

March 22, 1974

Dear Harold,

Your last letter was a harbinger of spring. I detected a note of warmth in your salutation. Your tone was friendlier. It made me understand what I had taken in your earlier letters for pesticidal abuse by a beleaguered, weatherbeaten investigator was intended as compost, strewn with a liberal hand on the stubborn soil of our common ground from which there are now emerging, appropriately to the season, the first tender shoots of collaboration. Hopefully your timely well is a propitious omen of a promising summer.

You think now "there are things" I "can do" to "just help... with three different but cooperating lines of inquiry," one of which is "the Oswald angle," in connection with "one book pretty certainly, another possibly, and...helping develop what might be used in a suit...planned but...not ready for filing." More concretely, this help would take the form of "an occasional check at the New York Public Library...from time to time" to get, for instance, "all the listings on a certain street in a certain city for certain years." All of this would certainly have to be held, I understand, even more completely confidential than Nixon holds his incriminating tapes and papers to be. Absolutely confidential.

I won't mind doing an errand or two at the New York Public Library to speed your book and suit. The Library has many rewards for curious visitors. I recall a day in 1950 when I spinned its shelves and stacks for material for an encyclopedia article on trade unionism and fell behind in my assignment while I devoured Henri Pirenne's History of Europe, an astonishing intellectual feat, written entirely from memory while a prisoner of war in southern Germany in 1914-1918.

Recourse to the library will also give me occasion to track down your reference to Thomas of Occam whom I could not identify in any work I have at home. Perhaps you meant William of Occam or Ockham, a medieval English scholastic philosopher, known as Doctor Invincibilis and Venerabilis Inceptor, who died in 1349, six hundred and fourteen years before Kennedy was killed? Either way it is not clear whether you intended a sly derogatory thrust at me or an oblique compliment to your own infallible wisdom. In any case you are as mysterious about Occam as about Burkley and I don't want to give up the pursuit of the latter by exhuning the former. Moreover, Occam, whether William, Thomas, or Harold, I am reasonably sure, has less relevance for our reach for truth, than Confucius has for Mao.

I can't believe that you who "worked and lived with the FBI on decent cases" and "was in intelligence in World War II," won't discuss Burkley with me because you take seriously the Camelot idyll of the lady Jacqueline and Sir George in Morte d'Kennedy. You must have more cogent reasons. It would be an earnest of your intent to collaborate in a common effort if

you said what those reasons are.

I agree, the solution to the mystery of the Kennedy assassination will not be found in the Report of the Warren Commission and the 26 volumes of its hearings and exhibits; nor in the literature of exposure which has demolished the government's account of the event. In time evidence may be adduced to identify the gunmen who killed the president and their accomplices, employers, and sponsors. In itself, however, that will not necessarily establish the motive for the assassination. In some instances, identification of an assassin may be a clue to motive. Obversely, some assassins have assumed false identities to conceal or counterfeit their motives; Trotsky's murderer, for example. Other killers, like Ruby, gave false motives for their murders. In a complex assassination, the killer's motive may be only incidental to the larger motivation of the authors of the murder plot. Such, historical research has demonstrated, was the case in the assassination of Lincoln.

Motivation is the key to the source of the decapitation of the American imperialist state on November 22nd 1963. History and political logic signified at once a powerful force in American society had acted to remove an obstacle to the pursuit of its vital interests. The military-industrial complex was the obvious source of the assassination. The triggering motive - it is now documented - was escalation of the war in Asia, made urgent by Kennedy's decision to withdraw from that conflict. Other powerful motives were associated with that primary motivation in a complex of causation stemming from the jeopardy to the interests grown mighty in the cold war from Kennedy's policies of detente with the soviet world and accomodation with the revolutionary forces of the so-called third world. What is needed now is a rounded account which moves from source to motive to plot to execution, and puts the event in political context and historical perspective. I wonder if that is your understanding. That agreement could constitute a fertile soil for collaboration.

Oswald's role in the assassination needs clarification and the role of the SWP excoriation. But I leave discussion of these mysteries to future correspondence lest this letter become overlong.

You said you injured your left hand. I hope it is neither serious nor symbolic. Incidentally, may I recommend Companions of the Left Hand by Tabori? It is a moving tale.

Sympathetically,

Thomas

P.S. What is the dialectic, Harold of Frederick, of the contradiction you see between "socialist belief" and investigation of Burkley as a link, conspiratorial or bathetic, between the murder in Dalls and the coverup in Washington?