

Dear Vincent

Do you remember how it was in the beginnin^g when President Kennedy was killed? Connally heard a shot, was hit, cried "they" were going to kill "us all." Hiding and waiting in Parkland Hospital, Johnson thought a plot might be afoot to eliminate all in line of succession to the Presidency. The Pentagon moved toward war. Almost immediately the Dallas police and the mass-communication media shouted "communist plot."

Stunned and frightened, the country waited restlessly. Would blacks rise to overwhelm their oppressors? Would revenge fall on the radical left, the nation be mobilized to crush Castro, punish Mao, exterminate Krushchev?

Danger ebbed. Johnson seized on Oswald, ordered the sacrificial goat stripped of political motivation, and with prestidigitary skill convened a motley of establishmentarian confidence men. Behind the cloak of investigation the Warren Commission conjured away the obvious truth and transported a nobody to the hall of everlasting infamy.

Came critics, most protesting injustice and undertaking to solve a case of murder. Political approaches, for the most part, were decid^{ed} or ignored. Ironically,

both the communist and Trotskyist parties, which Oswald had approached, pleaded innocence of association with him. The Soviet government denounced Oswald as a Trotskyist.

Your activity began with attacks on the ballistic evidence of the Warren Commission. At the time and under the circumstances then prevailing what you did took courage. To Rotarians and other groups you made speeches projecting political insights into the assassination gleaned from a number of leftist sources. Your activity expanded into an effort to identify, locate, and interview a man you thought one of the gunmen who ambushed Kennedy in ^lDrayley Plaza, an essay in detection which, in the end, proved fruitless. Later, you collaborated with Garrison and other opportunists in a demagogic ^aattack on the government's assassination policy, which he launched in unscrupulous pursuit of unnamed local and regional interests and of his own political ambitions. I tried to persuade you an antagonistic subordinate component of the country's power structure could not prevail in conflict with the entrenched establishment ^fof the national state; and I urged you to make use of your opportunity to expose Garrison's political and moneyed sponsors. You argued his good faith and won his acknowledgement of your help in writing Heritage of Stone.

Finally, speaking under the auspices of the Women's International League For Peace And Freedom in Cambridge, Mass., in October 1971, you defined the issue in the assassination as "questions of war and peace that involve the whole of humanity." Yet in your letter four months later, in reluctantly agreeing to discuss with me your "thinking" on the assassination, you postscripted your inability to understand why I am "so eager to rehash this tired old subject" with you.

Why do I want discussion with you? The answer should be obvious. In writing and speaking on the assassination you project ideas. True, you expressed fatigue with the subject on February 23, 1972. But only a few days earlier, in a letter to me, you indicated the possibility of you^r writing a book to explain your views. I think you will write and speak on the assassination in days to come.

Ideas have influence; when they penetrate masses, said Marx, they become forces. In Cambridge you expounded a view of the assassination which included ideas which I am afraid may have impressed some people in your audience. If repeated, they may influence others. *And some much confusion.*

Three propositions in that speech struck me as especially significant: the cold war with the Soviet Union is a pretense; the American republic "expired" on November 22, 1963; on that date Wall Street was "stormed" in Dealey ^{Plaza} and capitalism was overthrown in the United States.

As you did not develop these ideas in your speech with illustrative and supportive data and with political analysis, they may be construed as demagogic oratorical devices intended to agitate your audience. But to what end? Despite the gravity of this issue, as you defined it, and the commitment of the organization under whose auspices you spoke to courageous opposition to the war policy of the government, you called on your audience to do no more than "join together, black and white, rich and poor, jew, gentile, conservative and radical, to tell the truth about the killing of Kennedy" in order to "understand and love ourselves and our society better." How could I not attempt discussion with you!

There is also the unfortunate possibility you believe your formulations to be literally true. That suggests, disturbing thought!, faulty apprehension of reality or, rather, perception in which things are transposed into their opposites. It is, therefore, reassuring that you maintain, as appears from your letter, a busy law practice into which, I trust you understand, I am loath to intrude.

But that need not prevent our meeting if you think discussion of these points may be useful. Sometime in early April I may visit friends in Philadelphia who will have, I know, no objection to our meeting in their home at our leisure. Is it agreeable?

Fraternally

Thomas M. ...