

CONFIDENTIAL

2/17/72

Dear Sylvia,

I would like to respond to your letter of the 15th for several reasons, even though, as you admit, it is unlikely either of us will change our view. One of my reasons is merely to help me think this thing out, to organize my thoughts. Also, there are things you write which I feel I should address to you for your own reflection.

The central problem, so far as our discussion is concerned, seems to be Harold. He has problems, and they are getting worse. I don't think they've reached the point where I am given to have serious doubts about his judgements. But that is my own feeling and it is not relevant to you and your attitude toward/relationship with Harold. Age, poverty, frustration resulting from the type of person he is--these are all eating at him, and at times, too often, in fact, they are manifested in counterproductive and offensive ways. I have learned to live with that, and realize it is all past the point of change.

However, what really concerns me--and you too--is the fact that Harold is, in effect, suppressing information of a startling and sensational nature. I have tried, and I don't think he can be budged; there is no making him diverge from the path he has chosen. He will tell you he is not suppressing, but that his info must come out in the proper context, and in a way which will give him proper credit and not compromise his integrity. Like it or not, that is Harold. It affects me differently at different times. Right now, it is bugging the hell out of me because I think the philosophy of so many of us would be changed or enhanced if they knew what Harold had.

I am somewhat disappointed that you have not taken into consideration the position of the guilty accessories like Hoover and Specter. They warrant no sympathy, of course. But I think it can be counter-productive not to have some grasp of the position they are in, for calculating and evaluating our own moves. The lies and crimes of these people must be exposed, but I strongly feel they must be exposed in such a way that prevents the accessories from constructing a defense based on more and worse lies. That is why, in part, I don't think it is sufficient for Cyril to say merely that the pix and X-rays disprove the Report. There is more to be said. Unfortunately, right now only Harold can say the rest--the involvement of the Commission and staff with the autopsy films. That is where a large part of the guilt lies.

I am not concerned, nor do I expect you to be concerned that the Kennedies will get the blame for suppression. What concerns me is who will be transferring the blame and thus wiping their own hands clean.

I know that many times Harold has told you that you are living in the past, that you make your judgements now without the benefit of many new developments. I am afraid that is true,

even though it is not your own fault. For one thing, you are too busy to keep up on the case as Harold does. But a good part of the fault is Harold's--plain and simple. I think in many cases he should have shown you the new things he was getting, but unfortunately his judgement was to show only a few people. I'm sure he would show you his new stuff if you went down there, but I realize you could not do that.

One of the effects of what Harold has is that an examination of the films becomes less and less necessary. I know that here we disagree. I think that the Panel Report has largely eliminated the need to have the pix and X-rays examined, because it tells us the most essential thing: That the Report is unreconcilably wrong. It is limited in what it tells us actually happened, but even an honest reading will be deficient in that respect. Quite seriously, too, I wonder of what use it will be at this point to piece together a positive reconstruction of exactly how JFK was killed. I am very interested to know. But I am satisfied that I know the essentials, and I must question whether an examination by Wecht now will yield enough to risk what I see as possible disastrous consequences, in which the truth will suffer greatly.

My thinking on the matter is coming to this: I think it would be good for us now if Wecht was refused access. It would make the gov't look bad and suspicious, would add to their record of suppression, and might leave them open to other mistakes like Lattimer. (My interpretation of the "Lattimer thing is that it did not work as the gov't anticipated, i.e., it backfired.) If Wecht gets access, then by all means he should see the stuff after being adequately briefed. However, when he makes his statement or holds a press conference (or whatever), he should be prepared to reveal other information which is currently known only to Harold, myself, and very few others. Or, Harold could appear with Wecht--something along those lines. That is what I think should be done; Harold probably would not stand for it. I've already suggested it to him, and he's against it. I suspect he will change if Wecht gets access.

Might I suggest you carefully re-read my letter of the 10th? Your response leaves me with the impression that you failed to grasp my apprehensions and concerns, and possibly read the letter with a bias that I am interested in protecting the Kennedies.

A million thanks for your excellent letter to Aaron Asher. I'll try to send the book off as soon as possible. I realize this gesture is out of the ordinary for you, and I appreciate it all the more because of it.

I hope you won't view me as some kind of assassination "reactionary" because of the thoughts I've expressed to you. Understand, these are projections. I'm sure future developments will seriously alter my thinking.

Best wishes,

*Howard*