

Collection: Office of the Chief of Staff Files

Series: Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files

Folder: Fallows, Jim

Container: 34a

Folder Citation:

Office of the Chief of Staff Files, Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files,
Fallows, Jim, Container 34a



THE
Atlantic Monthly

April 27, 1979

Dear Hamilton:

I certainly have no cause for complaint against you or anyone else in the government in the recent controversy over my article. I thought I should tell you, though, about a talk I had this morning with James Reston.

I called him to say that, while it was not my place to agree or disagree with the analysis in his column today, he should know there was an error of fact. I had left the White House feeling great reluctance to write about the President, but I had not made any agreement, or even discussed, a year's period of silence; indeed, I told him, it might have been worse to wait a year, since that would put us in the middle of the primary elections, when the inevitable distortions of and damage done by the points I was trying to make would be even greater. His reply was, "perhaps you'd better clear that up with Mr. Jordan."

What amazed me most was his assumption that I, rather than he, bore the burden for checking such things. I wanted you to know that he was discussing you this way, and to tell you that, if our recollections differ, it's an honest mistake on one side or the other. I understand that many people I respect feel it was wrong of me to write that article, even as I felt it was the right thing to do; but I would not have knowingly broken an agreement like the one Reston mentioned.

Sincerely,

Jim Fallows

Jim Fallows

4640 Reservoir Road, Washington DC 20007

Jim:

I did plan to make contact with you after your second articles as I did have some things to say to you about the substance of your articles. I would like to think that you and I can remain friends through all of this and that I can say some things to you that I feel very strongly about (on ~~xxxxxx~~ the substance of your allegations) after your second article appears. I want to wait to do this to avoid creating the impression that I am trying to influence your second article which I assume for all practical purposes is completed and ~~xxxxxx~~ on the presses.

On the particular subject of Reston's article, let me make several comments. I have refused to talk generally or even specifically about your article with members of the press, Mr. Reston being the single exception. I don't know the gentleman and have only dealt with him on two occasions the entire time that we have been here. He did call me last week and asked me several questions about "the Fallows article".. I agreed to talk on background and this is, as best I can remember, precisely what I told him.

As to your motives, I said that I did not think that it was your intention or even your wish to write an article that was perceived as being negative or would be, in the final analysis, harmful to the President. I told him that you came to the White House as a journalist, that it was widely recognized that you would probably leave before ~~it~~ it was all over, but that I did not think that affected the way you were treated by the president or anyone else here. I told him that I thought that primary motivation as a journalist were to record accurately your perceptions and observations of a President at work. I told him that despite what your primary motivation was, that your article had hurt the President among thoughtful people in this city and country. I told him that I thought that you probably genuinely regretted this but that your primary motive and obligation was to your craft just as my primary motive and obligation in this matter had to be the President's posture and wellbeing.