

8 April 1971

Dear Cyril,

Many thanks for sending me Salandria's review, by Gaeton Fonzi, of Garrison's book, written by Salandria. It is saddening, and instructive as to the reasons for the decline and fragmentation of the erstwhile brotherhood of critics of the WR. Like other noble heresies, the critics attracted conscious cynics like Mark Lane, and ingenuous idealists like Vince Salandria, each ready in his own way to out-do the chicanery and opportunism of the Warren Commission in the name of discrediting it, and succeeding instead in compromising the critics' position and cheapening their cause.

For many years, Salandria has been taxing other critics by promoting his somewhat simplistic hypothesis of a CIA-coup-d'etat. (It originated, in fact, in an exercise in inductive logic performed by a philosophy instructor who is a friend and protégé of Salandria's.) Certainly it is one logical explanation of the Dallas assassination—but it is only one of several, equally logical hypotheses that can be postulated from the same basic set of facts. There is an implication of monumental vanity in the way an ostensibly modest man like Salandria has pressed the rather facile theory of a CIA coup, as if the evidence led irresistably to that finding to the exclusion of all other possibilities, and as if he had not made some breathtaking errors of judgment in the days when he was still engaged in research rather than single-minded propaganda. Vanity is no crime, and tends to be epidemic among the WR critics. But it is quite another story to collaborate with a banal charlatan like Garrison in clumsy and laughable fabrications, and in the ruination of an innocent but vulnerable man. That, Salandria assuredly did. He was no doubt motivated by the passion to expose and destroy the Warren Report; but he managed to destroy instead the credibility of all the critics and such chance as we had of getting the whole case reexamined officially.

That is something that I can never forgive, however much Salandria uses one ventriloquist's dummy to praise works he produced in the name of another puppet. Harold Weisberg, for all his failings and his own brand of paranoia, has done untiring and often brilliant investigation and endured an awful load of fatigue and frustration by pursuing the facts, while others have been contented with the monotonous reiteration of a single sophomoric irrelevancy. All the more a pity, then, that Weisberg's books, no less than his frenetic output of illegible letters, are all but unreadable.

I have been well, but worked half to death at the UN, where bureaucracy and petty one-up-man-ship have been searing to new heights, and the shift of a comma from one line to another takes on the urgency of a world crisis. These of us who do not die of sheer overwork will probably succumb to unbearable exasperation. There has been no time at all for work on the case, even had I conceived of anything more that I could usefully do (and that Harold Weisberg had not already anticipated). I do hope that you are well in spite of your usual gargantuan workload. Best personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

