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Mr. Christopher Lehmann-Haupt
Daily Book Review
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, N.Y. 10036

October 24, 1971

Dear Mr. Haupt:

On December 1, 1970 John Leonard, then a daily reviewer, reviewed Jim Garrison's "A Heritage of Stone" for the New York Times. That review was rather severely edited between the City Edition and the Late City Edition, and the last thirty lines of the review which cast doubt on the findings of the Warren Commission were expunged, thus significantly changing the tone of the review.

In response to a letter inquiring why these deletions were made I received a letter from George Palmer stating that this was "routine editing in line with a longstanding policy of our paper." Mr. Palmer went on that "We do not permit personalized editorials in the book columns."

One can hardly fault a newspaper for establishing such a policy providing it is not arbitrarily enforced. In your September 29, 1971 review of "The Magician," in describing the book's protagonist you say: "He is a random case; he is one of those 'types,' like Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earl Ray, who are born to lead, but lacking the equipment to do so, must assassinate the true leaders."

Mr. Ray pleaded guilty to the "technical plea" of murder, meaning only that he was involved. He has steadfastly denied shooting Dr. King, and his conviction was not for having physically committed murder. Lee Harvey Oswald was never convicted of anything, Jack Ruby having saved the state of Texas the trouble of trying him. The Warren Report notwithstanding, Lee Harvey Oswald, not having been proved guilty in a court of law, is presumed to be innocent. Indeed there is a significant collection of literature which casts great doubt on his guilt in any case.

If the Times considers it "editorializing" to question the Warren Report in a book review, then it should also consider it that when a reviewer implicitly does the opposite by calling the alleged assassin the assassin. Was the retention of your remarks an oversight or does the Times consider the Warren Report a statement of historical fact and questioning of it subjective "editorializing"? If this is the case I would suggest that the Times practices not "routine editing," but routine censorship.

I would appreciate a response from you on this matter.

Sincerely,


Jerry Policoff

cc: George Palmer