

10 December 1965

Dear Dave,

Thank you very, very much for your letter and the various enclosures reporting on your telephone conversations and your visit to WJL. I hope that you know how much I appreciate the generosity with which you share information and that I will treat everything with utmost confidence and discretion. This is my lunch-hour, and I shall comment as fully as possible on all the points raised in your letter.

First, regarding your separate note: I will certainly make every effort to maintain direct contact with you on any developments which may occur and avoid relying on third parties, as you request. At the same time, Dave, I must say that I am distressed at what I read between the lines. It would be a great pity to permit the Buchanan business, or any other matter of that kind, to assume such proportions--rightly or wrongly--that it compromises relationships of value and importance. Let me repeat what I perhaps have said already: that in my opinion it is morally questionable, to say the least, for Buchanan to suggest, explicitly or by silence, that the material in his article is the product of his own research, effort, or intelligence. That would be true even if he obtained full consent for such claim to credit from those who really provided the material--he would still be dishonest to permit the impression that it was his own. That is one issue.

Another issue, and here the facts are not clear to me, is whether Buchanan in fact received consent, or believed that he had received consent, to use the material presented in the Paris Match and the other European magazines. In other words, were you given the opportunity at any time to authorize the use of your own material, with or without conditions; and if not, was it Buchanan who disregarded your rights and the need for your consent? I have the impression, for what it is worth, that no one tried to take advantage of anyone else, and that haste, confusion, distance, and perhaps an undue feverishness contributed to the ambiguity which has arisen. You are perfectly right, Dave, in saying that no one working on the assassination has any obligation to give away the results of his work. Some of us do feel a special sense of commitment or even "mission" and do not think in the same terms about this as they might about work done on another kind of problem. I certainly started with unhesitating and perhaps naive willingness to share anything I knew or found out with anyone else--for example, about a year ago I spent several hours giving one of Mark Lane's assistants everything I had then discovered in the H & E which was in conflict with the WR. My subsequent experience with Lane and his coterie (I have not met him personally) is such that my instinct would not be not to co-operate---but if it came to making a decision in practical terms, I would probably put my impulses aside if I felt that I was in a position to provide material that would be used effectively against the WR. But that is my personal attitude and I certainly would not impose or try to impose the same views on anyone else.

It is true that we all make sacrifices in this work--time, effort, anguish, and money. Some of us can manage the financial output without difficulty; others are not in the same position, but still spend the money. I can put myself in your position without any difficulty, and even as a third party I can see the irony and injustice of having Buchanan make a lot of money largely on your sweat. But the relevant question here is--did you protect your position by setting specific conditions when you sent him your material, or did he have reason to believe that he was at liberty to use it freely? You remember that when you telephoned me I indicated some apprehension about the then-prospective publication in Paris Match--although I did not feel able to interfere--and I think that perhaps at that time you should have cabled him to prohibit the use of your material. As things now stand,

the legal position is ambiguous--he has no formal permission from you, but neither has he been prohibited from using the material in the form he did use it. Perhaps the best course would be to ask him, in light of all the circumstances, voluntarily to share the proceeds with you. Before leaving the subject, let me say also that I think we should all do everything in our power to maintain unity and co-operation even if it means swallowing some bitter pills, because the group is very small and the cause is such a difficult and "unpopular" one (to say the least) that we cannot afford to invest energy and emotion on side issues which will fragment and dissipate such "collectiveness" as we have managed to achieve despite distance, differences of theory or emphasis, etc. And we should be as calm, objective, and patient as possible, too (without becoming carbons of Ed Epstein or his ilk), because we have a long haul ahead of us. I think this must read like a sermon, which it is not intended to be, but I am sure you will understand my motives.

To reply to some other specific questions: My book as it now stands is a comparative study of the conflicts and contradictions between the WR and the H&E on some important aspects of the case, and I do not plan to use photographs or diagrams--in fact, my thinking hasn't even approached the question, because I have a great deal of writing to do yet and it will be some time before I begin to consider the final format and focus of the manuscript. So, for the time being at least, pictures are out. Anyhow, I don't have that kind of money...anything over a hundred bucks gives me great great pause.

Jones Harris, contrary to his usual practice, has not telephoned me for about two weeks. At that time I told him about Paris Match and he apparently dashed right out after we said goodbye to get a copy. I am surprised that he has not called to vent his spleen, and perhaps vent it on me as well on the grounds of my relationship with Maggie...and it is just as well that he has not. Sauvage has not called either. The last time we were in touch I told him about P-M- and he too intended to get a copy. In his case, the fact that he has not called is probably no index to his reaction---we are not normally in touch on a regular basis. I have not called to ask him what he thought of it because I didn't want especially to know--I have always been pained by his feud with Buchanan, for the same reasons outlined in my "sermon" above. By the way, when Jones Harris said that you and he "were not equals" didn't it occur to you that he might be right? After all, that leaves open the question of who is less equal than whom. I don't want to spend too much time on Jones Harris--again, it is unproductive and a waste of energy--but he is generally too supercilious and superior, with almost everyone, I believe, and rather childishly secretive as well.

About WJL and the moral problem that confronted him and others on the WC--I am afraid that I am rather uncompromising on that question. I would have fought as hard as I could from within and if I lost I would have resigned, called a press conference, exposed what was going on, and repudiated the WR as a dirty rotten job. I don't see any room for compromise on such an issue. It is true that WJL's present appearance of scepticism, his willingness to talk to critics, even to raise questions with his former colleagues and suggest re-investigation of certain evidence, creates the appearance of virtue. I don't want to denigrate that unjustly--but as you have suggested yourself, it seems to be animated to some extent by hostility towards Redlich and/or Rankin and/or those at the highest levels of the Establishment, not by a thirst for justice or a hunger for the truth or devotion to principle as such.

Reverting to Jones Harris (so that I may answer your question about his pronunciation of my name), he started almost immediately and without-a by-your-leave to call me "Sylvia" and although I am not a Victorian spinster I was momentarily annoyed--not by the first-name as much as by the general tone and what later developed into a certain patronization. It may be that he is not aware that the name is pronounced "Marr" for, to be fair, sometimes I pronounce it "meager" to people who have seen the name in writing but not heard it, so that they will identify me, and later on explain the pronunciation. But who is the "Bernie" you mention? I don't know anyone in this circle of ours named "Bernie."

About Triumfo, as you may know already we have inquired at Hotalings and were told that nothing has come since tthe last issue, some months ago. However, at my first opportunity I will stop there again and see if it has come in.

I'll be interested to see your exhange of messages with Herbert Orth. Apparently the series of inquiries from Lillian Castellano, you, and me has alarmed him and I suspect we will get nothing more out of him. I am hesitant to contact him again personally; let me mull it over before I do anything. Of course there is no "testimony" from him, as he must have known. However, I am sure that he was asked a lot of questions, whether or not his replies were transcribed.

About the tape of the radio program--events have probably outstripped me, but the tape was copied, together with a shorter broadcast by Sylvan Fox on November 1st, and a TV interview of the venerable Judge Brown, and all tapes sent to Maggie to keep and make available to all those interested. I believe there will be an "audition" tomorrow and I hope that you will be able to hear the tapes and also to copy them if you wish.

I don't have enough time left to do justice to your full, fascinating and valuable reports on conversations with MM, JH, and WJL--which I want to re-read anyhow. I'll save comments for a later letter. However, I do want to thank you again for sending these accounts and to congratulate you for your energy and ingenuity in obtaining reactions and admissions which are certainly arresting, if not conclusive.

I am sending you under separate cover, for your own information but to be kept confidential, copies of a series of letters I wrote to counsel (including WJL) to which I received no replies, or no replies on the substantive of the questions on which I asked clarification. You have already had the summary of my telephone conversation with Eisenberg (on the ammunition clip, and thanks by the way for your generous remarks on that), so now your picture will be complete. I am planning either to publish those letters as an appendix to my book or perhaps to submit them as an article, if I can interest a magazine. Let me know what you think, when you have a chance.

With warm regards,

Sylvia Meagher