

Received  
10/14/66

Dear Sylvia: My car finally gave up the ghost this morning and I am off to see if I can afford a cheap Rambler.

Yes, I've read the Fred Cook article on the Hoffa thing (and RFK) and the only comment I can make is to repeat yours: "...look at his (Cook's) half-assed treatment of the WR..." As usual I present myself so badly: I agree with you 100% that we should not put our whole philosophies in the hands of anyone--RFK, JFK, Fred Cook, Hoffa, anyone! On the other hand, what I intend in regard to RFK is a defense for him, the same as yours for Hoffa and Lee Oswald: "while we may not like or respect, (RFK) (we must) fight like tigers to be sure he is not framed, misrepresented, maligned, etc. There is a tendency abroad to feel that justice, as such, should NEVER extend to the Kennedys--because they are rich, allegedly handsome, relatively young, etc., etc. I never have quite figured the origins of the hatred the extreme left has for RFK. (Needless to say, they had it for JFK and if you will read magazines representing the far left that Lee Oswald subscribed to and read, you can easily assume that his state of mind, thanks to these publications, was such as to have made fait accompli the assassination. As I recall, in those days, JFK was, to the left, an assassin himself, etc., etc.

The French say that to know all is to forgive all. And I hold to this. At the moment I can see many fans for RFK, but no intellectual defenders. What is it about RFK that offends them? Since he is not an intellectual, perhaps it is this. But, no, it can't be this alone, because Hoffa is not an intellectual and despicable as the Left finds him, they do nevertheless find it in their hearts to make allowances for him in the cause of justice. But not for RFK. Yet I have not yet read anywhere (perhaps I have missed it) a cry ~~for~~ from RFK explaining every step he took in the alleged Hoffa persecution. Is it possible that RFK does not feel a defense is necessary? Does he feel that IF an independent researcher took the time and effort to analyze his every step along this line, he (she) would discover nothing untoward? But, again, I am asking ONLY that as much fairness and justice be displayed by the Left (and yourself, Sylvia) to Bobby as is displayed (most correctly) by the Left (and you) towards Jimmy Hoffa. The cold facts of the matter (in my opinion) are these: Mistakes were made on both sides during the pursuit of Hoffa. Errors were undoubtedly accomplished. However, in my opinion, Robert Kennedy did NOT at any time during the pursuit of Jimmy Hoffa knowingly employ government techniques against him which would be below the belt, so to speak. This much confidence I have; again I cannot expect you to agree with this. On the other hand, before you accept Fred Cook's denouement of RFK, wait at least for the gentleman (RFK) to present his facts. Then, after looking carefully at ALL sides, make your decision. At the present moment we have nothing to show for RFK's side of the story. He has not yet thrown himself vocally into history protesting "I am innocent" "I am innocent." Perhaps his conscience is such that he feels no need for such protestation. We must wait to see. In the meantime, let me repeat (in other words) what you said in your letter: As far as Fred Cook's reliability is concerned, he is a bag of shit. He is primarily a money-maker. Nothing wrong in that. He has made his money by writing articles that the Left enjoys. His orientation has been towards that market. Bravo! I have no complaints. But I am far and away from considering him the Will Durant of his time.

But, Sylvia, Vickie is right. We will get NOWHERE arguing over the Kennedys. And I don't intend to lose your friendship over this. Harold Feldman and I have conducted a long (and sometimes bitter) argument on this for two years, but thank God! Harold still likes me and I adore him. (He is full of god-damned masculine faults nevertheless. But show me ONE who isn't wearing trousers department, that is!) All I have to defend my feelings on the Kennedys is an instinct, an intuition, and this is a lousy way to make a judgment! On the other hand, I am a stupid, loyal, aging woman. When I make a friend, I will not give him up, whether his name is Kennedy or Meagher. I am convinced about the illness-LBJ connotation. Much of this is fragmented, but if you want it I will send it next letter. It will take a little pulling together, something I am not good at. Nevertheless, I will try. There is no doubt in my opinion that JFK was seriously ill and dying. But the actual prospect (as far as death was concerned) could have been past the time of the '64 convention. However it is also my opinion that the

LBJ "resignation" may have been demanded almost immediately--before Christmas 1963, in order to prepare for '64. Would a VP have been placed into the vacancy? You know of course that the first meeting set up by all parties concerned (RFK, Sorenson, JFK, Dem. Nat. Chairman, etc.) for planning the 1964 campaign met in the White House in a three hour meeting, I think on November 14th. LBJ was deliberately excluded from this meeting, a terrible affront in itself, due to his (LBJ's) confidence that JFK could NOT have won the '60 election without him. Many things were quite different in '63-'64. I won't go into the politics of it, things you know as well as I. But it was not the religious issue which was a factor in '63-'64, but the racial issue. Thus Kennedy felt fairly sure he would lose most of the South (and Southwest); however, his popularity in the rest of the country was such (Gallup: 59%-Nov. '63 compared to LBJ's after same time in office to date at 46% and Eisenhower's at same time as Kennedy at 53% and Truman's at 23%) that the '64 race would have been an overwhelming victory in contrast to the slim margin of '60. This mandate was all important to Kennedy because he intended to use it to enforce his myth-shattering, which meant so much to him and the establishment of a detente (firm) with Russia and an approach to the Revolutionary era ahead which he and RFK understood so well. Johnson and the Bobby Baker case could have done enough damage to JFK (what with the press, mostly conservative using it against the Kennedy Administration and the press of the Left delighting in it as a sign of American political decadence). Whichever way it went, IT plus the southern racial defection could be the ONLY thing to hurt Kennedy enough to harm him. Thus LBJ had to go--just as Dulles went after the Bay of Pigs although Kennedy ~~allegedly~~ took the blame for that fiasco. Smathers had been approached for the VP--not because the South mattered, but only because neither RFK nor JFK wanted the South to be replaced as VP by, say, a Northerner. This they felt would have been too much of an unkind slap. Smathers was practically useless as an aid on the ticket, but the South was a lost cause anyway. Smathers would historically save the face of the South as far as the '64 election went, and LBJ who would hurt the ticket this time around, nationally, would be gone. At any rate, I'll send you a more coherent background on the illness and LBJ's awareness of it later.

MUCH, MUCH LOVE. Be patient with my love for the Kennedys. I would defend you the same way.

S.