

20 September 1966

Dear Shirley,

I am glad to send you herewith a copy of the Popkin book, with my warm compliments. There is a generous footnote about my index on page 54 or so—which I appreciate. Also, I am quoted (with my prior permission) on the page facing the inside front cover, complimenting Popkin on his careful study of the H & E volumes. BUT just the same I was quite taken a-back when I scanned the book. Early in the summer the editor of the NY Review of Books invited me to lunch and asked me to help Popkin (who was and still is in Europe) reply to a long letter from Curtis Crawford—my bete noire—criticizing Popkin's article. I was glad to do that and it cost me two days or so of hard work. I prepared about 10 pages of rebuttal of Crawford's arguments, which were sent to Popkin. Eventually I had a chance to go over his 24-page reply to Crawford (which will appear in the next issue of NY Review of Books). I was surprised that he used so few of my arguments; but I said nothing, after all, it was his reply. But now I see that the unused arguments have quietly been incorporated into the enclosed "book" (which is really only the original article, padded out), without my knowledge or agreement. This is not the first time, nor I suppose the last time; and I am more disappointed in the ethics of those on my side than I am angry.

I agree with everything you say about TIME and I have drafted a letter dealing with their factual inaccuracies which I am sure will not impress them at all. The fibers on the rifle "matched" LHO's shirt only in the sense that they could have come from that shirt—or any other shirt from the same manufactured batch. What is more important is what Liebelier pointed out in his 26-page memo (see INQUEST): that the fibers in the paper bag and the fibers on the rifle were completely different from each other.

Also, I agree with you that TIME's caution in the RFK cover story derives from the fantastic tide of his popularity. Last night on the TV news there were scenes of RFK in the midst of some group or other of youngish people—the screams and bedlam reminded me of nothing so much as the 1940s fainting-for-Sinatra fad; or the current mania about the Beatles. It is frightening, for the unthinking adulation could be manipulated and channeled into almost any direction by the man who enjoys it—not because his position has been studied and supported on merit, not for any cerebral or idealistic reason, but only because of the guts-mystique-hysteria accruing to the surrogate for the murdered Kennedy.

Yes, probably RFK wants the White House in part to avenge his brother; but mainly for power with which he can reverse present policies. Yes, he may have no proof; yes, Oswald is dead; but by that rationalization, why not go along with the Earl Himself—maybe he too reasoned that after all Oswald is dead—so anything goes. No, Shirley, your defense of RFK's possible motives doesn't hold together. Justice is no less important for the dead than for the living, for in denying justice to any individual, living or dead, we violate what is sacred to civilized society—justice itself, in the abstract, which may not be knowingly or willingly sacrificed for ANY reason unless we are ready to accept the unacceptable—that the ends justify the means, and that the same thing may be done to you, me, or the man-in-the-street, or the child in Vietnam, in the name of some higher cause.

Why does RFK have no proof? There is every evidence and proof anyone could want that the WR is a dirty lying document. He does not even have to read it—he needs only to read some of the current books, or even some of the reviews of the books, to know how foul the stench is. It is not just a question of Oswald being dead—it is a question of the assassins going free and unpunished and free to take more lives, as perhaps they have already taken that of Bowers and some others.

That RFK is silent in the face of all the evidence that the WR is corrupt and that the wrong man has been branded while the real murderers go scot-free, that in itself is (for me) unforgivable. It has been such an ugly thing to face that I eagerly welcomed all kinds of scraps and hints of information which suggested that in due course RFK would take a public position with the critics and researchers and I tried to hold judgment in abeyance, comforting myself with the reminder that he and EMK had left themselves an escape-hatch in reiterating that they had not read the WR.

But I was wrong. If my information is correct (and there is every reason to believe that it is) RFK will not merely fail to come out on our side--he will not merely remain silent--he will act soon, or has already acted, to take the Warren Commission off the hook! I think it will be done via the Manchester book. Something was added to it, at the last minute, which takes the pressure off the WC and "closes the case" again, by means which may make it infinitely harder to reopen.

You say to me in your letter "the fact remains that not my brother or your brother, Sylvia, was killed in Dallas in Nov. 22, 1963. It was RFK's brother who was killed." But, Shirley, the fact remains that you and I have been possessed by one objective and only one since 11/22/63 (and in my case, without any great feeling about JFK, only the feeling that after a terrible beginning he was showing signs in the American University speech of growth and greatness) --to find the truth, whatever it happened to be, and to settle for nothing less. I wish the brother or brothers had done the same as you and I and the handful of others like us...you can tell me again that they are obstructed by the need to be realistic, by practical politics, by ultimate purposes--it changes nothing. The fact is that they have let obscure, helpless people fight the whole battle by themselves, the battle they should have been leading...and now, not content with withholding support, publicly or even privately, they are about to undo what we have achieved, collectively and with such bitter effort...and to rescue the WC and the "skewered cadaver" of the WR.

W H Y ? ? ? ?

Why are they doing this? I can think of only one reason, and that is that they have made a deal of some kind--traded the conferring or restoration of respectability on the discredited WR for some political gain or gift of later power. If you can think of a better reason, tell me what it is--I am ready to consider any reasonable hypothesis which leaves RFK with the right to honor and respect. It is just that I cannot myself think of any.

You ask what I think of U Thant. I think he is one of the truly great and pure souls. I think he SHOULD leave because it is a measure of his moral protest against the filth and cruelty of Vietnam. If he backs down, I will be deeply shocked and disappointed. The General Assembly opens this afternoon. The gloom here is thick and suffocating...the weather, deep gray-black overcast, with rain beginning, is the dirge to the general mood. If I heard the drums and the anguished music of the funeral march, this moment, it would make everything complete.

You ask also about the ugly possibility of perversion and the sex motif as perhaps the root of the assassination. I completely reject that idea--there is nothing at all to support the idea that LHO was an overt or even a latent homosexual--however you reacted to your first look at him on TV. I too had that first look and so did many others, without that intuition. Maybe I am slow to recognize deviates...but I have never seen, then or later, evidence of deviation. The man was married and a father, a father who really adored his two children; and not one crumb has ever turned up to suggest perversion at any time in his life--even in the Marines, when it should have emerged if it was there. (No; he had a Japanese mistress and seemed to be in love with her.) ### Thanks for the fascinating information on the Colonel. ### Yes, I think I will send for Joesten's books; I haven't done it yet; is that address sufficient? ### In closing Shirley, I warn you as a loving friend, don't