

2/3/69

Mr. Vincent J. Calandria
2226 Delancey Pl.
Philadelphia, Pa. 5

Dear Vince,

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This letter is the beginning of the record I promised you I would make of the awful thing you have been doing and have just accomplished. You have just protected the Warren Report, Attorney General Clark and everyone in any remote way connected with the assassinations and their investigations from total destruction. You have done for the government what it could not possibly have accomplished for itself. In the course of so doing, you have probably ruined Jim Garrison's reputation among not just critics, but among all those decent people who do have an understanding of the fact and don't or will come to understand the unparalleled opportunity and the exploitation of which you prevented.

Particularly because of your unaided paranoia that almost everyone else is an agent, a tumbler you accidentally transmitted to Jim, do I emphasize that if you were an agent you could not possibly have accomplished so much. I could build a much better case of agency against you than you have against anyone.

It has, to me, been one of the tragedies that you, one of the first-published critics, were the first to abdicate and were strong in your efforts to persuade the rest of us continuing the fight for truth and the integrity of our society was a futility. It is possible to interpret your recent activity and in-judicious ~~injudicious~~ use of your influence as a conscious or subconscious attempt to justify your own abdication, your cowardice of your quitting.

It is also possible to argue that you are engaging in a self-justification because you not only refused to help but tried to dissuade me when I asked you to act as my lawyer in an effort to bring out what you have just prevented Jim from doing. You are consistent.

In talking to me Friday night you made much of your judgment, and I asked you to examine the record it has made for you. I shall, to a limited degree, for I have no time for the gilding of lilies. It is your own excellent judgment, you said, that you had to use for Jim's benefit. In each of the few of the available instances of your judgment that I will cite I ask you to pretend you are not involved, that you are impartial, and then ask the question, "Is this inconsistent with the action of an agent?"

My first experience with you and your "judgment" was when you prevented Dave Dellinger's publication of a review of WHITEWASH. You then accused me of plagiarism, saying I had drawn on the work of others (non-existent at the time I wrote that book, as you should have known). When I challenged you and disapproved your slander, actually in the form of blackmail, intended to force me to give you credit for what I had done, you followed the course of Salandria honor and did not withdraw your foul and self-serving slanders. This first instance of Salandria "judgment" cost me and honest criticism of the Warren Report access to the progressive-peace press, for had "Liberation", in that very early day, paid attention to solid criticism of the Report in honest books, that press might not thereafter have been silent for so long.

Then there is your "judgment" in your writing about the bullets. You, the progressive lawyer, the man who detests the excesses of the FBI, actually dedicated your writing to an FBI agent, Franier. You thus praised him ecstatically for his false, deceptive and crucially-corrupting testimony before the Commission. Had Franier testified really honestly, the framing of Oswald and with him that of history would have been impossible. You dedicated your writing to him, thus, inherently to his agency and J. Edgar Hoover.

Inconsistent with this is your handling of the FBI report when you wrote about it. Not once did you mention the fact that the FBI, the same agency to which, in effect, you dedicated your labor, pretended to provide the definitive report on the murder of the President without accounting for all the shots it knew had been fired and without even accounting for all the injuries it knew had been inflicted.

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At that time my disposition was to slobber you for your stalwart defense and protection of the FBI. Now I now regret I did not, that I decided this could be the kind of error the potential for which was carefully built in by the other side, the sort of oversight that was possible with the needless complexity of the material. I accept full responsibility for this and acknowledge my own judgment was deficient, that your glorification of Frazier and his agency should have decided me otherwise.

Quite consistent with all of this is your excellent judgment when you began to study the Snyder file. You were devoutly convinced and tried to persuade everyone that Connally could not have been hit until, what was it, Frame 267 (if so, you picked a good one, for that or one close does not exist)? Do you have to be reminded of your boorishness when you were invited to participate on a radio program that was supposed to be mine, when you filibustered with consummate verbosity for most of the four hours on just this? That certainly was one way of being on a program for WHITMAN, the first AM that ever and on a station with no widespread audience. This conduct of yours, whatever caused it, is not inconsistent with that of an agent trying to mislead and to deny attention to genuine critical writing.

With this record of hindering me and a solid work, who did you help? Epstein, and the name should be enough commentary. Thompson, the man who came up with the copout formula that might get the government off the hook. What better examples can be cited of your superb judgment!

I skip to your December whiffling in New Orleans, where you spent every minute you could to persecuting ^{him} as he should trust nobody and that everybody was or is an agent. ^{his} was unnecessary, was not warranted by any fact. In doing this you succeeded in separating him from some he might have gotten worthwhile help and judgments from and were your own terror campaign against him and his peace of mind. You could not have done more to frighten and disorient him. Then, for no reason at all, you mixed with your pose of gray eminence a stance as Counteragent No. 1. You went around and put on guard those who might be, for no reason, based on no knowledge, and with such ferocity of determination it was not possible to stop you. You then blew an excellent chance of inflicting the greatest

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damage on the other side and in the doing laid a foundation for great hurt to us and Jim. There was no possible rational reason for the things you did and said, no possible constructive purpose to be served by them. Jeffe had already agreed to surrender his credentials voluntarily, as I had persuaded him earlier that morning, when he acknowledged to me that he might already have hurt Jim by the things he had done while he carried them. Because it is unpardonable for a private citizen to presume to speak for the district attorney of a major city, and in such a case, I did not take them. Only you have the truly superior judgment that impels you to do such things, publicly and to enemies, so there will be no secret about it. He is not the only one I so persuaded, privately, without stink or the possibility of harmful publicity for Jim. So, the one major accomplishment of that outstanding demonstration of Belandria's judgment, good sense and real diplomatic tact, that quintessence of understanding of agents and how they work - and of counter-intelligence know-how - was to immediately warn Lemarre. True genius - Belandria style.

With this but part of your record you pretend to have judgment not descending to a pre-puberty Congolian idiot? You presume to advise anyone?

You pose as Jim's friend? Yet those things you have so loudly, so ostentatiously done in his name cannot but hurt him. I cannot believe your own experience in the world did not so warn you, as I cannot ignore that with all the vehemence possible you did it.

How you could presume to hold an opinion on the current matter without the most careful analysis of the papers Clark filed in court with your training as a lawyer escapes comprehension. When you did this, with complete abandonment of logic and reason, and I tried to get you to understand what, for the first time, we really had, you were never once responsive. Because others were present, I presume, you never once let me finish a thing without an interruption that was in no single instance genuine. Prior to Fensterwald's arrival, all you would talk about was the inevitability that he, too, is an agent. The reason boiled down to that he had failed to overthrow the government!

Not once were you even in point, not once did you make the slightest effort to respond to or refute anything. You had an answer for everything: a trap! Would that we had more such traps and fewer "friends" and "helpers" like you! It just is not possible to adequately describe your use of the word "trap", for with what I had by then already discovered in the papers at issue in that very court, it was a "trap" like none other, ever. What we have is the Attorney General certifying the Warren Report and its account of the investigations of the murder of the President ^{was} fraudulent and that key witnesses had perjured themselves. He did have an out, now that he had been forced to provide descriptions of the suppressed evidence we had not previously had. He could plead the evidence was falsified.

Some trap! Some Judgment! Some Calandria!

Whoever was responsible for that time-nick phone call to Russ Berta in the courtroom was also responsible for the preservation of this monster Warren Report and everything flowing from and connected with it. His spectacular success would have been short-lived had it not been for your valorous backstopping. For the first time, in a court of law - and in Washington! - we had a chance of doing what had never been done and what had never before been possible, and you prevented it! For the first time we could, in a court of law, have established the invalidity and much more - the motive - and you saved the government and its henchmen.

And you dare talk of others as agents?

Had we been able to go ahead, we would have done more than accomplish what is clear from the above. We could have protected Jim. A victory in Washington would have validated all his claims of government interference that today stand without support to the average citizen and the press. Again we would have done more. We could have given him a victory much more significant than convicting Clay Shaw can possibly be. Simultaneously, we would have put him in the position where even a defeat in the Shaw case would have been a victory for him. All these things your great judgment and dedicated friendship spared him.

Inevitably one who has written such finds what he has written sometimes appropriate in other cases. I refer you to the epilogue to SKETCHES II, where I address myself to the record of the late President's "friends". On the first page of this strongly-felt writing I say "The late President had such friends he had no need for enemies. Caesar's friends had more honor. They worked in the open." Whatever your motive, nothing could better describe your "friendship" with Jim, your performance as his trusted "friend". It is like castration as a disease preventive.

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I cannot ignore what I heard Friday night and what you did Saturday morning. Bud phoned me early to tell me of your call to him. In the middle of the loudest possible denunciation of any move in Washington, the one place we could not lose by moving, Jim phoned you. You then, pointedly, said you were moving the phone to me close to the one to him so I could hear what you were saying, and you went out of your way to let him know. What you then did and said is as opposed to what you stopped doing and saying to me as it could possibly be. In fact it was, as you know, not necessary to move the phone, if you did, for I heard everything anyway, I can only assume your words were for Jim's benefit, in this case synonymous with deception. Then you immediately turn around when you think you had dismissed me and do the opposite again. If this does not provide a measure of judgment, it certainly does of honor and honorable intent. Without putting the phone down you tell me you are unalterably opposed to proceeding and simultaneously tell Jim you see no good reason why he should not. Then you come back on the phone to me and tell me the same thing all over again, we should proceed. You sure wanted to be certain I got the message, didn't you?

Without carrying this further, which is possible, I tell you I think it makes a persuasive argument that you are, indeed, what you call everyone else, an agent. I also tell you what you have often heard me say, whether or not a man does what he does for pay is not as significant as the effect of what he does. You have made your own record, and I shall do with it what I can. It is not important to me to decide whether or not you are or could be an agent. It is suffi-

isient for me to understand that if you are an agent what you have done is more honorable, for then you will have been faithful to some trust, have done what someone had the right to expect of you.

You have written the most invidious part of our history. No Schiller, no Thompson, no Epstein, no Roberts or "Friend" like Salinger has been able to approach what you have done. It may be years before this can be properly recorded, for there is constructive work to be done. Eventually, it must be. You must get full credit. You have earned it.

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Bearing on whether or not you are or might be an agent is your qualification. If you are not you do meet a prime prerequisite, a psychological one. There is preference for those with paranoia and a tendency for self-destruction. Like all paranoids, you can be and still not be aware, believe any effort to suggest is part of a tremendous campaign in some way to "get" you. But if you are not an agent, you certainly are a very sick man. I doubt you would heed my advice or that of anyone else, but if you are not an agent you are long overdue in seeking competent help. On this subject you are completely irrational, your reactions are without sense or possibility of accomplishment.

As I told you in New Orleans, these frightful things you do, regardless of what impels them (Ned has an apt phrase about how much Oyster's scout had earned Oyster's trust), so unsettle me they make it impossible for me to work well for several days. If you persist in this dubious career, do me the favor of doing it without any contact at all with me.

It sickens me to write one of us as I have you. I told you I would. I have but a single comment to add: if you are an agent, my hat is off and my caps swirls.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg