

Copy for Paul Hack

6 March 1978

Dear Harold,

Many thanks for your letter of 2/27/78 and for the non-defamatory FBI document on myself. I feel a little chagrined—it is something like the disappointment of being left off Nixon's enemies list. But perhaps something defamatory and scurrilous will still turn up; if so, I hope that you and/or the AIB people will send it to me.

Thanks also for coining that delightful new appellation "Epsteinker". I enjoy it and have adopted it. I have now read his book "Legend" and regard it as an insidious and dishonest work, parts of which are despicable and outrageous.

The first question that must be asked is how this book came to be written—was it commissioned? if so, by whom and for what purpose? Epsteinker had an enormous budget and a huge staff. Who made Kosenko available to him and why? Did he pay for interviews and if so are the results of the interviews tainted? I think there is probably a big story in how Epsteinker came to do this book but that it will be a carefully guarded secret. Someone was anxious to tie Oswald (and the assassination) in with the Russians (and/or the Cubans); and thus to divert suspicion from where it belongs, which is within the home Establishment. Did Epsteinker succeed in making a case for Oswald as a KGB agent? Certainly he did not. His book is a gradiose vessel for very slender cargo of evidence. It is a mixture of speculation and innuendo and he does not even have the guts to state a clear conclusion on his own part.

What is so ridiculous is that he argues, in effect, that Oswald was both a KGB agent and a lone assassin. For that purpose, he presents an Appendix on "The Status of the Evidence" which out-does the Warren Commission itself in perverting fact and evidence to sell the lone-assassin thesis—even going so far as to claim that the oak tree was bare and no obstacle to an earlier first shot. One need only look at CE 900 to judge the outrageous falsehood of that allegation. It is so outrageous and preposterous that I do not regard it as merely a falsehood but as a deliberate cynical fabrication, which Epsteinker knows will be obvious only to the community of critics but which the public and the ignorant book-reviewers will swallow whole. The entire Appendix is of the same cloth as the oak tree allegation—a monstrous deceit and distortion for which there is no possible excuse.

There are a few things that are potentially damaging, if they are true—but it will take a lot more than "evidence" presented by Epsteinker to lend them any legitimacy. One item is that De Mohrenschildt had in his possession a photograph of Oswald holding the rifle which was inscribed by both LHO and Marina (and Epsteinker claims that a handwriting expert verified that it was Marina's handwriting). But he does not publish the photograph or name the handwriting expert, and he even avoids a flat statement that he himself saw this photo. Unless and until this is truly authenticated, I will classify it with the oak tree allegation.

The second item is Epsteinker's claim in the body of the book that John Bowen (at Jaggars-Chiles-Stovall) and Gary Taylor both saw the rifle in Oswald's possession (in the footnote, this is changed to Gary Taylor and Alexandra De M. Taylor, with Bowen dropped). But Gary Taylor said no such thing in his Warren Commission testimony—why should one believe him now? As for Bowen, he is an ex-convict, using an alias, and I would like to know if he was paid for giving Epsteinker an interview.

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On the other hand, the book contains material that is very damaging to the CIA, the FBI, and the Warren Commission. You will recognize it easily when you read it.

The book got a largely favorable review yesterday in the NY Times Book Review section, written by Kevin Buckley. However, I am told that the NY Times is seething and furious about the book and it is interesting that it has not done any news story on it.

The book is based largely on material from Angleton--indeed, it could be said that it is Angleton speaking through Epstein and for his own purposes. Just to show again what an incompetent idiot and/or cynical liar Epstein is, he even repeats from the lying Warren Report the allegation, exposed long ago as sheer falsehood, that Oswald arrived in London on October 9th and departed the same day for Helsinki! I need not emphasize how much that offends me personally.

I will be most interested to hear what you think of this 1984 book when you have read it.

All the best,

As ever,

Dear Paul,

Here are my fragmentary first thoughts on Epstein's book. I am sure you and Russ will catch even more errors and weaknesses in the book. Best,

Stephen

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