

4/9/69

Dear Mr. Chatelant,

Your letter has been forwarded. We haven't lived in Yattstown for a year and a half.

With your first par. I am in accord.

Of course, I will see you and help in any way I can. You may at first not accept it as help, but the immediate suggestion I have is that you forget about your project, ~~xxxx~~ it is an anachronism before you begin. And the likely market is poor. The best you will be able to claim is a reshuffle of the past. People will not go for it. A similar thing is bombing out right now, with Meredith the publisher.

You cannot do a book that "presents all the known facts". You cannot do it on the government side because so much was never published. You cannot do it from the critic side for the same reason and because there is an enormous amount not yet printed but available for printing that could ruin you if it takes hold and gets out. I have three books completed, three more almost ready, and all covering new ground.

Nor can you begin to deal with the evidence and the issues in one paragraph.

Are you in a position to make dependable evaluation of the arguments on each side? You cannot do it by reading the other side. That takes an enormous amount of knowledge that can come only from original work. You will require years just to learn how little you ~~know~~ know of what you should. You can not begin to evaluate Specter and you will wind up a propagandist. You cannot begin to know when he is lying (as he does and has), when he is telling part truth, when he is telling the truth out of context, etc. You should be able to make a judgement from this: he has declined several dozen challenges to meet me, yet he is willing to talk to you. Do you think it is because he believes you can check him out or trip him up?

I do not know the extent of your reading. However, I assure you there is little original critical work. One of the best-known works is largely plagiarized. Give that one credit and you destroy your own credibility. If you do not detect it, you are not properly equipped. Are you in a position to recognize those that are pot-boilers, works of sycophancy? Serious people often have not.

My belief is that you are heading for trouble and problems and cannot do what you want, regardless of the seriousness of your intent and the decency of intention. I do wish you were in a position to understand this but I fear you are not. But your problem will not be a lack of willingness to cooperate. Those whose cooperation you'd require would help with a work of serious scholarship. Those who will accept will be wanting to use you. Those who will not will understand what you do not and will not want to help something that cannot do good, cannot succeed.

By the way, if you cannot trust Specter, I think you can trust Wade.

Sincerely,

22a North Nashville Ave.
Ventnor, N.J. 08406
April 5, 1969

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Hyattstown
Maryland

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

For some time I have been deeply disturbed by the seemingly endless controversy which has followed the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and, more recently, the murders of Senator Robert Kennedy and Doctor Martin Luther King. It is frightening, of course, to know that a United States President, a United States Senator, and a respected civic leader can be so cruelly shot down and destroyed. It is no less terrifying to realize that other national leaders may in time suffer a similar fate. Yet, I believe my principal concern is for the American people and the damage being done to them by the lasting confusion. The absurd charge that we are all to blame, that we are a sick society, is making the nation uncertain of itself. It is depressing to pick up a newspaper and learn that a reader is "ashamed to be an American."

I believe the real need is for one book that presents all the known facts, objectively and comprehensively, in strict chronological order, without undue speculation and free of distortion; a book that examines the evidence point by point, with both ends of the controversy presented side by side, so that the reader can determine for himself or herself what the facts really are. I would like to write that book. In one chapter dealing with the evidence and the issues, I want to present the arguments of the Warren Commission and the critics side by side as each point of dispute is discussed. In one sense, the Commission and the critics would be debating the case in this chapter.

I am fully aware that I may not be able to obtain the amount of cooperation needed to make this book possible. It is too soon to say. For that reason, this letter does not constitute a formal request for an interview; the book may never be written. I have had encouragement from Arlen Specter and District Attorney Henry Wade. Both men have agreed to see me.

At this time, I ask only if you would consider talking to me if I am able to secure the cooperation necessary to do the job properly. Would you please advise me as to how you feel about my intentions and if you would agree to an interview if my plans should materialize ?

Very truly yours,

Frank E. Chatelanat
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