

8/21/67

Dear Harold,

I have great respect for your work as a researcher, and great personal affection for you—so much so, that I feel tempted to let your 8/15/67 letter (received today) constitute the last word in our attempt to achieve mutual understanding. If I do make some additional commentary, please regard it in the context of my genuine affection and regard.

To read that, in effect, I exercise a double standard, was something of a shock. I have tried to maintain a scrupulous single standard, both with respect to evidence (which is precisely the basis for my negative view of Garrison) and with respect to my colleagues and especially those who have become valued friends. On questions of evidence, I feel that I have scrupulously maintained a single standard, so far as conscious thinking has prevailed; but I do not overlook the possibility that sub-conscious predisposition may at times have produced inconsistency without my awareness, at the time or now.

On the personal level, there is unavoidably some subjective influence. By temperament, I am usually quick to speak openly and directly. There are some exceptions. At times, I refrain from speaking openly if it would hurt, affront, or disturb a friend, without accomplishing anything which might be said to justify giving pain or offense. (And I am sure that my friends and colleagues exercise the same protectiveness toward me, I claim no special virtue.) For example, if it had been the case that I saw some small basis for Arnoni's attitude, or Vince's, and this is purely hypothetical, I would find it very, very difficult to express it; and I might keep entirely silent, whether out of cowardice or affection or both.

As it happens, I felt at the time that neither man, if he knew you better, would retain the impression which, in fact, they spontaneously and genuinely derived. Since both men were greatly predisposed to be friendly toward a critic and his critical book, and neither was animated by any conceivable ulterior motive, and both have been truly good friends to many of our colleagues and to me, I see their reactions, rightly or wrongly as to their criticisms, as honest and disinterested, although certainly harsh.

But it is not true that I was "silent and would not become involved." I understood them, and I felt that I understood you, and I did try by discussion to modify impressions derived solely from reading your book. I did not write letters with copies to you, I did not write letters giving you a blow by blow account of my efforts, nor did I align myself with you against "them," because I regarded them as men of utmost honor and good faith, who had an opinion which I regretted. I do hope that you neither expected me to break with two people dear to me because they exercised their right to hold an opinion, or to have a reaction to what they considered an excess claim to credit and an obliteration of other critical work. Indeed, Harold, your convictions are so intense and your feelings of injustice are so keen that you are sometimes unaware of the impression others may derive—unaware that you set off resistance, irritation, and resentment, none of which you intend. Yet I know that you speak with amazing honesty, without the hypocrisy or false modesty or conventionalities that are usual, and of which I am often guilty.

You say that my knowledge of Garrison is less than my knowledge of you. This is true. But I don't need a great deal of knowledge in the case of dishonesty or untrustworthiness. Such personal contact as I have had with Garrison by letter or telephone has been sufficient to convince me that he is using witnesses who lack all semblance of credibility (Russo, Bundy), and citing evidence which is contrived and absurd (P.O. 19106, which originated with Jones Harris), making charges which have no foundation (page 47 of Oswald's notebook suppressed), has poor judgment and indiscriminate ententes (Gurvich, Jones Harris), and that I can have no confidence in him. If I accept Russo and Bundy while repudiating Markham and Brennan, that is a double standard, and one of which I am absolutely incapable. So while my knowledge may be "less," it is sufficient and more than sufficient.

*Harold — This was written before your visit to my office. Although we agreed some of this ground at lunch, I read it anyway. pfm*

I said a minute ago that you sometimes provoke irritation or resentment without intention or awareness. Here is a case in point, your comment on Collier, three short sentences. Two would have sufficed. But if I did not know how innocently you meant the third sentence, I might be offended by, "He wanted one not as tough." Collier had no basis for evaluating the toughness or softness of my manuscript; and with all due respect, Harold, neither do you—you have not read it. Of course, I am subjective about my own work—and you about yours—but I think my book is tough, probably no less than Whitewash, and I am sure that you did not mean to imply that my work is commercially acceptable because it is compromised by finkyness or caution or cowardice. The title in itself speaks to the contrary. I take it for granted that you did not intend to imply that my book was mealy-mouthed; I merely suggest that you should stop to think that it might be interpreted or misinterpreted as suggesting exactly that.

When my book comes out, I would like it to sink or swim on its merit, and nothing else. I do not want to seem ungracious or unappreciative, because I am deeply appreciative of your determination to be helpful. I am most disinclined to do public relations for my book—it is enough that I wrote it, I don't want to become a hawker, again, it is not my temperament. Let Bobbs-Merrill do what is necessary and bother me as little as possible. Inevitably we disagree on strategy (the publisher and I): they have insisted on certain jacket quotes that I do not want and have fought against very vigorously in one case. I lost. I was ready to dispense with all quotes to avoid this particular one, even though it is surprisingly gracious and generous, and I am assured ad nauseum that it will help the book immeasurably. I don't want to be beholden to the person involved; and I don't even want to be beholden to my nearest and dearest. I cannot impose my view where it is not acceptable; I do understand and value your wish to help my book—let us hope that I will be lucky and it will not need help. Either way, Harold, it has to be your decision, and without any strings.

You need not labor to convince me of the role of the anti-Castro Cuban exiles: you never seem to remember that one of the first envelopes that traveled between us was a copy of my chapter on the Odio affair, in which I developed a hypothesis of Oswald's ties with this bunch, and their ties, in turn, with CIA and ultra-rightists. This chapter was written before we had our first contact on the pages of the New Leader—I realize and acknowledge that you published the hypothesis first, but I do beg you to remember the contents of my chapter and to realize that you do not need to sell me on a theory that I myself formulated independently, as you did, and perhaps as others then unknown or still unknown to us also did. It is not the theory to which I object—what I question is that those who are now accused of being implicated, Shaw and the others, were in fact involved—and the effect of their exoneration, if it comes about, on serious attention to the hypothesis in which both of us, and others, find strong credibility.

I agree completely with your comments on Joesten; he did say in a letter to me some time ago that he had never seen the 26 volumes. His grandiose airs and worthless "books" are an embarrassment; though I still find considerable merit in his 1964 works.

Dear friend, I am not insisting on the last word, nor claiming a perfect record. I entertain no doubt whatever of your good will and your good faith, and I hope that you harbor no doubts about mine. With the same affection as always,

*Lylin*

*P.S. You have been misinformed. Arnone published no reviews of the Savage or Lane books.*