

13 November 1968

Dear Mr. Whalen,

It is unfortunate that it was not possible for us to discuss the questions you have posed during your visit to New York, since it is difficult to deal with them by letter alone, but of course I understand that necessity called you back to Washington earlier than you had planned.

Let me try to respond as succinctly as I can, and perhaps simplistically, to your letter of the 11th, after which we can perhaps talk on the phone one evening if you want to pursue any points further or if I realize that I have overlooked an important fact or argument, as my present haste makes probable.

I am absolutely convinced that no one individual did or could have done the deeds of Dallas 11/22/63 and, while I cannot categorically or logically exclude the possibility that Oswald was consciously and purposefully a party to the assassination, I am quite firmly persuaded that he was not knowingly involved. I base that conclusion on (1) his lack of motive, means, and opportunity, in the evidentiary terms discussed in Accessories; (2) his character, personality, and history, which reveal a capacity for deception and calculation but not any resort to or capacity for violence—which reveal also a sustained "idealism" (according to his own lights) with which violence is incompatible; and (3) the persistent signs, before and after the fact of the assassination, that Oswald was carefully, systematically, and cunningly maneuvered into the role of scapegoat.

The framing of innocent men whose innocence was brought to light at the eleventh hour is too well documented to require argument; and it is self-evident that the record does not include cases which no doubt occurred of men framed so successfully that history records their guilt as proven "fact."

Because the weight of evidence suggests that Oswald was framed but entirely innocent, Oswald becomes our one certain link to the assassins who framed him and/or their principals. (I cite only one item of physical evidence, for reasons of brevity—the homemade paper bag discovered in the dead-letter section of the Irving post office, see Accessories, pages 63-64. No effort was made to trace and identify the sender, through handwriting, typewriter, fingerprints, etc.)

My tentative hypothesis of Cuban counterrevolutionists and American accomplices, both private and official individuals or groups, still stands. Nothing has come to light since my book was published that alters that theory (not necessarily of what did happen, but one of several possible explanations for Oswald's apparent guilt while actually innocent and ignorant). Such authentic new material as has turned up (the minutes of the Commission's executive sessions, for example) has served only to corroborate the inferences drawn at an earlier time by other critics and by me.

In an earlier letter, I mentioned that one promising instrumentality for an ultimate breakthrough might be the "Miami tape" (Accessories page 89 fn.). I see only three possibilities that explain that tape: (1) that the outline of the crime tape—recorded on 11/9/63 and the faithful rendition on 11/22/63 was only a pure and bizarre coincidence. This "possibility" I reject out of hand as outside the vagaries of chance. (2) That the Miami tape was based on knowledge of plans that were to be, and in fact, were implemented. Or (3) that a person or persons with access to the tape decided, only after hearing it, to follow the blueprint and thus divert future suspicion to the parties said to be planning to dispose of the President by the voice on the tape.

Let me digress for a moment, apropos of possibility (3), to the still incomprehensible and mystifying historical phenomenon of the near-exact description by Jonathan Swift of the two moons of Mars about a century before the satellites were discovered for the first time by terrestrial astronomers. I reject the hypothesis of a lucky guess by Swift, since he described correctly characteristics of the Martian satellites which are unique in the solar system. I leave open the possibility that Swift had access secretly to advanced optical instruments and integrated into his work of fiction facts which he knew to be genuine. I leave open also the possibility that super-intelligent Martians endowed with superlative sense of humor or mischief deliberately translated into reality what originated in Swift's mind as a fanciful invention.

I mention this because it has in common with the Miami tape the fact that almost any explanation, however it strains our credence, is still more credible than pure coincidence. And if you exclude pure coincidence as the link between the Miami tape and the Dallas assassination two weeks later, then the tape must by one route or another lead back to the actual assassins.

At the risk of being presumptuous, I must add some comments on your hesitation to add to the "public burden of corrosive doubt." I feel strongly that the truth is an absolute imperative, regardless of public morale or sentiment, and whether or not we succeed in establishing the entire truth, it is essential for the public to know that the "truth" of the Warren Report is not truth but falsehood and error. Apologists for the WR have exhorted the critics to let the dead sleep in peace, to desist from raising the questions we have raised—a specious argument, utilized in some desperation or default, since spokesmen for the WR cannot dispose of the factual and evidenciary arguments against the official conclusions and cannot exonerate the WR in logical and material terms. It seems to me to be a grave disservice to the public, to the country, and to history to "protect" the people from the truth, however dismaying and ugly, for the sake of a tranquillity which can only be illusory at best and damaging or dangerous in the last analysis. The American subconscious—and increasingly, since this year's assassinations of a second Kennedy and of Martin Luther King, its conscious awareness—has already found it impossible to incorporate as "truth" the official version of Dallas, and impossible to close the chapter.

Nothing can fortify us, the American people, so much as the truth—for in the very bitterness of confronting the truth about the assassination, we regain something of our honor and courage, and some greater control of our destiny. If the public burden of doubt is the only cause for your hesitation, then I would urge you to proceed with your project. Not only is the public strong enough to carry the burden of truth—to spare the public is also to spare the engineers of the assassination, and to encourage them to repeat their feats with impunity.

I have gone on longer than I intended and I can only hope that I did not fail you entirely. But these are my thoughts and my deep convictions.

Yours sincerely,