

"Legend" is a horrible book.

Nonetheless, it's a very important one. The surfacing of the dispute about the war of the moles appears to be part of a very heavy game within the intelligence community, maybe some sort of attempted countercoup by the Angleton faction. Nosenko and the JFK case may be a very small part of this story; I have no way of knowing how little of the whole story has come out.

After a great deal of hype (inside the WR critics' community, largely by word of mouth), I am a bit surprised that the book is as unimpressive as it is on the JFK case specifically. The mountain has labored and brought forth a mole. Most of these notes will cover the details which have led me to these negative conclusions. [By the way, these notes are intended as a draft of a review Russ Stetler and I plan to prepare; they are not to be given to the press without our permission.]

Nonetheless, this story may tell us something important about the JFK case, and/or its investigation-coverup; the link may be quite different from, and less significant than, what Epstein and Angleton believe. Epstein has presented some facts and ideas which should be thought about carefully. If some of these same facts had come out in an analysis with the same care and sophistication as, say, the Schweiker-Hart Committee brought to bear on the Cuban connection, I think we would not dismiss them too quickly, as Epstein's presentation tempts us to do.

I'll get to some specifics about Oswald later. In general, the mere existence of Angleton's analysis over the past 14 years must have had a serious effect on the way the assassination has been investigated. (Incidentally, I find it hard to believe that Angleton does not think that the KGB was directly responsible for the assassination, despite the disclaimer. As Epstein correctly pointed out in "New York," the tie to the Russians is too obvious, but somehow I don't get the impression that would really keep Angleton from reaching that conclusion.)

An interesting question to think about - what connections might there be between Angleton's view of a world filled with KGB moles, and the really shocking story of the CIA's plots against Castro (notably the bizarre handling of the AMLASH matter) detailed in the Schweiker Report? Does Angleton think that the Castro plots were compromised, or deliberately mishandled? (Could he not think so?)

During my first hasty reading of "Legend," I didn't give much thought to Chapter XIV, "The Cuban Connection." It is short (10 pages), and comes largely from the Schweiker Report; there is little new. In retrospect, the amount of attention given to the role of Des Fitzgerald personally seems a bit odd. One can certainly spin scenarios around Fitzgerald's pursuit of the AMLASH case, especially his meeting with Cubela against the advice of his own counterintelligence people (discussed by Epstein) and the decision to have him present himself as RFK's personal representative (fogged over by Epstein, who implies but does not say that it was Fitzgerald's decision [p. 240]; cf. SR 18, note 33, which makes it clear that Helms [an Epstein source] testified that he thought it was "unnecessary" to get Robert Kennedy's approval). I've done some speculating on all this myself, even wondering if Fitzgerald's death in 1967, shortly after being interviewed for the Inspector General's Report, might have been a suicide brought about by guilt and the fear that his misfeasance had caused Castro to retaliate. (As far as I know, there is no evidence that his death was other than natural.) That is, to me, the focus on Fitzgerald personally is reasonable; but, in the context of Epstein's presentation, is it? I wonder if Angleton has ever suspected that Fitzgerald (or someone at a comparably high level in the AMLASH affair) was a mole. It's hard to believe that Angleton doesn't have some interesting suspicions in that area. So, there might be a connection, in this indirect way, to the coverup described in the Schweiker Report.

Epstein gets called "scholarly" a lot. [E.g., Reader's Digest, 3/78, p. 14] So do I; for what it's worth, my opinion is that his scholarship is lousy, even for someone with a Harvard Ph.D. (I know from experience that Harvard tends to rot your brain.) There are a lot of footnotes, but they seem designed not to lead

I am naturally curious about the driving force behind this book - Epstein, Angleton, or the Reader's Digest. The accounts by Epstein (in "New York" particularly) and in the Digest don't seem to agree. Epstein gave the impression (NY, 2/27/78, p. 30) that he started out by asking why Oswald defected, which is why he interviewed the Marines from Japan, and that the CIA put him onto Nosenko, he presumed because they found out he was doing a book on Oswald and wanted him to include Nosenko's message in it. The Digest claims to have decided on a "definitive examination of the enigmatic assassin" (3/78, p. 13) and to have selected Epstein to write it. As he was working on the documents, Epstein is said to have begun to make contacts with former intelligence people. The preface to the book states: "I began my research by interviewing" Nosenko. So, what's going on? Would the Digest put all that effort into a biography of Oswald, before knowing that there was a sensational angle to it? Would the CIA make Nosenko himself (as opposed to some documents about him, which came out at the Archives and were widely publicized by Dan Schorr in May 1975) available to someone who was just doing a biography of Oswald? If you apply Angleton-think to this "legend," you can come up with conclusions which cast doubt on the integrity of Epstein's scholarship, but no such conclusions should be drawn until more facts are known.

Incidentally, Jerry Policoff has spent some time tracking down the genesis of Epstein's book his contacts with the critics, etc. I don't know what conclusions he may have reached. I had just one contact, a call from his top researcher, Pam Butler, on 25 February 1976. She struck me as being relatively uninformed and/or cryptic; I was struck by the phrasing of her request for anything I might have which would be of interest in connecting Oswald "with something like the KGB, or Russian intelligence [sic], or even [sic] American intelligence," or words to that effect.

While I'm getting personal, I may as well comment on Epstein's track record on the JFK case. "Inquest" still stands up pretty well, and you can see some interesting parallels with "Legend." In each case, he has a pretty sensational and solid but slightly general story from a good source - the procedural limitations of the Warren Commission from Epstein, and the war of the moles from Angleton. In each book, there is a more substantive and even more sensational factual conclusion, from which Epstein draws back. In "Inquest," he argued (weakly, we now know) that the Warren Commission had accepted a second, altered, autopsy report, but copped out by calling the Commission's conclusions "expressions of political truth" rather than the product of a massive conspiracy, extending within the government. In "Legend," he marshals evidence that Oswald was a KGB agent in the U.S. when he shot JFK, but pulls back from that conclusion. (This sort of thing led Kevin Buckley to call Epstein a "tease" [NYT Book Review, 5 Mar 78], which is the mildest of the quasi-sexual epithets I have heard applied to Epstein.)

We can't really blame Epstein for writing a piece on Garrison in the New Yorker which met the CIA's approval enough to be distributed widely abroad, although I found the expanded article ("Counterplot") frustrating in that it went after Garrison without what I feel is the necessary context for understanding the Garrison phenomenon, namely the fundamental weakness of the Warren Commission's case. And I guess we shouldn't be too harsh on Epstein for his piece on the Panthers vs. the police, since a lot of white journalists were not inclined to accept the Panthers' allegations (which may have been exaggerated; I don't know) and nobody outside the government knew for sure about the COINTELPRO operations. (Still, if I had been in Epstein's position, I would have been embarrassed to reprint that piece, as I recall without substantial updating and without apology, some years later.) But "Legend" is something else. It should have been quite obvious to him that his access to a very sensitive story was a major part of the story itself, and that the motives and good faith of his sources deserved critical comment in the book. In my opinion, that's rather poor scholarship. I don't think it is even good journalism. The level of sophistication in "Legend" is much lower than I would expect from such non-WC-buff journalists as George Crile, Taylor Branch, and Dan Schorr, who have all gotten into the double-agentry angles of the JFK assassination story.

Epstein's tendency to tease is quite obvious in the table of contents. As

NOTES ON THE BOOK:

Preface: The first sentence is quite misleading; as noted above, the book really isn't about Oswald and the U.S. agencies at all. Did Epstein originally intend it to be? Did the CIA and the FBI persuade him that there was nothing to write about in that direction? Or did he introduce this 'balance' at the last minute?

P. xii, line 5: CIA file on LHO dating back to his 1959 defection. Actually, the CIA opened a 201 file on Oswald in December 1960, for reasons which are not known to me. Epstein may be hiding his knowledge of that little puzzle.

Same paragraph: I think it is misleading to state that the CIA notified HQ when it was determined that LHO had contacted a Soviet intelligence officer (Kostikov). If my recollection is correct, the 10/9-10/63 messages did not mention Kostikov; that contact was known only a little later. The FBI in Washington was told of the Kostikov contact on October 18 (CE 834, item #61 - still withheld, I think). The distinction is not important here, but Epstein is being careless.

CIA request for LHO photo: presumably Epstein did not realize that the CIA files contained a photo of Oswald (from the press, at the time of the defection) which was predictably more recent than anything ONI would have. The reason for the request has never been clarified.

Page xiii: as discussed above, Epstein's claim to have begun his research for this book by interviewing Nosenko doesn't seem consistent with other accounts, and raises obvious questions.

What, or who, made the reason for Oswald's defection the most vexing question? I wonder if Jones Harris' alleged interest in some sort of Japanese angle (which I have heard about only indirectly) predates Epstein's interest in this area?

Epstein says that, through FOIA requests, it was possible to obtain CIA traces. He avoids saying he asked for traces other than those in the released documents. Some of the information later in the book was not familiar to me, but I would have to check a couple of the large CIA documents to see if they are there.

P. xiv: Epstein doesn't raise any questions about DeMohrenschildt's reliability, either here or (as I recall) later in the book. But by 1977 it seemed clear he had emotional or other problems which cast grave doubts on any recent additions to his story. (Oltmans may have been the cause, and not just the beneficiary, of some of DeM's problems.) Oltmans is not mentioned in the book, and as far as I recall Epstein hasn't mentioned any of DeM's most far-out claims. That's to his credit in one respect, I guess, but hardly scholarly.

Re locating Marine witnesses: in "New York" and the Digest, there is more discussion of this. Supposedly people were tracked down from county of birth. (Digest, 3/78, p. 16.) Brad Sparks suggested to me that getting even this much help seems unusual, and may have been a Privacy Act violation.

P. xv: The Archives allowed him to develop and print many of the photos LHO had taken?? I assume Epstein doesn't mean to say that!

I wonder if the FBI gave Epstein exceptional help in "locating documents on Oswald." I don't recall many references to unfamiliar documents. I wonder if this means they looked up names in their cumulative indexes?

I'm sure Sylvia Meagher is delighted that her index was invaluable to Epstein! But seriously, it is striking that none of the critics' books on the case are credited here.

* If Epstein was serious about looking into the LHO-CIA relationship, he could have done worse than spending some time checking out the questions I raised in my 1975 memo to the Rockefeller Commission. ("The Assassinations," p. 460) Of course, I am curious about any stir my questions might have raised within the CIA at the time. Internal CIA documents on my memo, and their response to the Rockefeller Commission, should be in the forthcoming 'final' CIA release. (I've had a FOIA request pending since 3/17/76.) Who knows; my memo might have accidentally touched on something which caused the CIA to get the Nosenko story out.

* By the way, I'm skeptical of Epstein's claim (NY, 2/27, p. 36) that Angleton agreed to see him because he knew that the CIA had given him the (false) Nosenko story. I had the impression that Angleton has been a good soldier, despite the firing - has he leaked anything else? Although the Angleton-new CIA split is

evidently very real, we shouldn't just assume that there is no continuing common interest in getting the LHO-KGB story out.

* Just what "insights and experience" does Jones Harris have that was so helpful in connection with Oswald and Japan?

* I would like to know what Jones has to say about this book, which he has been hyping cryptically for quite a while. Jones supposedly thinks Hoover could do no wrong, and here we have a book which really dumps on Hoover.

Prologue: P. 5, line 14 - sloppy editing - what is "surveillance and counter-intelligence of ... enemy agents"?

P. 12: Very coy - Helms did not want to think about the possibility that the KGB had killed JFK. Really?

** Page 13: The Russell quote ("That will blow the lid....") is not from an executive session "only a week before" Marina's testimony of February 3, but from the session of January 21, nearly two weeks before. (P. 111 of the transcript.) Also, what McCloy had heard strikes me as being much more on the level of rumor than Epstein indicates. Anyhow, according to the transcript, Marina was suggesting not that "she" was a Soviet agent, as Epstein has it, but that "he" [LHO] was. (McCloy: "That is what I heard through Life Magazine [i.e., that Levine was in close touch with Marina] and they were throwing in this note she was now saying, giving evidence she was going to put evidence in this thing that he was a Soviet agent.")

* Page 15: On what Hoover thought, Epstein's source is presumably Sullivan. There should be documents in the recent FBI release on this; are they withheld? Do they support the Sullivan-Epstein interpretation?

[Page 16] This is pretty clever; the absence of a photo of LHO at the Embassy is used as evidence that he was evading the surveillance (and thus presumably had a sinister purpose). Was the CIA coverage so concentrated on the front door that it could easily be evaded? (The section of the Gale memo dealing with the Mexico matter appears to be withheld, which is unfortunate, since it might contradict the Epstein version.)

I believe this is the first confirmation that Sullivan was the assistant director who was censured.

* [Page 17, line 4] As Peter Scott pointed out ("Crime & Coverup," p. 6), a literal reading of this part of Gale's memo shows that "Logically, Gale's judgment must refer to U.S. intelligence assignments, the only assignments which could have mitigated, rather than strengthened, the need to keep track of Oswald's movements." Thus, there is no justification for Epstein adding "[from the Soviets]," especially inside the quotation marks! (Now that the Gale memo is released, it looks as if his language was just sloppy, but Epstein presumably didn't have access to the Gale memo before I did.)

*** [Page 17, line 13] The "thus" hardly seems logical - if Hoover didn't want to raise questions about LHO and the KGB, it doesn't follow that he should not mention that the FBI had an active Oswald case. That was left out of the initial report to LBJ (SS 104), as were many other things, but that report did mention Oswald's 1962 disclaimer of any affiliation with Soviet intelligence; it also went into Oswald's Soviet Embassy contacts in late 1963 in considerable detail, mentioning his claim to have had business with the Embassy and to have met with Kostin. Since this was basically CIA information - that is, the Embassy contact in Mexico, not the intercepted letter to Washington - Hoover could have used that as an excuse for leaving out more than he did. And, of course the (probably erroneous) evidence of an Oswald impostor which Hoover included raises the most serious conspiratorial implications, although they do not point in any clear direction.

In the FBI Summary Report (CD 1), which was prepared for public release (but not released for years), Hoover wrote: "In view of the circumstances surrounding Oswald's trip and residence in the Soviet Union, his re-entry into the United States presented the possibility that he had been recruited by the Soviets for an intelligence mission in this country. In that connection, an FBI

[Before I get back to systematic notes on the book, here are some points which have come up over the past few days. Refer also to my 'appendix' of questions for Epstein, and the review Russ Stetler and I have done.]

In checking out one of Epstein's allegations, I have come across what I considered to be an incredibly sleazy and indefensible piece of 'scholarship.' Note the implications of the underlined words from pages 109-110:

"A microscopic examination of Oswald's handwriting in this diary indicates that the entire manuscript was written in one or two sessions. The misdating of a number of events shows that the writing took place at least one year after the events described. For example, in the October 31, 1959, entry Oswald discusses his visit to the United States Embassy in Moscow that day and notes in passing that John McVickar had replaced Richard Snyder as "head consul." This change he points to did not occur, however, until August 1961, twenty months later, when Snyder was recalled to Washington. Another anachronism appears [in the entry for January 5, 1960, which refers to new rubles].... But if the diary was fabricated well after the events described, what was the purpose of this effort?"

The implications of Epstein's comments in New York (3/6/78, p. 56) were comparable: "Oswald's Russian diary was a fake.... I discovered independently [of the handwriting examination] that the diary was full of anachronisms. One of Oswald's 1959 entries mentioned an official who was not in office until 1961."

When I read this in New York, I was impressed; Epstein had made it look as if he had discovered a subtle flaw in the (allegedly) KGB-dictated legendary diary. I was particularly ready to be impressed if the official in question was a Russian, which would have meant that the error might not have been evident to someone who didn't have access to the CIA's full set of traces.

A normal reading of the passage in Legend would be that Oswald had indicated that McVickar had replaced Snyder by the date of the entry, 10/31/59. Here is the text of the entry itself (from CE 24 [16H96] - and here there is no excuse for Epstein's failure to provide a citation):

"... She rises and enters the office of Richard Snyder American Head Consular in Moscow at that time. He invites me to sit down.... His assitant [sic] (now Head Consular) McVickers looks up from his work...." [My emphasis]

So, it is quite obvious that Oswald is writing after the fact; here he is making no attempt to conceal it. Specifically, if this diary had been dictated by the KGB and made to look contemporary, this rather obvious indication that it was being written later would certainly have been removed.

Epstein may in fact have noticed something that escaped the attention of the Warren Commission. I don't recall whether they thought the diary was written later. (That would be neither surprising nor suspicious. There are various indications that Oswald had some literary pretensions after his return to the U.S.)

I find it hard to excuse Epstein's handling of this point. Perhaps one of his researchers observed that the diary had been written later, and Epstein then incorporated that result, and an imprecise description of the diary entry itself, without checking it out. But that's not much of an excuse, since this is a rather important point: not only does the evidence not support Epstein's implied claim that he had discovered a flaw in Oswald's legend, it suggests that the diary was so obviously of later origin that it could not have been an attempt to provide documentary support for the legend. (Of course, the fact remains that the diary is incomplete, and it may well not be an honest document; but the idea that it was prepared under KGB direction - an idea spelled out by Epstein for Oswald's shipboard notes, p. 154 - now seems pretty far-fetched.

I guess Oswald can be faulted for failing to adhere strictly to the usual connotations of the word "diary."* But Oswald had a rough childhood and didn't have the educational advantages of Edward Jay Epstein, which I think would have allowed Epstein to learn the meaning of "anachronism."

(*: although I don't recall that Oswald ever claimed the diary was written contemporaneously.)

P.S.: Didn't the Commission, the CIA, or NSA do standard handwriting and ink tests on the diary? Does anyone recall the results?

[More non-sequential notes:]

The 44 questions for Nosenko: without going back to reread the book, my impression is that Epstein treats these questions in a very odd way. He brings them up to score a point against Hoover for refusing to let them be asked while Nosenko was under FBI control, and reprints them in an appendix, with little or nothing in between. This raises all sorts of questions. (See questions 4-7 in my appendix.) When did Hoover's authority to forbid certain questioning cease? Didn't the CIA get control over Nosenko fairly soon? (In fact, my recollection of the FBI interview reports is that Hoover pointed out to the WC that Nosenko was in CIA custody.) I guess the hypothesis in the back of my mind is that if the asking of these questions was delayed, other than for a few days by Hoover, it might have been delayed because non-Angleton people inside the CIA had reasons (maybe good ones) for not asking them.

Interception of Oswald's mail: see p. 5 of these notes. The citations for two interceptions (one letter, one return address) are given on p. 5 of the Hoch-Stetler review, with a brief discussion. (Pages 103, 169.) As noted there, Epstein said in New York (2/27, p. 30) that the letter mentioning Powers was also intercepted. If this is accurate - and we certainly can't trust Epstein - then Angleton's apparent non-reaction (or at least his apparent failure to notify the FBI and the rest of the CIA) is particularly striking.

Some interesting information from Brad Sparks:

Until 1958 [sic], the CIA's foreign intelligence operations were to some degree under the Defense Department. [I'll try to get exact sources on this.] Thus, it makes more sense than I had thought that in 1959 ONI might be putting its own defectors in Russia. If ONI were proceeding without proper authorization, that might explain certain things. (It would certainly explain their failure to tell the FBI all about Oswald better than Epstein's suggesting, that they were trying to keep information from the Soviets!) Of course, the idea that LHO was ONI should be pursued regardless of the facts about that alleged 1958 change in procedures, but the facts are worth checking.

Marchetti is given as a source on the handling of Nosenko (in the late 1960's, I think). This suggests that he knew what Angleton was thinking about, which makes his novel, The Rope Dancer, more "à clef" than one might have thought. (I am told that this novel deals with an Angleton-type who is after a DCI-type mole.)

It might be worth our while to talk with Barron, in the Digest's D.C. office. (Cockburn says he's upset by Epstein - not surprisingly.) There is surprisingly little overlap between the people on Barron's project, and on Epstein's.

It's rather striking that Epstein seems to overplay the U.S. ties of two people: Snyder and Priscilla Johnson. He reports that Snyder joined the CIA in 1949 (p. 94), served in Tokyo under cover, and was now "acting" as senior Consular officer in Moscow. Epstein omits the reference (a puzzling one, to be sure) to the fact that Snyder "apparently" resigned from the CIA when he went over to HICOG [High Command, Germany?] in 1950. [CIA #609-786] Johnson's objections to being called a U.S. government employee at the time she met Oswald are well known; Epstein refers to her "previous tour" at the Moscow Embassy as if she was on another tour in 1959, and describes the infamous (and, probably, just plain inaccurate FBI report indicating she was a State employee) as a "State Department document." (Page 99) On the other hand, the CIA ties of Alexis Davison are simply a Russian allegation in a footnote (p. 308, note 17), and nothing is said about the interesting ties of Spas T. Raikin. Most peculiar.

Incidentally, I just found the 44 questions for Nosenko - CIA #583-814.

CD 931 - re LHO's access to the U-2 - might be important. Apparently replying to an allegation that LHO had physical access to the U-2, Helms made a strong denial, but said nothing, really, about access to such things as altitude information.

Is James Jesus Angleton the CIA's answer to Mae Brussell?

Has anyone made a list of the people Epstein interviewed who are not mentioned in the book (at least, in the index)? E.g., Edward Brand, p. 354.

(More to come)

[More non-sequential notes. I haven't gotten back to reading the book, but lots of information is floating around, so I thought it might be helpful to list sources, both actual and anticipated.]

First, a P.S. to my comments on page 9, about Epstein's "discovery" of the "anachronism" in Oswald's diary. I pointed out that Oswald made no attempt to conceal the fact that the entry cited (but not quoted) by Epstein was written after McVickar's promotion. In fact, even the Warren Report noted that this part of the diary was not a contemporaneous record! [WR 691, at note 498]

Published sources:

- (1) Reader's Digest, March 1978 (excerpts, plus "Behind the Lines" - important background)
- (2) Reader's Digest, April 1978 (excerpts, plus a chronology)
- (3) New York, 2/27 and 3/6/78, "The War of the Moles" (interview of EJE, with sidebars by EJE)
- (4) New York, 3/13/78, p. 12 (followup, not attributed but probably from EJE. Possibly very important; shows that the intra-CIA struggle is still active.)
- (5) London Sunday Times, 3/18/78 (Not copied. Mostly the same as the NY interviews, plus a couple of responses to questions about the BBC program on the assassination, and EJE's explanation of why he didn't think LHO was a U.S. agent.)
- (6) New Times, 2/6/78, p. 18. (Pre-release. Close but no cigar.)
- (7) Pre-publication blurb for the book. (From JP; source, date unknown. Interesting.)
- (8) Village Voice, 2/6/78, p. 28 (Cockburn & Ridgway. Interesting; mostly on the U-2 angle.)
- (9) Village Voice, 2/27/78, p. 23 (Cockburn. Interesting.)
- (10) Reuter's, 2/19/78.
- (11) AP (in the Berkeley Gazette, p. 22, 2/20/78)
- (12) Time, 2/27/78, p. 24. (Generally favorable review)
- (13) NYT Book Review, 3/5/78 (Kevin Buckley. Critical of EJE's style, but not substance.)
- (14) People, 3/6/78, p. 26 (Unreliable but amusing on details)
- (15) Dallas Times Herald, 3/29/78, p. 19 (Allen Pusey)
- (16) Dallas Morning News, 3/30/78, p. 26 (Earl Golz) "Dallasite [DeM] debriefed Oswald [for CIA] after return, author says" Interesting.
- (17) Newsweek, 4/10/78, p. 90 (Review by Kenneth Auchincloss. A bit critical of EJE on style; apallingly positive on substance.)
- (18) Village Voice, 4/10/78 (Short, apallingly positive review by E. Fremont-Smith)
- (19) Psychology Today (~~May '78? Alleged to exist, but I haven't seen it.~~) 4/78
- (20) Dave Williams has a couple of hours of EJE on tape, and a review coming out in the Boston Phoenix.
- (21) Earl Golz and Mark Allen reportedly have EJE on tape.
- (22) Peter Scott has an hour and a half of EJE on tape, to be aired on KSAN (4/16)
- (23) The Hoch-Stetler review will probably come out in "Inquiry"
- (24) George Lardner is working on a review for the WP.
- (25) Jeff Goldberg has written a review (for "Seven Days"?)
- (26) Howard Roffman has done a detailed critique of EJE's "evidence" appendix.
- (27) Harold Weisberg is going after FOIA aspects; Mark Allen and I have (independent) requests in re the CIA's mail interception.
- (28) Mary Ferrell has sent me some comments, and a pro-EJE letter from Oursler.
- (29) Larry Haapanen is working on a memo for distribution.
- (30) Sylvia Meagher has sent me the "inscribed" LHO photo, from Oltmans' Dutch book.
- (31) Lots of useful comments from David Lifton, Sylvia, Harold, Brad Sparks, Russ Stetler, Mary, Jim Kostman, and others.
- (32) Andrew Hacker is reportedly working on a review for the NY Review of Books!

POEM:

The CIA's doctor, Alexis,
Examined the Oswalds - both sexes.
He said, "Visit my mother
In Atlanta - deep cover -
On the way to your mission in Texas"

[By R. Stetler]

[Sources, continued:]

(33) There is a favorable review by John Barkham (of Saturday Review?), printed in the S.F. Examiner-Chronicle, April 9. Epstein is called an "acute researcher" whose documentation is "impressive."

Incidentally, the same page contains Barkham's review of the Weinstein book on Hiss, also positive. Victor Navasky's persuasive exposé of Weinstein (Nation, 4/8) makes his scholarship look as bad as Epstein's; in both cases the press reaction has been generally positive.

(34) Wall Street Journal, 4/7, p. 14; review by Michael Ledeen, editor of the Washington Review of Strategic and International Studies - i.e., he sounds like a rather big wheel. Ledeen understands the significance of the "mole" story, and specifically predicts that "Legend" will enter into "the general debate" on the CIA which is about to begin, as legislative guidelines are being considered.

[(17) A P.S. on the Newsweek review - the reviewer is the managing editor! I don't know if he often reviews books, but it seems that if they wanted to have someone special do the review, they could have found someone who knows more of the facts of the case.]

(35) Schorr's book has some interesting material on Angleton. My knowledge of the circumstances of Schorr's initial interest in Nosenko does not lend any support to the speculation that Angleton's side was leaking an anti-Nosenko "KGB did it" scenario back then, before Epstein got it.

(36) I am told the the new book on the Dulles family has quite a bit on Angleton. Recall that Angleton is one of the people with control over Dulles' papers at Princeton, presumably including his WC files.

(37) I am also told that Colby's forthcoming book will have a lot to say about Angleton. Supposedly Angleton is one of the few villains in the book, which complains about excessive zeal in counterintelligence. It may be that the Epstein book represented Angleton's attempt to get his side of the "war of the moles" out before Colby got the other side out.

(38) Russ Stetler got me interested in "Five Signs from Ruby," a trashy 1976 novel by Hugh C. McDonald - the same McDonald who gave us "Saul" and solved the JFK case. In the novel, the high-level penetration of the CIA is pro-PLO. As noted in Schorr's book, and elsewhere, Angleton was in charge of the Middle East account until Colby took it away, and since he's convinced that the PLO is a KGB front, pro-Arab sympathies are looked upon skeptically (to put it mildly). [As noted below, I think it is no accident (as the Russians used to say) that the alleged PLO-Weatherman link has come to the surface in the LaPrada-Gray-Felt-Miller case.]

Epstein's "Psychology Today" article [(#19) supra; April 1978, p. 97] is as bad as I expected. It deals primarily with the handwriting analysis, but Epstein has slipped in a couple of tidbits on related matters. For example, he repeats the devious analysis of the "anachronism" in Oswald's diary entry re McVickar, but this time credits the discovery to "one of my research assistants." Epstein may not yet have read the text of the entry himself!

Also, Epstein gives what I think is a new version of the Reader's Digest connection - he says that "In 1976, the Reader's Digest came to me with an offer to supply almost unlimited financing for a new investigation into the Kennedy assassination." The Digest says that Epstein agreed to their proposal in October 1975. Epstein continued: "At this late stage, however, the only question that seemed [to whom??] worth exploring" was Oswald's motive in defecting and staying in Russia. The Digest said that "the probe would focus on Oswald's associations with intelligence agencies, his access to U.S. military and reconnaissance secrets," etc. In New York, Epstein also focused on his interest in the defection, but the apparent conflict between his interests and the Digest's is not so obvious.

The most interesting thing in the Psychology Today piece is Epstein's confirmation of my hunch that the CIA got him into the graphology question. (See my question #14 for Epstein.) Specifically, an unnamed "former CIA research director" mentioned that the CIA had used Dr. Lewinson's work, with some success; Epstein called Lewinson the next day. In typically ambiguous language, Epstein reports

that Lewinson explained that "she had been an occasional consultant to the CIA but is now in private practice." Since she quite possibly was also in private practice when she was a CIA consultant, I would not conclude that she is no longer a CIA consultant.

I find it interesting that Epstein would go into Lewinson's CIA connection in such detail here, since (as far as I recall) there is nothing in the book to indicate how Epstein learned of her work, or why he had reason to believe that it should be taken seriously. Presumably Epstein realized that he could be criticized for leaving the CIA link out of the book. One possible explanation is that, by being somewhat more candid in his articles and interviews, he wants to give the impression that background information which would detract from the Angleton hypothesis had to be left out of the book - e.g., at Reader's Digest insistence. That is, Epstein may want to put some distance between himself and his function as a simple vehicle for Angleton. At least, I suspect he has some doubts about his role - but not enough to overcome the lure of all that money - and it might be productive to inquire about this if anyone gets to talk with him informally.

I certainly don't get the impression that Epstein understands Lewinson's analysis. Certainly the discussion in this article is singularly unhelpful. I gather that the vertical axis in each of the graphs on page 98 represents a percentage; i.e., the percent of the measurements of (e.g.) depth which are rated +3, +2, respectively - whatever those numbers mean! (The numbers in each graph do seem to add to 100%.)

I'm willing to believe that quite a bit of information can be obtained from analysis of handwriting, but the alleged underlying theory - "contracting and releasing tendencies" sounds questionable to me. If you can detect stress, haste, etc., this analysis can be a useful tool, although I don't get the impression that Lewinson has used it with the same critical judgment and sophistication that O'Toole applied to his PSE work on Oswald. And I would be very surprised if Lewinson can substantiate her claim that Oswald's handwriting shows that he "was an easy target for manipulation and control by others. His loyalty could switch, depending on [from] whom or where he could find support."

The superficial similarity between Lewinson's conclusions and parlor fortune telling makes me wonder how many of her conclusions are derived from clues other than Oswald's handwriting. It may not be fair to her to rely on what Epstein says, but he claims that "she determined that Oswald was traveling on a large ship [not a small ship? or an airplane?] when he wrote both these documents" [i.e., his political notes, CE 25 (presumably), and a self-questionnaire, CE 100]. [From p. 152 of the book, it is almost certain that Epstein is referring to CE 25, rather than to (say) CE 97-98.] Anyhow, one has to wonder if Lewinson's brilliant deduction was influenced by the fact that each page of CE 25 includes a picture of a large ship, identified as the logo of the Holland-America line.

Epstein is quite unfair in claiming that the Warren Commission "had accepted uncritically" the diary, "as their basis for charting Oswald's activities in the Soviet Union." In the same paragraph in which it noted that the diary was not contemporaneous, the Warren Report said that "The Commission has used the diary, which Oswald may have written with future readers in mind, only as Oswald's record of his private life and personal impressions as he sought to present them..." [WR 691]

Finally, it seems odd that the illustration in this article is a photo of Oswald superimposed on the famous letter to "Mr. Hunt," which is not mentioned in the text. Did Epstein have this letter analyzed, by any chance?

Jerry Policoff has reminded me of CIA document #376-154, dated 11 December 1963. The unnamed CIA author gives several arguments against the idea that the KGB did it. Referring to press reports about the FBI's summary report (indicating that Oswald acted alone), the author notes that "These disclosures presumably eliminate the possibility of further confrontations with Mr. Robert Slusser. In the event that Mr. Slusser continues to insist that the President was murdered by the Soviet secret police, the following additional negative indications and observations may be of some value." Can anyone out there tell me who Slusser is? Maybe a Congressional staff person?