January 12, 1982 (1983 - PLH 1/15)

Dear Dave, [MARTIN]

I expect that my comments on Epstein which you remembered when you called this morning were from 2 EOC 6, p. 6. In my remarks on Epstein's review of your book, I referred to his "useless notes or notes that don't check out, in some cases."

I've gone back over my 1978 notes on Epstein - about 32 typed pages, which I may not have sent you at the time. (I don't know what your current interest in Epstein's work is, but of course you are welcome to have these notes.) In this letter, I'll mostly quote my own notes, without going back to double-check against Legend itself, so if any of the specifics are significant to you, they should be verified.

"Useless" notes is an easy charge to back up. There are cites to Warren (P. 306) Commission volumes without page numbers; references to CIA documents (in their major release) without CIA item numbers; a reference to FBI interviews of LHO obtained from the National Archives (p. 300), when in fact they are in the 26 volumes.

Instead of "notes that don't check out," I probably should have said "sources which, when checked, turn out not to establish what Epstein says they do." The most glaring example, which is probably what I had in mind when I wrote my EOC comments, was his interpretation of the LHO diary. Epstein claims that he (or, in one of his accounts, his research assistant) discovered anachronisms in the diary. He actually doesn't give a footnote, but any buff can find the diary entry in question, and see that Oswald made no attempt to hide the obvious fact that the entry was written after the fact. What's more, the Warren Report noted this!

The main problem with Epstein's notes is not sources he gives, but those he fails to give. I found a couple of other sources which one can say don't check out. He refers to Voshinin's name in LHO's address book; I can't find it there. He has the wrong date for a WC executive session discussed on his p. 13, and says that there was a suggestion that "she" [Marina] was a Soviet agent, when in fact the transcript says that remark was about LHO.

As Jacob Cohen put it in his review of Legend, "anyone who carefully studies Epstein's footnotes will find little help in locating the verifiable sources for his most important factual assertions." An even more basic problem is Epstein's apparent failure to be properly critical of his sources, notably - of course - Angleton himself.

Some examples, from my notes. (Unverified, as I said.)

No notes on Hoover's "brutally simple logic." He's really unfair to J. Edgar!

His preface (p. xv) cites his FOIA actions, but two important items said (on p. 276) to have been obtained under FOIA were obtained by others (me and Weisberg).

P. 103: no cite to CE 295, Oswald's letter to his brother.

No cite for his appendix C, 44 questions for Nosenko, which I eventually found as CIA #583-814.

In his article in Psychology Today, he tells how an ex-CIA person prompted him to contact an ex-CIA consultant, who analyzed LHO's handwriting; neither CIA connection is in the book, I'm pretty sure. And there's no cite to the notes which were thus analyzed.

P. 329, note 3: Epstein refers to what someone told the NYT in March 1976, but omits the date of the article in question (3/10); the article (unlike the footnote) refers to the possible penetration of the CIA, as well as the FBI.

Epstein is very fuzzy, even contradictory, on the nature of his relationship with the Reader's Digest, who thought of the project first, it's nature, etc. The story of how he came to write this book (with the sources he had) is really part of the story he should have told, and I think the way he mishandled it is poor scholarship.

Hope this is of some help to you. Let me know if you want more details, or verification of what I've written, in some haste.

Sincerely, Paul

PLH