

20 Jan 68

Dear Mr Weisberg:

No answer required on this, so breath easily.

Have just received your 18 Jan commenting on my 4 Jan letter addressed "Dear Helen". Will forward the carbon of your 18 Jan to Helen (Helen Hartmann. Thank you for your reply. Seems you must be getting up at 3am daily to answer all this mail you must be getting, if indeed you do it all yourself.

Am grateful to you and the other critics (Lans & Meagher, anyway) for what you have all offered us. But still, I think it would be perfectly naive for any reader of the critics to assume automatically that the Top Critics are completely unrestrained - even the ones who struggle most to get heard with the most "damaging" evidence. We might be the freest large country in the world, but we ain't that free.

No, I don't "begin with a political bias" as you say - nor do I think that you do. What I do begin with is a "skeptical bias", in the sense of one who has paid attention to Emanuel Goldstein's 2 or 3 dozen pages in 1984. Or, for that matter, Animal Farm. To read these properly would (should) castrate anybody from conventional politics - whatever that is - and realize that extremists on the left and extremists on the right are one and the same thing, at least on the higher levels.

Critics in general seem to have avoided a particular implication of the issuance of the Report and Exhibits. That is the question of how it should have come about that the Commission could have thought in the first place that it could successfully foist off its nonsense on the public. Clearly, they would not have done so had they known in advance what the outcome would be. Therefore, what gave them the courage (or assurance) that they could do so? It must obviously have seemed possible to these talented & experienced men that even the most utter hogwash they could produce could be successfully foisted off onto the public despite, or with the help of, all the seemingly free & independent news services. How did they come to have this confidence?... THAT is in my estimation more important than even finding out who pulled what triggers on the various guns, what group or groups were behind them, and for what reason or reasons they desired the assassination. These things are of course important, but what of the profound significance of this seemingly mixed group having reason to believe that their 20,000 pages, published, could successfully escape comparison with the Report?

Now it must appear equally clear that these intelligent men must have realized that eventually they would be under attack, and that the attacks would necessarily gain momentum in view of the extreme importance & implications of the many-gun assassination.

So we have these two equally "clear" possibilities: That the Commission actually had reason to believe that the Report could be satisfactorily defended in the eyes of the public either for all time or for a long time, or that there would be a stampede of critics who would find themselves published somehow or another & would, could, be dealt with. Either possibility would seem to have enormous implications.

2 Weisberg 20 Jan 68

Living as we are in a day when it is an open secret, or anyway an open suspicion that critics or "critics" or defenders or "defenders" of any important matter might be either subsidized or somehow influenced, it seems impossible to me that these methods would not be employed in the JFK fiasco. Moreover, while some "critic" books are so obviously false as to appear ridiculous, these seem to provide a service in giving the more discerning readers more confidence in the "real" critics - Weisberg, Lane, Meagher. But going a step further, if it were foreseen that critics would break through here & there and be heard, would it not be the most logical thing for the Commission & those they might have represented to jump the gun & supply the public with the "best" & most palatable critics? This is a question which by now must be gathering momentum - and if so, it should be paid attention to. It will explain why I strain to look for flaws in even the "best" of the critics while appreciating what they have to offer. I have been through the 26 volumes myself, and on re-reading Lane, Weisberg, Meagher, parts of them, since that time... on doing this I realize that I was unable to see for myself 9/10 of the significant things. You need a computer built into your head, and I don't have that kind of head. I thank you & Meagher & Lane for doing this.

It is a backhanded "thanks", though, as I don't really know what's going on & don't expect to learn it in my lifetime. It irks me that I don't, and here I sit & write. I never vote, but if I had the opportunity of being able to vote for a "No Confidence in Anybody, Throwaway Vote Party", I would maybe get into the car & go down to vote. This is what things have come to, and it is a goddamn shame.

So you can add this bitchy letter, the essence of it, to whatever statistics you carry in your head. My emotions agree closely with Garrison's foreword to OSWALD IN NEW ORLEANS, and I can't help thinking that nearly everyone who reads it can avoid being somehow influenced. It gets so close to the heart of things that I can hardly believe it appears in a paperback, even a hard-to-get one. But then he gave almost the same message in his nationwide 19 June 68 telecast, the equal-time thing, 1/2 hour. Garrison is too good to be true, and remains a mystery to me. Perhaps "things" are so critical that even Garrison is permitted to exist as a convenient distraction. Surely it is coming to seem that the fantastic is the order of the day, and that the most disturbing distractions are welcomed in order to draw attention from even more disturbing things. Such as?

As I say, relax. I don't want an answer and at this point wouldn't be taking any reply at face value anyway. But if you want a sampling of what may be becoming an increasingly popular attitude, read me. If you are "nothing more" than a chicken farmer (if I read the "critic" critics, or critic "critics", or critic critics or "critic critics" right) and are simply standing up on your hind legs and honestly and indignantly barking about the mysterious behavior of your government - if this is all you are and you are doing it without anyone's assistance or influence... if this is so, I owe you every allegory I can muster up. But you will understand how this question is bound to come up, given as much to read as we are here in this at least relatively free society.

A point here is that if such suspicions are on the increase, then it would be to the advantage of the confused public (me) to impress this fact upon whatever group or groups are running the show. A result of this might be a speedup in the rate at which "new" things are brought to public attention. The impatience is the thing which has to be dealt with, and the "new" findings aren't being "found" & publicized fast enough now to satisfy an increasing number of suspicious people.

3 Weisberg 20 Jan 68

The rate is not right, not properly chosen to balance the need of "the establishment" on the one hand, to deal with their nasty problems, nor on the other hand to satisfy the curiosity of the public. Why the snail-pace "progress", we are beginning to ask.

Recalling that Surrey & Hosty played bridge together, hope you might voice this thought to everybody within earshot next time you play bridge if you find yourself in agreement with the belief, and it may be that you do. Right now everybody would benefit from a change of pace, even a phony seeming-speedup.

Hard for anyone to really know the background of the critics they are reading. By background I don't mean what they have done in the past, but rather what they have been exposed to in their reading in various fields over the years, and whether or not they have discovered for themselves any interesting associations between the various fields. I mean such diverse fields as politics, religion, economics, science, history, etc and the histories of the development of these various things. (No, no, I'm not a scholar of any description, don't want to mislead you. I'm a workman, but do flip thru paperbacks .)

What I'm leading up to is this: a hypothetical & completely possible case in which all the JFK critics (assuming them to be honest & also unfluenced) are primarily specialists in one field only in addition to their being JFK assassination experts. If this is so, it would seem to me that they would be at a distinct disadvantage in considering more than some small part of the significance of the assassination. Each of them might have thoughts ~~relating~~ relating to their own primary specialties, but each concentrating primarily on conventional criticism of the Commission & not having the courage or knowledge or support to introduce his ideas concerning the implications of the assassination. In this connection I seem to note that certain critics following more or less the same line in their books don't seem to be on speaking terms with one another, or aren't at one time or another. If this is not simple pretense for one reason or another - if it is really true it might be interesting to speculate just how such a situation should come about. Maybe you various critics, the most talented of you, are in fact all little children emotionally and can't get together & compare your notes. But I'm suggesting that perhaps you have been placed at odds with one another by others who might have a particular interest in doing that very thing, and I could imagine many ways in which it could come about - given the resources with which ~~to~~ to do it. Sheer speculation, of course, but the idea is as old as history. And due to the importance of the JFK thing, I couldn't think of a better first-move than to split the critics into individual wet hens.

Regards,

*S. J. Weisberg*

cc: Mrs Helen Hartmann, 4666 27th Ave North, St Petersburg Fla 33713. Vent your spleen on her if you are feeling like a wet hen over this. She doesn't yet understand the futility of her pouring over the 26 volumes, and I have only just come to realize the futility for myself. Me, I am as of now divorcing myself from all controversial topics, and this is my last letter to you (you're welcome, don't mention it), and when my head gets better I'll devote myself to putting up more shelves in the garage & such things. Better I should worry about how to put a straight shelf on a creaked wall, which is a solvable problem & gives a good feeling of accomplishment once it's done. And then there's no end to the number of harmless shelves one can put up. You ought to see my place now.