

15 December 1969

Dear Helen:

This will be a poor answer, indeed, to your good letter of -- horrors, last Feb. 25. SHE insists she is too covered with shame to write, describing herself as just a blob of mortification. Anyway, I have been selected to do the ~~dirty~~ dirty -- a sort of male chauvinist type reply, a short note to go with a Christmas card and lend it a pale color of respectability. I'm supposed to be able to get away with it because I'm not a girl.

Anyway, what I can tell you is that we got way behind in our work last winter during the Shaw trial and never have caught up. While the Garrison case itself dwindled thereafter, other things happened peripherally with respect to the whole assassination problem and the overall volume actually increased: things like the Green Berets, Ted Kennedy and other happenings which, as you well know, cannot be ignored simply because they are not overtly related to the central problem. In addition to this we have had a number of time-consuming developments in our personal life, like a radical change in working hours after 15 years of night work, which leaves us considerably less time to live. Anyway, your letter was one of the things that were neglected partly because it deserved something better than a brief reply.

I certainly do want to say, even briefly, that we are much interested in your thoughts on Garrison and would encourage you to keep them coming. The idea that he was being used and maneuvered had occurred to us a number of times, and it is most useful to have your view of this possibility. To sum it up roughly, we still have to reserve judgment on him, either way. Too much is missing for a firm conclusion. Perhaps the perjury trials may shed some light, but experience thus far does not justify a very optimistic expectation.

Speaking of the perjury trials, the other thing I would like to mention is this business of Thornley. We have nothing against him, never having met him, but we do have a couple of taped interviews with him in which he sounds like a pleasant enough guy. We do not doubt that Garrison may have overstated his case against Thornley and warped the evidence, among other things. However here again we simply have to reserve judgment, not only because we know so little but also because once a man, no matter how decent, becomes a member of that community to which we all believe Oswald belongs, he never gets entirely away from it. There is too much on him, and if he is his own master in any respect it is only because it serves someone's purpose to let him be.

principles

We agree very much with your analysis of the Warren Report, its origin, design and purpose. We'd add only that it seems to be based also upon two well-known both to the government and Madison Avenue flackery: The short memory of the public and its equally dominant herd instinct. One has only to give any myth the cloak of respectability long enough for the majority of the public to forget the holes in it, and it then becomes established fact, seeded away in cheap school textbooks and encyclopedias from which it takes root in the minds of the new generations who are born into their own new worlds where the well-buried truth becomes the new myth with no relation to reality. The Lincoln assassination established this procedure. Several people were convicted and hanged for conspiracy, yet the truth today is that John Wilkes Booth did it all by himself.

This is about all I have time for if I am to maintain my male chauvinist image as a terse, decisive problem handler. It is a great temptation just to sit down and have a good long cry with you, but that would be fatal and I would be writing all night. As it is we have to get up at 5:30 in the morning so I can get to work on time, and that is a schedule with which there is not much arguing at my age. SHE sends appropriate apologies to which I add my own for neglecting you so. If it's any comfort, you're not the only thing that's been neglected around here during the past rather unbelievable year. Perhaps the next will be better. One hopes so. At least we're well. We hope the same for you, and send our very best.

Sincerely,

James D. White  
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