

April 30, 1974

Dear Harold,

Sorry about the delay in answering your last letter. I was swamped by other correspondence. An old friend in Los Angeles wanted to know my daughter's impressions of Mao's China where she had spent the better part of a month recently. Another old friend who has a bookstore in San Francisco asked whether I had old radical books and pamphlets and documents I want to sell. I replied I do not want to sell. If you do I'll send you his name and address. You may realize a few dollars that way. A very good and old friend in New York sent me a squib relating to a correspondence between Marx and Proudhon which sent me to rereading parts of old classics and to writing a belated comment. And a newer friend in Chicago who doesn't give a damn about Burkley or Lattimer abjured me to banish interest in the Kennedy assassination from my mind lest I become a bedfellow of the authors of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. That's as good as your effusions of compliments about my effort to discuss Burkley with you. The forgers of the Protocols are dead, of course. Is my friend's plea also a warning I may be assassinated? What do you think of historical analogies which consist of abstractions from time and place?

It's all chit chat but I hope it helps to divert you from your pain. Why were you in the hospital? Why couldn't you lie down? Was it your back? Are you better? What's the prognosis? Do you trust doctors? Medically, I mean; I know about Burkley and Lattimer in relation to the Kennedy assassination. We have a friend, now in the hospital, who was told by her doctor when she complained of bad persistent pain, he suspected an ovarian cyst and recommended surgery. The surgeon found no cyst; but he did find and removed a badly diseased appendix. But it's reasonably certain an ovarian cyst was not your trouble; if it had been it shouldn't have prevented you from lying down. What was the trouble? You can trust me with the information. Or does answering that question involve a breach of the confidentiality of the doctor-patient relationship?

I thought of you yesterday while reading a dispatch by Christopher Wren in the New York Times. Wren warbled from Moscow, "The dissident Soviet historian Roy A Medvedev," author of "Let History Judge," a catalogue of Stalinist crimes, "In an eight-page typewritten essay," circulating in the Soviet Union, noted, "Truth arises only in the clash of ideas and in debate. Hence, it is not for us who seek the truth to introduce 'self-censorship' into our midst and forbid ourselves debate."

Medvedev's comment was addressed to the differences of view among Sohlzhenytsin, Sakharov, himself, and others, all of whom together constitute what he calls the "democratic movement in the U.S.R." But it is equally applicable, don't you agree, to you and me? Why do you meet my wish to exchange ideas with you

as an attempt to steal your treasure? Surely, you have ideas. It cannot be that your stream of invectives is intended, whether consciously or not, to conceal an ideational vacuum. It must be to hide what you think. It is too bad. Ideas that do not emerge into the maelstrom of life have no social value. Ideas bind people together. When ideas penetrate masses, Marx observed, they become forces. Isn't that what you want for your ideas?

Let's discuss and debate our congruent and divergent views about assassinations. If you want to go beyond what you have already had published about the evidence in the Kennedy assassination, will you respond in kind to political analysis of the event? Are you interested in the Lincoln assassination and its bearing on the murder of president Kennedy? What do you think of the assassination of Huey Long? Are you familiar with Browder's analysis of it? Do you see any connection between the murders of Medgar Evers and John F Kennedy? Between the assassinations of Diem in Vietnam and Kennedy in the United States? Have you developed evidence and views about the killing of Malcolm X? Why were the Trotskyists more interested in the latter than in the assassination of president Kennedy? If you could go to China would you want to look into the alleged attempt by Lin Biao on Mao's life?

Do you approach an assassination exclusively or primarily as a problem of evidence? Is it your belief or conviction truth consists of physical or statistical fact? Or does your interest encompass also the problem of moral and political motivation? What are your views about motivation for the assassination of a head of state? About Kennedy in particular? Above all, do you strive for elucidation by analysis which places assassinations in contemporary political context and defines their impact on history?

Finally, inasmuch as you wrote you had no objection to my political "concepts," can I conclude we can collaborate in comprehending the assassination of John F Kennedy in the light of the materialist conception of history? Would you like to begin or shall I?

Belatedly,

*Thomas*

Obviously, my typing hasn't improved. But yours seems to be better. You must write more often.