

8 July 1967

Dear Vince,

Let me try once again to explain my views on Garrison—I am willing to commit myself in writing, against the future risk of being proven wrong. By way of preface, let me just recall that I accepted Garrison's good faith and professional competence from the time I first heard about his investigation, toward the end of January 1967, until the preliminary hearing in the case of Clay Shaw, in March. During that period, I volunteered my help and took the initiative in sending Garrison certain chapters from my manuscript and other information which I thought might be useful to him (including my personal copy of the Subject Index, which was by then out of print). Ironically enough, it was during that period of time that I came into some conflict with Ray Marcus and Maggie Field, because Ray suspected that Garrison might have been set up deliberately, with or without his knowledge and consent, to destroy authentic dissent from the Warren Report by setting up a smokescreen of charges that would easily be proven fraudulent. I saw no evidence of that, and I rejected such suspicions.

My own misgivings developed when Garrison used Russo and Bundy as witnesses against Clay Shaw. Their credibility was no greater than that of Markham, Brennan, and other WC witnesses when all the critics rejected and denounced. Personally I could not accept Russo while dismissing Markham. The question arose: Did Garrison really believe their testimony? Or did he invoke their testimony for reasons of expediency? If the former, his judgment and professional competence were questionable. If the latter, he believed that the ends justified the means, which (in my opinion) completely compromised his moral integrity and therefore his trustworthiness.

Garrison's professional recklessness and carelessness were further demonstrated when he publicly charged that page 47 of Oswald's notebook had been suppressed, when in fact it was published in Volume XVI. This was followed by the horrendous and fraudulent "cryptology" which originated with Jones Harris and was taken up by Garrison with impetuous fanfare, although calm study of the so-called evidence would have shown him at once the serious weaknesses of his "discovery" and should have at least caused him to check out the data where it could be checked.

Instead, he rushed into the headlines with the so-called code. When it was pointed out to him that the "P.O." was in reality the Cyrillic "D.D." he merely replied that he had decoded three more numbers. During his explication of the three new numbers, I frankly began to fear that he was demented, even as he spoke—so capricious, illogical, and arbitrary was his deciphering methodology.

Subsequently, Garrison has conceded privately that the code is a mistake; but he refuses to make a public retraction on the ground that the error was in good faith.

This is undeniable proof of incompetence, dishonesty, and use of fabricated evidence. These are among our charges against the Warren Commission. When both "investigations" are demonstrably founded on falsehood and deception, I find no rationale by which I can support or suspend judgment on the one while denouncing the other. Against such proof, you invoke inferential reasoning.

You ask: Why is the whole establishment engaged in an all-out assault on Garrison if he has nothing?

To this question, there may be several answers no less plausible than the conclusion which you suggest. Let me suggest, for example, that the establishment has unleashed this assault for the very reason that it will be interpreted as evidence that Garrison really has something; the WR critics, making this inference, will become or remain Garrison partisans, and will publicly endorse his investigation (as some have already done). Then, when he falls apart as he must (because he really does not have anything, still the establishment reasoning), legitimate criticism will be compromised and buried, two birds with one stone, while the establishment will assume the mantle of truth-seeking and perspicacity, for having seen through him from the beginning.

And there are other possible variants.

The issue is, is inferential logic with its uncertain results to outweigh and overrule proven unscrupulousness? For me, the answer is a decisive and absolute no. Truth does not miraculously issue from a tissue of lies and half-lies, headlines and premature boasts which must now be made good, by whatever means.

A second question which you have raised in the past as well as now: Is it the moral responsibility of the WR critic to act as a monitor, reformer, or mentor of Mr. Garrison (or anyone else who comes along asserting Oswald's innocence or mouthing lofty calls for justice, with dubious and malodorous evidence to accompany his grandiose declarations)? My personal answer is, no. It is the moral responsibility of the critic to denounce lies, perjury, and fabricated evidence regardless of their source, because we are seeking the truth, whatever it happens to be.

To say that Clay Shaw will have his day in court is no answer. Is it all right for the State to fabricate evidence against an accused, even if he is to have the opportunity to come to trial? Is there any circumstance in which we are to condone the framing of an accused? Even *pro tem*? Is the prosecution entitled to publicize false evidence, in order to protect its "real" evidence from disclosure, to the defense? Doesn't the Bill of Rights entitle an accused to confront his accusers and their so-called evidence, as a governing principle? Or does this protection begin only during actual trial? Is the pre-trial exempted from the obligation to give the accused his rights?

The moral responsibility of the critic, or the ordinary citizen for that matter, is to oppose with all his strength such violations of individual rights. But the critics have an additional responsibility: to preserve their effectiveness, and to protect the painfully won legitimacy of pre-Garrison criticism, which has overcome a taboo and achieved some real dialogue, and which is now in serious jeopardy. When Lane endorsed Garrison's case to the whole world, he was risking more than his personal reputation—he was jeopardizing authentic criticism, which to many he symbolises.

There arises, incidentally, the issue of Garrison's indiscriminate ententes with, for example, Jones Harris as well as Lane, although Harris spends more energy attacking Lane than attacking the WR, and although he holds hands with Liebel and Schiller; is he looking for expertise, or looking to embrace all the critics that they may extol and comfort him? You have the hope of playing devil's advocate, Vince. Good luck. Pershing Gervais, a friend of very long standing and particular intimacy, tried that; and he is "out" (though still protective of Garrison, and looking for some way to extricate him from a disaster of his own making, according to reliable information). Maybe Gervais tried, before he defected (I don't know, it is only a possibility).

Bill Turner, and I need not tell you how staunchly he backs Garrison, had the very highest praise for Gurvich, when he was still "chief investigator." There, by the way, is another Garrison lie: now he says that Gurvich was practically a self-invited intruder, but pilgrim after pilgrim returning from New Orleans told me month after month that Gurvich was the chief investigator. Ray Marcus; Philippe Labro; Harold Weisberg; Tom Bethell; Jones Harris; Bill Turner; etc.

Well, Vince, I don't suppose I have changed your mind, much as I would like to stop you from walking into this cesspool of sordid and nightmarish melodrama. Thieves, perverts, and despoilers competing with each other in perjuries and lurid charges. If Gurvich is twice proved a double agent, or Sheridan a blackmailer, in no way does that prove Garrison an honest man. If jailbird Casler is a liar, why is jailbird Bundy to be honored as a speaker of truth? If Jones Harris—consorter with Epstein and Liebler and Schiller—has the keys to the kingdom, it is not proof that Garrison is a charlatan, or a nut, or a secret tool for the establishment. It proves nothing. Garrison has to be judged on his own merit; that is what stands against him, demonstrable and clear, and makes him a mortal danger.

Cry wolf (CIA) often enough, and if and when someone comes up with a real case, he will plead with the deaf and petition the blind. But go to New Orleans, Vince, since you must; each of us must follow his own conscience. I am sad that we have to follow different directions, Vince, perhaps for the first time in a long and most warm devotion...but at least we are now calm rather than shouting like enemies...My bon voyage wish is that we will find ourselves sharing an identical view, one way or the other, before long.

There is only one Vince Salandria; no one can take your place, only a vacuum, cold and black. I do not know how to give up those I love, or fight them, without bleeding...But I do not know how to find faith in a charlatan like Garrison, nor how to condone his methods. For this, I have lost some friendship already...a high price, for nothing has been more wonderful and sustaining for three years than the warmth and oneness that has flowed among a group of us, who are now divided for the first time on a fundamental issue. Well, at least Liebler will be happy....

As always,