

NEW ADDRESS: Rt. 7, Frederick, Md. 21701

1/16/68

Mr. Arthur Crook, Editor  
The Times Literary Supplement  
Printing House Square  
London E.C. 4  
England

Dear Mr. Crook,

Your kind letter of January 10 reached me between trips on which I am making radio and TV appearances. The consequence of such things as the government is attempting to do to Jim Garrison and such palpably unfair writing as Mr. Sparrow's, inevitably, is to make people look for the fire that causes the smoke. Each makes popular unhappiness that much greater. On my last two TV appearances where polls were taken, the vote against the Warren Commission was 82% and 96%.

Yet in the printed press, only the other sides gets decent attention. Witness your article by Sparrow. What I really would like is an equal opportunity to respond. When you publish such writing, you are at the mercy of the author. When a man has the reputation he enjoys, you are justified in feeling his writing is both fair and accurate. In this case it was neither. He uses a shoddy device, to say that Weisberg and Lane say this, or Costen and Weisberg say that, and in each case he smears me by the other, wrongly, in some cases representing my writing and beliefs as exactly opposite to what they are. He does this to the degree that I wonder if what he has done is actionable. He even quotes nonexistent witnesses, like the female clerk at the Irving Sports Shop.

My first letter was written before I was able to get the full text of the article. The second was written when I had only the New York Times account of the Roche letter. Each got the widest possible distribution here, and each is quite wrong and quite defamatory. I had hoped the time was past when responsible publications would freely libel those who oppose such injustice as "paranoid". The net effect of each was to damage me and what I have tried so hard and at greater cost than I think you can comprehend to bring about.

At this moment, I am pressed for time, and I will be for a week or so. Then I leave again for several weeks. What I should like to ask you to do is this: permit me to respond to Mr. Roche, in any abbreviation of that letter you may make or in a very brief one that I could write separately, and then invite me to write in response to Mr. Sparrow, addressing myself to his writing, and under the same conditions.

I do wish I had the resources to fly to England and debate him in public. That is something, I am confident, he will shun, for he knows he speaks wrongly, and he will not face one who knows the fact. We do, very much, require a dialogue on this subject, for in every country it is a touchstone issue. There is no country, today, not influenced by American policy, and no American policy uninfluenced by the murder. Instead, the world is inundated by learned lies and slanders from lickspittles. This is not a mechanism for producing truth.

Hastily,

Harold Weisberg

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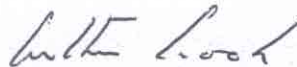
January 10, 1968

Dear Mr. Weisberg,

Forgive me if (somewhat more politely) I confess to sharing some of the puzzlement of the Correspondence Editor of the Sunday Times. Your two letters reached me safely and you very kindly give permission to abbreviate as I deem necessary. But there are difficulties here, since your letters were written at different times and your comments on Mr. Roche's letter seem to be based on the New York Times despatch rather than on the relevant issue of the T.L.S. which also included letters from E.J. Epstein and Joachim Joesten, together with a reply from Mr. Sparrow. I enclose cuttings of this correspondence.

If, after having read the full correspondence, you feel moved either to rewrite and bring up to date your original letter or to write another letter for publication, I would gladly consider it, which means, of course, that I would ignore the two letters already sent to us. If you do rewrite your original letter (which was addressed to the Sunday Times) the references to that journal should be changed to The Times Literary Supplement, since the papers are quite separate.

Yours sincerely,



Arthur Crook  
Editor.

Mr. Harold Weisberg,  
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## AFTER THE ASSASSINATION

Sir,—John Sparrow states in his article "After the Assassination" (December 14), that Mark Lane and I "worked together for a time on their investigations". This statement is completely false and without foundation. I never worked, cooperated or was associated with Mark Lane. I am sure that this was an honest mistake on Mr. Sparrow's part, and he did not intend to impute guilt by association to me, but I do not think that he would want such a fiction presented as fact under his name.

I should also like to point out that his charge that I misquoted some of the Commission lawyers is at least questionable. To be sure, the fact that I took notes during my interviews and submitted these notes as part of my thesis research is not in itself a reason to presume that the notes were accurate. But neither can the protest of these lawyers, made more than a year after the interviews and without the benefit of notes, be taken at face value. Some evidence of this problem can in fact be found in the example Mr. Sparrow cites: Joseph Ball claimed that I had interviewed him "once only, for about ten minutes in the lobby of a hotel". No doubt Mr. Ball was sincere in his memory of the event, but when I later told him that we had breakfast together in the Regency Hotel in N.Y. with a client of his on June 24, 1963, he admitted that he must have been mistaken. In any case, I believe Mr. Sparrow is quite right in suggesting that interviews are not the best evidence of the conditions under which the Commission worked. After my book was published a good deal of further evidence was released from the National Archives which, I believe, supports the conclusion I reached that the staff laboured under severe time pressure in writing the reports. The payroll records, for example, show that most of the staff lawyers worked less than half-time, and many of the lawyers who had conducted the field investigation had left before the Report was written. I should also point out that there also was some evidence that the lawyers had paid more attention to some problems than I had gathered from my interviews.

One final point. Mr. Sparrow's charges that my argument that the Commission suffered from a conflict in purposes was based on an out-of-context quotation. However, he neglects to say that I state this in my book: "Although the Commission's discussion of this problem gives some insight into the Commission's dominant purpose, conclusions cannot be based on what are, in fact, selected and possibly out-of-context statements. . . . The dominant purpose becomes clear not so much from the dialogue as from the Commission's subsequent course of action." I don't think, therefore, I was as guilty of deceiving the reader as Mr. Sparrow suggests.

EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN.

295 Harvard Street, Cambridge, Mass.

Sir,—On December 14 Mr. John Sparrow has succinctly described my book *Oswald: The Truth* as "a compound of bad logic, bad English, bad temper, and bad taste".

I plead guilty to the second count

English is not my mother tongue and whatever I managed to learn of it is American idiom, not the King's English. And my accent is surely the most atrocious ever heard on either side of the Atlantic.

As to the charge of bad temper, I doubt that anyone personally acquainted with me would ever describe me as bad-tempered. However, it is true that, as a writer, I am apt to be carried away by strong feelings when confronted with flagrant fraud, injustice and official misconduct.

The question of taste is hard to argue, but it seems to me that Mr. Sparrow misuses the term in this connexion. Whether Lee Harvey Oswald or his accusers are the real criminals in this case, is not a matter of taste. Rather it is a matter of information, perception and good judgment—in all of which Mr. Sparrow seems to be sadly lacking.

In order to settle the question as to which of us two is guilty of bad logic, I hereby challenge Mr. Sparrow to a duel (of words) before a panel of independent judges, at any time of his choosing.

JOACHIM JOESTEN.

Munich 23, Dreschstr. 5, Germany.

\*\* Mr. John Sparrow writes:—I gladly accept Mr. Epstein's disclaimer about his having worked with Mr. Mark Lane. I was basing myself on a letter from Mr. Lane to *The Observer* (October 2, 1966) in which he spoke of a "working relationship" between them which continued for a time until it was terminated by Mr. Epstein. I can well understand Mr. Epstein's wish to free himself from the imputation of "guilt by association" with Mr. Lane, and I hope I made it clear that I regarded the latter's work as being on an altogether lower level than Mr. Epstein's.

As for the use made by Mr. Epstein of his interview with members of the Commission and their staff, I certainly acquit Mr. Epstein (as I did in my article) of deliberate misquotation, and I will content myself here with saying that it would have been in every way better if he had submitted his "quotations" to their authors for checking before publishing them.

I feel somewhat disarmed by the genial tone of Mr. Joesten's letter. I certainly would not wish to criticize him personally for faults of English or of temper, or indeed for lack of taste. But I was criticizing his books, and in them he repeatedly allows indignation to carry him beyond what seem to me, making full allowance for the importance of the subject, to be the limits of controversial decency.

As for faulty logic: I suspect that I should enjoy a verbal duel with Mr. Joesten but, even if it were possible to arrange one, I do not think it would serve a useful purpose, for I feel as sure that he would not convince me of the logical cogency of his argument as I am that I would not convince him of the logical cogency of my own. I am content that readers of his books and of my article should judge between us.

Sir,—The Dallas demonologists have had the field essentially to themselves for too long largely—as John Sparrow noted in his superb analysis (December 14)—because few of us have the fan-

that energy absorbed by an electron  
demonstrates that the world is not flat.

There is one review that Warden Sparrow did not make which seems to me vital to any non-paranoid assessment of that awful day. Every one of the plot theories must necessarily rely on the inconceivable connivance of one key man: Robert F. Kennedy, then Attorney General of the United States.

Those of us who have any knowledge of the relationship between President Kennedy and his brother have assumed from the outset that had there been the *slightest* trace of a conspiracy, the Attorney General would not have slept or eaten until he had reached the bottom of the matter.

And any fair analysis of Senator Robert Kennedy's abilities, his character, and of the resources at his disposal as Attorney General, would indicate that if there was a conspiracy, he would have pursued its protagonists to the ends of the earth.

Admittedly, this is not a legal argument, but a sane society operates largely on common-sensical notions of trust and leaves conspiratorial black masses to a priesthood of marginal paranoids.

JOHN P. ROCHE.

Special Consultant to the President.  
The White House, Washington.

Sir,—I wish to congratulate you for publishing Mr. John Sparrow's convincing and woefully needed dissection of the pretentious nonsense that has been published about President Kennedy's assassination.

This kind of demonology automatically springs up after any such fateful event, but it has been dismaying to find reputable scholars and responsible edi-

tors permitting themselves to be caught up in the process.

I suppose that the reason is simply that it is so appalling for human beings to find that mere haphazard chance can bring about such lamentable consequences that they are driven to seek some meaning, even the worst if need be, to account for its having happened. Thus even the suggestion that the C.I.A., a conspiracy of Texas millionaire right-wingers, a band of anti-Castroites, or the like is "behind" the assassination is preferable to the thought that one poor, twisted misfit could all by himself end John F. Kennedy's life. But alas, such could and did happen.

I could wish that Mr. Sparrow's review essay might be reprinted in every newspaper and magazine in the United States, the British Isles and the Continent. You have performed a real service to the truth and to the memory of President Kennedy.

LOUIS D. RUBIN, Jr.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.