

12 December 1966

Dear Tom,

I am no longer sure whether you are a critic of the Warren Commission, or a critic of the critics of the Commission. All along, I believed that you were a critic of the Commission, and the first such critic to have seen the Zapruder film as a motion picture. In the 15 months which have elapsed, you surely had every opportunity to do those things with which you tax the critics for not having done, or not done to your satisfaction.

Proclaiming that a political approach to the assassination is a basic prerequisite, you proceed to ask me, "Why do you fight it?" That question is not merely patronizing--it is offensive, in that it implies intellectual dishonesty and moral cowardice. The fact is that you seem to demand not only that the critics take a political approach--they must take your political approach.

I can ill afford the time and effort to disabuse you of some of your notions but I suppose I must. (1) If you will read my review of four books on the Warren Report in the current issue of Studies on the Left, you will acquaint yourself with my "political approach," for which it did not occur to me to seek your prior approval. (2) I have set myself the primary task of documenting the fraudulence and misrepresentation in the Warren Report, and compiling an inventory of the evidence against the pre-fabricated official conclusions. I continue to suffer the illusion that this work, including the subject index, has not been entirely useless. (3) For reasons of competence and resources, there must be a separation between the researcher, on the one hand, and the editorialist, on the other. As a researcher, I feel that I should avoid making claims which cannot be documented. Editorialists, on the other hand, can assess the results of the research on the evidence and place the events into their proper political perspective (as at least one publication has been doing since 11/23/63). (4) Under no circumstances do I wish to emulate from the left what is issuing from the right and the ultra-right. Spokesmen like Henry Taylor, General Walker, Revilo Oliver, etc., pretending to be students of the evidence, are filling the newspaper columns with vicious innuendo and accusations that the assassination was plotted in the Kremlin or Havana. Do you really feel that something is to be gained by issuing parallel accusations against "the government" without supporting evidence, by any researcher? If so, I still fail to understand why you do not do this job yourself but deliver constant reproaches and complaints about the shortcomings of other critics.

I am saying all this in a friendly spirit, although I suppose it will read like an eruption of irritation, and some irritation is present in fact. I realize that your letter, too, was entirely well-intended; and that you have no barometer to my extreme busyness and the pressures under which I happen to be working at the moment. But you do know that I have never agreed with your approach, which tends to denigrate the evidence as such, and I still deny that we will ever get to the bottom of this affair by studying the economy of Texas or the like. So please don't belabor me further on this score--I am certain that the researchers and critics have more positive things to be done than to recriminate and feud with each other. We can do the post-mortem on failures and faults in due course, but now I want to concentrate on what in my misguided way I consider the necessary and indispensable tasks. Friends?

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If I am correct in thinking that you are a critic of the Warren Commission, then it seems to me that you were the first critic to see the Zapruder film. Nothing prevented you from doing all of those things which you tax the other critics with not having done, or having done unsatisfactorily.

But I have a growing impression that you are, first and foremost, a critic of the critics of the Commission, and that you have not yet found merit in any of their work.

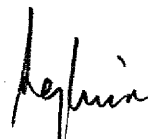
You say that the basic prerequisite is a political approach to the assassination and you ask "Why do you fight it?" That is an offensive question, although you may not have intended it as such, which implies intellectual dishonesty and moral cowardice. I do not "fight" but I do reject a political approach which I regard as merely the other side of the coin of the ultra-rightists. They take the approach that there was a political conspiracy, that it was hatched in the Kremlin or in Havana, and they are beginning to fill the newspaper columns with vicious innuendo and charges of a Communist plot. The evidence, material and circumstantial, they regard of course as irrelevant and extraneous, since they know already who the guilty parties are.

I have no intention of imitating or echoing from the left what the Henry Taylors and the Revilo Olivers declaim from the right. The evidence establishes the fact that there was a cross-fire but not whose fingers were on the triggers nor the identity of the principals who commissioned the executioners. As a researcher, that lack of evidence restricts me from uttering pronouncements about the identity of the assassins. I have set myself the task of seeking to expose the Warren Report as a fraud, and of establishing so far as possible an inventory of the known facts and evidence, objectively compiled. I do not make unsupported claims.

This is not to say that I repudiate all political speculation about the motives for the assassination. I draw a line between responsible political speculation which welcomes and encompasses factual inquiry as a tool that will lead to the truth, and political speculation which is incompatible with and antagonistic to fact-finding. And I see no dearth of responsible political speculation since at least one publication has been engaging in it since November 23, 1963. I draw a line also between factual and evidentiary research ~~research~~ and the analysis of the political significance of the crimes. These are jobs for two different kinds of people, and I question that either the researcher or the editorialist can do both jobs competently. For a researcher to accuse "the government" (whatever his private convictions may be) would be to dignify the doctrinaire unsupported accusations against Castro and/or Khrushchev by the ultra-right.

While I cannot take the time to elaborate my position further, I hope that this necessarily compressed statement will not lend itself to misinterpretation. Let me suggest, in a friendly spirit, that the time and effort spent in reprimanding the critics for their shortcomings can better be used to do directly and effectively what you consider has been done inadequately by others.

Yours sincerely,



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