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Harold Weisberg
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Dear Harold:

I got your letter a few days ago and was tempted to call, but I didn't want to get your blood pressure up. I've been preoccupied with the Gates nomination and this was my first chance to write.

You are wrong again in your conclusions about what I might say or write about Vietnam. I do not say Kennedy didn't want to get out. I do say he was not irrevocably committed to it more than one year ahead of doing it. If you think that, then you must take all Catholics literally when they go to confession and vow never to sin again. The McNamara-Taylor report, which Kennedy approved, did not recommend absolute withdrawal. It called for withdrawal of most forces, once the South Vietnamese had been trained properly, IF this could be done without impeding the war effort. LBJ wanted to get out of Vietnam, too. He approved almost identical language following a spring 1965 trip to Vietnam by McNamara. He campaigned against sending American boys to fight Asian wars, remember? But the situation deteriorated and Johnson did what he did. You can argue till you're blue in the face about whether Kennedy would have pulled out under the same circumstances or whether he would have sent more troops or some other option. The fact is that when Kennedy was killed, no one but mythmakers can say what he would have done. What Gen. Gavin told you he said could not have been locked in stone (as in Oliver). And I strongly doubt that Kennedy was as absolute as you have Gavin saying he was. Historian William Gibbons told me McNamara, for one, used to talk to the generals a lot about withdrawing just as a ploy, to keep the generals from asking for more troops.

I'm enclosing my copy of the Sciambra memo, but I find it hard to understand how you have been hampered by not having the xerox. I returned all of your papers to you, including the Sciambra memo, in a bag that I left at your doorstep months ago. If you want all the xeroxes back as well, let me know.

Sincerely,

