31 May 1966 Aug 66

Mr Harold Weisberg
Hyattstown, Md. 20734

Dear Harold,

Things have started to move, and much faster than one's capacity to record in letters. For example, from Friday at 4 pm until late last night I was literally without an inactive minute, between the telephone and the typewriter. One night was entirely without sleep. A great deal is happening, all or most of which you surely know about--for example, the story in Sunday's Washington Post--in any case, I cannot attempt an account of the last few days, there is simply no time.

I found three long letters from you when I returned from the office tonight. I had to skim through, rather than read carefully, and noted that you wished me to return your letter to Johnson at the Archives, which I enclose herewith accordingly. Harold, I know that you will understand that I am not being rude when I say that at this moment I cannot turn my thoughts to the Archives or the Zapruder frames; it is all I can do to pursue my own projects, meet deadlines, and handle urgent matters that seem to come up unexpectedly every hour. I will have to reserve until a calmer time a careful reading of your comments and a responsive reply.

Ed Epstein's book will be in the bookshops in major centers on Monday next, the 6th of June I believe. I will look forward to your comments when you have read it. You know already that I regard it as one of the most important and impressive documents of our time, although I draw different conclusions from the evidence that Epstein has presented than he himself draws. And that leads into the question of Warren and his role in this affair, which I wish to clarify, in the event that you may have misunderstood me when we discussed that point long ago. I do not want to argue with you about Warren, but I do not agree with your evaluation of his responsibility or lack thereof. My own evaluation will appear soon in print. However, I just take the precaution of emphasizing that I do not agree, and have never thought for one moment, that Warren does not bear an overwhelming and shameful responsibility. I did express that view, I believe during one of our telephone conversations, but your letter does not indicate an awareness that we differ on that matter; so my failure to comment now might only perpetuate a misunderstanding.

Harold, I hope that you will not be offended and that you will realize that I am writing in the same spirit of friendship as always and without intending to be intrusive or presumptuous--I do think you are understandably exhausted and perhaps overwrought, after the long months of labor and the tension of hope followed by disappointment; and I would beg you to try now to force yourself to rest, to calm yourself, and to reexamine your perspective. You write that you are being slandered, accused of plagiarism, and victimized by something resembling persecution. No one can have accused you of plagiarism and I am sure that if you reexamine the letters in question you will find no such charge. Criticism can spring from honest differences of opinion and is not automatically malicious.

You criticized Salandria's article in which he quoted from the FBI Summary Report of 12/9/63, some months ago, and while I did not regard his article as perfect, I surely did not see, as you seemed to see, any sinister element whatever. Salandria sees with his eyes; I see with my eyes; no two WR researchers see things in an absolutely identical way, nor do they write in the same style. The fact that an interpretation of evidence diverges from your own interpretation should not cause you to question the good faith of the researcher who takes a different view, and I found absolutely nothing in Salandria's article to warrant any questions about his integrity or his motivation.

Not only do I find no inherent cause to question Salandria's work but I rely on my close friendship and experience with Vince, over a period of about a year, when I say that in my opinion there is no finer, more generous, more thoughtful, more unselfish, and more highly-motivated person in my catalogue of friends and acquaintances, whether or not they are involved in this case....Unless it is Arnoni, who during my short acquaintance with him, scarcely more than a month, has gained my complete trust, confidence, and respect, to the point where I would as unhesitatingly place my life, or my life-savings, in Arnoni's hands as I would in Vince Salandria's. My experience with both these friends has been unblemished; both are men of the highest ethical commitment and the most devoted and faithful human beings I know. I have experienced nothing but consideration, unfailing warmth, unquestioning help when I needed help--in short, when you refer to Salandria's "deceptiveness," "sneaky red-baiting," and "slanders," you might as well apply those terms to me personally and hurt me no less than when you apply such epithets to one of my dearest friends.

I can only think that you have misread and misinterpreted whatever letters you have received, from Salandria or from Arnoni; and that if you have so misunderstood their nature as human beings, it must be that your overtaxed energies and the demoralizing experiences over a long period have affected your judgment.

I think you must recognize from the tone of this letter that I am truly concerned and sorrowful, Harold, and that I am not attacking you but defending my two friends about whom you have made very extreme statements which I do not and cannot and will never accept. I am also your friend, and I know that you have always addressed me as a friend--and this letter makes me no less so, as I hope you know.

Harold, there are situations in which one individual confronts an opposing majority, holds to his view against an overwhelming tide, and yet is right, although he is only one against the many. But there are situations also in which one individual is at odds with the many, or the several, of his friends, allies, colleagues. At such times, the "one" should confront the possibility that he may not be completely in the right, and that he may even be wrong.

If Dellinger contacts me, or anyone else, I will tell the truth and no more, and no less. The truth is, I am your friend and I believe that you, like the fifteen or twenty fellow-researchers I have come to know and value and admire, have worked hard, made a contribution, and been inspired by a desire to uncover the truth. The truth is, I am also Salandria's friend, and Arnoni's friend, and that I know you are absolutely mistaken and unfair in attributing ugly motives to either of them. And the truth is, that I believe you have done so because of misunderstanding, and perhaps some intolerance of criticism, and perhaps some failure to realize that every one of us have put in excruciating hours of labor, made sacrifices of money and sacrifices on which no money value can be placed, and if we have not clamored our personal ordeal, the ordeal was nonetheless genuine, and perhaps no less than yours, when all is said and done. And since we are all in the same boat, Harold, let us not put the microscope to each other's failings, but pull in the same direction, investing a little trust and the presumption of innocence, and sometimes even turning the other cheek. There will be time to settle accounts--if accounts there are--when we have achieved that for which we are all striving.

If I have aggered you, Harold, I am truly sorry; the time has come to arrest the drift of events and the exchange of increasingly ugly recriminations. I am becoming frightened of the results if this continues.

In all sincerity, Sylvia

P.S. I never met Arnoni until after he had accepted my article on Hart to go — I would like that to be clear, so as to obviate any thought in your mind that I am pandering, to be published.