

24 April 1969

Dear Harold,

Thank you for your letters of the 9th and the 22nd and the copy of your letter to the NY Times Magazine, which I have just forwarded to Paul Hoch as you asked. I will be most interested to see what the Times does in response to your letter. I trust that you sent a copy to Epstein? I enclose a copy of my own letter to the editor, which I kept as short as possible in order to improve the chance of its publication, although I really had to grit my teeth to keep from the far greater elaboration I would have liked to include.

I trust that you will not take exception to the references in the penultimate paragraph to the report of the 1968 panel and its evidence of fraud. I based myself on Wecht's testimony, which is a matter of public record and which I had read before seeing your ms. It is really incredible that no newspaper has even mentioned the four-inch elevation of the alleged fatal entry wound, including the papers that gave page-one coverage to the panel's report when it was released.

In that sense, certainly, the failure of the news media to report facts fully or objectively to the public, there is valid ground for protest and bitterness. An interesting exercise is to calculate the column inches in the NY Times devoted to the successive pro-WR stories involving the autopsy photos and X-rays, and then compare the space given to Wecht's testimony before Judge Halleck or other relevant anti-WR news. But, Harold, while I don't wish to prolong a sterile dialogue, I really must insist that I am the only authoritative spokesman for my own experience with respect to the publication of Accessories. You ask when it was published, but the relevant question is really when it was accepted for publication in relation to when it was completed, ~~and~~ how many rejections it had before it was accepted.

The ms. of Accessories was completed sometime in July 1966. At that time, a Random House editor who had heard that I had a ms. on the WR contacted me and asked to see it, sending a messenger that very same day, to pick up the ms. After some weeks, I received a letter rejecting it with considerable affront and resentment because it "verged on the libelous" toward the WC and its lawyers and its federal investigative servants and experts. Before I even got around to trying another publisher, Bobbs-Merrill took the initiative in asking to see the ms. Instead of sending it, I sent some of my TMO articles and suggested that if they still wanted to see the ms. after reading the articles, to let me know. They did; I submitted it; and it was accepted fairly promptly, in the fall of 1966 sometime. The actual production of the book, it is true, took the best part of a year, but that was partly my own fault, as I kept adding new material as and when there were new developments.

I don't know what impression you have had about my "travail" in getting the book published, but I assure you that its "late" publication was not due to resistance, rejections, (other than Bantam House), or censorship.

It is true that in posing my suggestion about an article on the report of the 1968 panel, I indicated pessimism about the chances of such an article being accepted for publication. However, the main reason for my pessimism is that I feel that the aftermath of the Shaw trial is an atmosphere of disdain and impatience with further attacks on the WR from any source. This was explicit in editorials from one end of the country to the other, on the acquittal and the mortifying rupture of the Garrison "case." Another reason was the disappearance from the scene of several periodicals--the Reporter, T MO, and SEP, to mention those which come to mind. Ramparts is on very shaky ground; and the Esquire editor I knew has left the magazine for greener pastures.

Incidentally, Art Kevin said on a radio discussion on the coast, on the outcome of the Shaw trial, that Garrison's dismal showing would kill further efforts to challenge the WR for five years.

Recently, by the way, an article I did on the Shaw trial, based on the full accounts and transcripts in the States-Item, was rejected by a small magazine, Commonweal, which had a good review of Accessories and Six Seconds in 1968 and is "friendly." I do not see anything sinister in the rejection, which may have been the result of a variety of factors (including the quality of my writing, or weariness with the subject, or a full schedule which would have made the article too late to be timely), not including unwillingness to criticize Garrison or the WR.

It is true that it is not easy, generally speaking, to get real, solid criticism published; but it is not impossible and if one looks at all the serious work done on the case and actually offered for publication, it is inescapable that a large proportion of it was accepted, and in certain cases had massive attention from reviewers and interviewers. We probably do not agree in every case as to the solidity of the work but when I view the book by Sylvan Fox in the context of 1965 I cannot dismiss it lightly, or some of the other books which have serious shortcomings but still had distinct value and impact.

As you know, I do not believe that Oswald was guilty, even as one of a group of conspirators, and I tend to feel strongly that he had no fore-knowledge of the assassination whatsoever. However, I could not say absolutely categorically that he did not--there are too many "unknowns" still. I believe that some of the critics and pseudo-critics who predicate a conspiracy in which Oswald was one of the riflemen are pandering to the "respectable" segment of American society and to those who occupy seats of power. But I also feel that some of those who think that Oswald was, or may have been, a party to the conspiracy hold that view quite sincerely, however much I disagree with them. I would like to think that when you and I fail to see a particular problem eye to eye, such as your compromise suggestion for an article, you will not "worry" about me or imply that there is something deviated or sinister in my position, or that it is impossible for you to be less than unassailable in judgment or inventory. No one of us has been totally free of error or absolutely perfect in judgment (and I am quite aware that you recognize that without the benefit of my platitudes).

Sincerely,

(for any novice or obscure person to)

\* In many fields other than the WR, as well as on the WR, and very difficult in fact.