

21 December 1968

Dear David,

Just received your letter of the 18th with enclosed copy of your letter to Vince. I cannot really explain his two-sentence letter to you but I have been told of an incident that seems related to it. You will remember that in my letter to you dated 17 December 1968, page 2, I outlined the case of Ed Horsey, saying that I did not have time to go into the full story. One of the incidents that I omitted was that of a phone call to Vince, supposedly from Horsey, who was very anxious to talk to him. The person who took the call said that Vince was out of town and if it was very urgent to try to reach him at Garrison's office in New Orleans.

Shortly afterwards, a call was received in Garrison's office for Vince, from someone who said he was David Lifton. I am not clear what happened at that point, except that Vince did apparently speak to the caller, or at least heard his voice on the phone, and that Vince insists that he recognized the voice as your voice. In the light of everything else we have learned about Horsey, and the fact that the original call to Philadelphia was from Horsey, or someone claiming to be Horsey, I would be inclined to think that Horsey then called Vince in New Orleans, said that he was David Lifton, and proceeded to tell Vince something that Vince now describes as "strange behavior."

I heard about this incident about two weeks ago, and about many other incidents involving Horsey, in a phone call from Mrs. Hartmann (my correspondent in St. Petersburg). I did not pay much attention to the matter of the calls to Vince, which I wasn't too clear about then and which may not be entirely correct or complete as reconstructed above, because the incident involving Thornley and Thompson seemed more sinister and was at least susceptible of corroboration. That is why I did not go into it in my letter of the 17th (actually, I think I had forgotten it at the time I was writing you, but of course it came back to me when I got your letter of the 18th). Now I learn from Mrs. Hartmann, in a letter that arrived yesterday, that since Horsey's departure from St. Petersburg, all the mysterious phonecalls and harrassments have stopped completely.

Now let me tell you of a few things that came up since I wrote you on the 17th enclosing a copy of my letter to Vince of the same date: First, I heard from my editor at Bobbs-Merrill (who is also editor for a book by Bill Turner that was published earlier this year by Bobbs-Merrill) that Turner was upset because Vince was slandering him from coast to coast as a government agent who was deliberately feeding Garrison false leads and lies. Vince was making similar accusations against (you won't BELIEVE this) Steve Jaffe. Next, I heard that Bill Boxley had been fired and that Garrison had denounced him as a CIA agent. I made some inquiries and learned that this was all Vince's doing: he had gone to New Orleans determined to convince Garrison that Boxley was an agent, that he and Turner were working hand in glove to "ruin" Garrison. Although Vince is getting all the credit or all the blame, depending on one's point of view, I wonder if HW is not equally or more responsible. It was he who first made ominous noises about Bill Turner, it was he who asked to see the letters I had received from Striso, he went with Salandria to New Orleans (although I am told that he and Garrison are not on speaking terms--not surprising, since the continent itself is not huge enough to contain two such colossal egos), and he who has been making streams of accusations against Thornley, and against you in terms of your support of Thornley.

My reference to "unnamed but sinister backers" in my letter of August 19th was purely ironic--I was just mocking Harold for his apparent belief that Thornley was implicated in the assassination and poking fun at the idea that Thornley (and you) were acting on behalf of the conspirators. It was not HW's phrase, but my own ironic one.

Oh, yes, I almost forgot to include one further piece of information: Tink Thompson tells me that Vince called him recently, after his return from New Orleans, and during their conversation gave Tink cause to believe that Vince was still looking upon him as a CIA type agent. When he put this to Vince, he would not confirm it in those words, but he did say, let me put it this way, Tink, you have not passed our security clearance, or something very close to that. Tink couldn't believe his ears (I don't know which is worse--the absurdity or the effrontery of Vince's reply, remembering of course that he is supposed to be a civil liberties lawyer) and is now utterly fed up with Vince.

I have also heard something that suggests that Lane and Mort Sahl have fallen out, and that Sahl is hinting that Lane has become an enemy of the Garrison "probe."

Now, let us just update the inventory of government agents denounced by a stern Vincent Salandria--First was Epstein, then, Jacob Cohen, Thompson, Striso, Turner, Gurvich, Boxley, and Jaffe (not that I necessarily know them all). You, thus far, are charged only with "strange behaviour." I make that a total of 8 with options on a 9th (Lifton) and possibly even a tenth (Thornley) and, if I do not watch my step, will not the eleventh be Meagher?

What else can one say? It is an indignity to see what started as serious, objective research, and unselfish cooperation, degenerate into such a farce and a cheap vaudeville, verging on the obscene and the insane. I can hardly find words to express my disgust and impatience with this sordid comedy. (Oh, yes, I think Fensterwald is also accused, or at least he is under ominous suspicion by Vince.)

I do hope that you are not going to be bothered by ^{this} nonsense. As for me, I have decided just how I will deal with Vince when he gets around to accusing me: I am simply going to admit it.

Please let me know further developments on your exchange with Salandria and related matters.

Laughing my head off
(so I don't cry),