significant and strange? What do you make of it? Why did the Johnson Administration denude the assassination of political motivation and character?

In short, leave "microscience" to the Thompsons, and pseudoscience to the Alvarezes. Make your "logical analysis" a political one, but not in the style of Garrison. Reach for historical evidence. There is no other road to the truth.

Fraternally,

Thomas Stamm

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