

10/9/68

Dear Maggie,

Your clear eyes see well, considering the distance between us!

After explaining how you feel you said, "I can see you nodding your head in disagreement..." and that is almost exactly right.

We do not disagree at all on how things are, what they mean. We disagree on what is and for each must be a personal decision, what he does or does not do. You are not alone. I am the minority. I look forward by looking backward, and I see that where people said there was nothing could be done, nothing was. In each case the reaction that set in was really unopposed where it might have been, was more violent that it might have been. Essentially, I suppose our thinking differs because of the different cultures we inherit. I am here not because my ancestors knew how to sit and wait, which they often did, but because they also knew when not to. The engaged in futilities, like the magnificent bravery of the Bar Kochba band, they were the Maccabees, and they were the Chassidim. Were you to argue my genes spring from the latter, how could I deny it? Yet I think I am in the Maccabean tradition, and I think the fight not only must be made when and where it can be but never fails if it is made.

It surprises me that I am not dispirited. I am more lonely than I'd like to be. Too many of us have given up, and too many of those still doing something have not learned that those who would teach the pope religion must themselves pray. I am without doubt that had I the facilities, had I had the money or help, there are major things I could have accomplished beginning just two years ago. These, in turn, coming at that time in particular, coming, at least, before Chicago, might have had other, predictable and worthwhile consequences. We had and did not use many important opportunities. We will again, and I will do what I can to be in a position to utilize them, hoping against hope that the help may then be forthcoming. Much of the present situation you accurately describe is our own fault, for we have failed where we need not have. I assume my own share of the responsibility. There are too many things I did not do as well as I could and should have.

There may indeed be ^L great changes before the truth becomes known, but I regard the truth as not an isolated thing, an academic concept. It is because of the lies alone that we can anticipate these evil changes. The purpose of establishing, rather achieving acceptance of the truth is to frustrate the designs of the liars. If we can not do it entirely now, we can at least blunt it and prepare for wider opposition to it. If, as you say, we are powerless to make any but momentary dents, is it not worthwhile, not essential, to make as many of them as we can? Need we be, as you put it, truly effective on a large scale, or is it not necessary, if we cannot be effective on a large scale, to accomplish what we can?

My concept of the reality is, actually, more barren, more desperate than yours. I see hazards you do not, understand some things in a way you do not, and am preparing to cope with them when they must be as best I then can. One of these new problems is Jim. I am concerned for his survival and with his, to a large degree, that of the rest of us. I am dismayed as much, frustrated, yet I think I see what must be done and that I seek to do, handicapped most of all by him, as he does not understand, because he is his own strange kind of cat. I get no help from him at all and now seek none. But I still go there whenever I can, never able to afford it, each time burdening my strained finances more, each time succeeding. I will, largely, build at least part of the defense he needs, without his help, and have, to a fair degree, already.

Had I but a lawyer in New Orleans, there is an enormous amount I could do, could have for the past year. Belatedly, he sees it yet doesn't lift a finger, say a word. Jim's major survival problem is Jim. Next to that, those he considers his friends, some you also do. Looking back on it, I still cannot believe I have been able to make the contacts down there that I have, learned what I did, establish the proofs that I have - and now I have to hide these from him in order to have them for him when he needs them - and this with the agreement of one of his assistants, who sees exactly what I do and as I do. Aside from the permeating incompetence, there is an intellectual immorality that I just cannot adjust to. There is no such thing as the kept word, so there is no dependence and God, what messing up! On all levels, in and out of the office. I shudder when I anticipate the day of reckoning, but I also face it and, as best I can, prepare for it. We will not be powerless, if we will be less able than we could have been. It may require of me what some of us will find unwelcome, but if it does, I will do it.

I will be out there in a couple of weeks. If you'd like to discuss this, with no one but Steve present and in confidence, please let him know. Without your desire, I will not press it on you. I will also tell you what you may want to know of some of the things I have learned, but this also must be in confidence. By this I mean not any other of us are to be told it, particularly not Jim, who I will tell whatever I know when he need know it and not sooner. As a matter of fact, I invariably see to it that someone who can inform him has the general outlines of what I have so that, should he really need it, he can have it. Essentially, my purpose is to keep him from indulging his and the office instinct and capacity for self-destruction. There is no help I can give him that I will not. I plan to be there twice more this year, and with \$35,000 in debts and no income, I think you can take this as serious intent, for I have already written my New Orleans book and I must take that time, in addition, from other work. I may wind up with several New Orleans novels, however. It is being arranged that I can spend two weeks there with another interested in the case just before the end of the year and the extra fare required to get me there this trip has been given me. I'll probably stay, as I did last time, with the mother of a man who is, incredibly, part of the story, a man who did threaten to kill Jim. If not, there is an FBI informant with whom I can camp. I stayed with him several days last time! He was a little helpful. I anticipate my only real financial problem will be a car. If I cannot borrow one as I did last time, from a man who was witness to my making serious effort to help one on the other side, I shall have to rent one. Jim ~~will not have one for me.~~ There is, in fact, an advantage in poverty. Last time I had but four square meals, each of them provided. I had milk substitute and vitamins for breakfast and many of the days nothing else but a 19¢ hamburger. I lost 15 pounds, weight I needed much to lose, and have melted five more since returning. I still have weight to lose, but can do it less readily near a refrigerator. I've spent part of each day in recent weeks in physical work that was required here, taking down trees, breaking up stones, and have enticed a few of the missing muscles to come back. I will thus also be better prepared for the tougher day I agree lie ahead.

If you have anything you think I might not on Thornley, Oswald as an agent, and Liebler or Ball, I'd appreciate it. I intend to try and address myself to the latter two when I am there and I have special interests in Thornley. I now have much more information on Oswald and his probably connections, including the reconstruction of the obfuscation machine. Very simple, very effective. This is one they didn't complicate....I am leaving everything up to wonderful Steve. If you want to speak to me, he will know where I'll be staying, when I'll be where. I expect to spend two or three days in San Diego (anything you want looked into ~~the~~ there) with a great guy, George Abbott, whose magnificent father is a friend, my artist, and an authentic noble. Looking forward,

with best regards,

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Monday / 7th Octo.

Dear Harold -

Returned from 5 weeks in Europe and found ^{your} letter in the pile of accumulated mail. There is no particular reason for my silence. - I've really almost given up letter-writing, for one thing. As far as "the case" is concerned, I still keep my records up to date and will ~~answer any~~ respond, as well as I'm capable of doing, do any such stullbuggering at Epstein's, but I am finally resigned to the fact that great changes are going to have to take place in this country, before we can ever begin to expect that the truth will become known to the world - and, until then, I feel we are quite powerless to make anything but a momentary dent. Cumulative of course, the dents make a difference in the final analysis, but the forces arrayed against us are too powerful and do much in control for us to be truly effective on a large scale. I can see you

nodding your head in disagreement but that ^{is} is my present feeling about the overall picture.

I don't recall any more about what Epstein said re the June '64 meeting. I had taken notes of the entire performance, at the time, & sent them, in letter form, to Ray and Lifton (!) (it was a letter addressed to them jointly — for at that time, I still believed Lifton was a critic!!) but, although Ray ~~is~~ ^{thinks} he has that letter somewhere, he has never been able to find it. So I can't elaborate any further. All I can think of is that Vince was also present that day and might remember.

I look upon our present scene as a dark period through which we must somehow sustain ourselves — and I shall continue to do whatever I possibly can to stem the tide and to shed light — but I feel a certain amount of resignation, nevertheless.

With best regards always,

Jaggie