

December 13, 1971

Mr. Harrison Salisbury  
The New York Times  
229 West 43rd Street  
New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Salisbury:

If "truth" was ever David Belin's "only goal", he assuredly abandoned it in that shameful self-defamation with which you, in incredibly poor taste, commemorated the assassination of President Kennedy.

You, personally, should have known better because I, personally, put the disproof into your hands long before Mr. Belin's nagging conscience drove him to such lengths. You read my first two books on the Kennedy assassination in manuscript, remember. The second seems to have figured in your "re-investigation" that, lamentably, got nowhere. Both make a record ~~Mr. Belin has selected~~ never to address. It is not a record he can call "independent" or "honest".

Not one of his 13 points is true as he uses them. Take the first, that the ballistics evidence proves the Tippit killing was done with the so-called Oswald pistol. The FBI says the contrary, that it could not identify the bullets with that pistol (and the cartridge cases don't match the bullets, either). Or the last, which attributes meaning it does not have to the finding of the so-called Oswald rifle and clipboard. Mr. Belin was careful not to tell you how many times that place was searched without turning up the clipboard, which happened months later and after many painstaking searches. To this day there has been no proof connecting that rifle with the assassination. It was not of news interest to The New York Times, but I filed suit for that evidence, the spectrographic analyses. It is and has been suppressed, which does not persuade that it "proves" that rifle alone was used.

Or, go to the middle, where Mr. Belin (No. 8) brags of "the time sequences I personally checked out in retracing Oswald's steps from the time of the assassination to the scene of the Tippit murder". What he does not say is what his time checking did prove - that Oswald could not have reached the scene of that crime until at least five minutes after it was on the police radio!

Mr. Belin's quest for "truth" led him to misrepresent the evidence about when this crime was committed and who actually notified the police of this murder and how. It was F. F. Bowley who used the police radio, and at a time that eliminated the possibility Oswald could have committed that crime - by at least 10 minutes by Mr. Belin's own "check". Knowing this, Mr. Belin simply didn't use Mr. Bowley as a witness. If you want Bowley's affidavit, from the Commission's files, in Mr. Belin's area of responsibility, I will be happy to give you a copy.

And if you want me to address Mr. Belin's other points, I'll be delighted.

What doesn't delight is that such a further prostitution of truth should be on the op ed page, for which you are responsible. For years I have been inviting you to examine the formerly suppressed evidence as I have resurrected it. That has not interested you. But further misrepresentation of this great crime, from which the country has yet to recover - and in commemoration of it - does?

The Times is consistent, regardless of who is in charge of what. When my FRANK-UP appeared, it found none of its own people competent to review it. None of its own experts on assassinations, not the lawyers on its staff, not the FBI experts, and least of all the man who had covered the Ray "minitrial". The only competent man was John Kaplan, zealous if unofficial apologist for the Warren Commission, a man who started his career as clerk to Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark whose son was Attorney General at the time Ray was framed. Kaplan next served in the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice where the dirty-work was put on paper. He was then a United States Attorney. And if all this wasn't enough to qualify him for the Times, he was simultaneously engaged in anti-Angela Davis propaganda for the WHIA. The Times assassinated my book in the guise of his "review", which by any standard it was not.

How tragic it is that the Times did not learn from its abandonment of the honorable traditions of our calling at the time of the Bay of Pigs!

When the press is unofficial apologist for official misconduct or error, it is, in my opinion, as genuinely subversive as anything can be in a free society.

Among the things for which the Times has no space, when there was yet space for almost two pages of Gary Cartwright's ignorance and error (also in what the Times appears to regard as appropriate commemoration of the killing of such a President, on November 20), are correction of error and defamation when addressed to those who criticize the Warren Report; my filing of three suits for suppressed evidence under the Freedom of Information Act; and my winning of a summary judgment against the Department of Justice.

How many of such decisions have there been to report? But this one was not news!

Thus I ask what except falsehood, defamation and official apology is news fit to print in The New York Times on this subject?

If perfection is not a state of man and your and the Times' early errors can be explained, that time has long since passed.

I hope you will believe how much I regret that you have been part of this. It is an acute disappointment.

Perhaps the day will come when you and others at the Times will ask yourselves what the state of the country is when you and such a paper

serve so invidious a role; when the writer's obligations must be assumed to the point of bankruptcy by so unimportant a man as I, only to be regularly libeled by the Times and the literary whores it pays and make famous, Kaplan being but one.

In this context, I recommend the Times' November 22 editorial, "The Liberty to Know". It should sound as persuasive as "love" in the mouth of a harlot.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg