

May 18, 1966

Dear Mr. Aronson,

Your letter of May 16 warrants an immediate if, alas, hasty response. I appreciate your taking the time after a bout of illness. And there are certain things you say I shall attempt to refute, hoping if I say you will be specific in response and that you will support the charges inherent in your letter with fact. I respect your declaration of friendly intentions and agree with your conclusion that your letter would disappoint me. Further, I acknowledge, without your making the claim, that in browsing through material with which you thought yourself familiar it is possible there were things you did not see.

You may be correct in believing I am excited about what I did. I do not think so. I admit I'm not an impartial judge. But I think you should bear in mind that my book was completed in mid-February 1965, 15 months ago. You say I belittle others. I am unaware of the basis for this charge, unless it is in your unsupported claim that there were substantial books. Please name them, those you can define as substantial. Although I was talking about books on the "Report, I'll accept books on the assassination or the Report. I do not regard the Joesten or Buchanan books, important a function as they served, as within this definition. They were largely speculative. The Fox book is not substantial; it is superficial, and there are others working in this field, only recently known to me, who agree with this. I would especially value your listing of these books because you say, "If those which heretofore appeared have not been substantial, then yours could be considered such even less."

You follow with what I bluntly label a falsehood, and I call upon you to prove me wrong: "For I have found your ~~book~~ in the main, to be merely a reiteration of the research, analysis and criticisms by others. Instead of generously acknowledging their work and services you belittle them..."

I worked completely independently. I have - and you can see - a third of a million words of notes typed. I knew of no one else working in the field until after the publication of a letter I did not intend for publication by the New Leader, when one of these people communicated with me. You will find, if you consult the issue, that I praised both the New Leader and Sauvage. Sauvage will tell you I offered him a copy of my book almost a year ago, and he declined it, and I repeated this perhaps two months ago, and again he declined it, and I sent him a copy as soon as it was printed. There are a few of the things Sylvia Meagher in her letter of February 11, 1966, suggested I add, as I now recall, three, none basic. Aside from this, my work is entirely ~~mine~~ my own. If you dispute this, I call upon you for proof. To show my good faith in this matter, I will show you my notes, play you may tapes, of which I have 27 each containing six hours of dictation, and you will see that my work, in fact, is entirely my own. Frankly, although during this period I had little time to read anything, I am unaware of anything in print in even such magazines as yours prior to the completion of my manuscript. If I am wrong, please tell me. This, I hope you will realize, is a serious charge you have made, "that my book is merely a reiteration of the research, analysis and criticisms by others." You should,

I feel, prove it or apologize for it. I fail to understand how you could expect that I "generously" acknowledge "their work and services" when I am unaware of how many of it prior to the completion of my manuscript. Please show me, also, where I have drawn upon such work or services.

I am unaware of any book on the Report other than Fox's. Others may be forthcoming, but they are not now out. I do not regard Fox's as definitive, and you may disagree, and I do not regard any book on such a subject that is superficial as responsible. Again, you may disagree, but I regard such writing as properly in magazines, not book, when the assassination of a President of the United States and such an inquiry into it as this one is involved. I am also unaware of any "crisis yourself" but concede this may be your interpretation of some of my language.

Having finished the first page of your letter, I am not surprised that my brief account of my unsuccessful efforts to get my book published does not, in your phrase, invoke your confidence, for by this time I realized there was nothing that could, and I have no idea why. Your generalities are unworthy of comment and in the face of fact that I call upon you to refute, really without meaning. What is coming out the end of June bears no relationship to what was true beginning February a year ago. You carefully avoid the history of the Mark Lane book, and you must be aware of it. I have no reason to dispute your description of the Epstein book, and I do not. I am looking forward to reading it. It seems strange to me that with your knowledge of these "others who would and will" in the book-publishing business you never introduced those existing manuscripts who existance you would seem to know about to any of these publishers.

Again, I must insist that you cannot properly substitute your opinion, no matter what confidence you place in it, for fact. I made the submissions I said I made. What happened is what I said happened. I will show you the file. It is extensive. I cannot begin to imagine on what basis you say I quoted "initial public responses, prior to their manuscript reading," unless you are still the victim of a fever. You dream, sir. In every case save that of the Canadian publisher (where the excerpt is clear by context) the letters accompanied or announced the return of the good book. All but one of the letters reproduced in facsimile actually state this! I submit, Mr. Arnold, this is not the exercise of responsibility on your part. How in the world, in any event, could you know whether the comments I quoted were with or without reading of the book? In any event, I tell you without exception, those I quoted as having read the book did read it. If you dispute this, prove it. If you do not or cannot, be a man and apologize. On my part, I have offered you the letters as proof, with the understanding you will, as I did, make no reference to any identification.

The difference between your letter and my reply should be apparent to you. I ask, as you did in your concluding paragraph. Frankly, I tell you your letter is totally devoid of fact. I can find no merit in it. I find passion, and would appreciate knowing its inspiration. There remains the possibility of factual error on my part, as you see it. Therefore, I call upon you to cite any such fact. By this time, you can realize, your opinion is without meaning. You are entitled to it, but even opinion among reasonable men must have a basis in fact. I ask you to produce it or apologize for the serious accusations you have made without the offer or even the whisper of support. And should you want my opinion of some of the recent contents of your magazine, you need but ask for it. I do not intend this letter for publication, for I do not want to injure you. I would hope we may each find things more worthwhile to fight than each other.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg