

Hyattstown, Maryland 20734

January 23, 1967

The Editor
World Journal Tribune
New York, New York

Sir:

Slander is the refuge of scoundrels and your columns the sanctuary from which they prey.

Somehow it is honorable to practice your gents-room journalism but dishonorable to write demanding truth and integrity of government. A president has been murdered and consigned to history with the dubious epitaph of an official investigation that answers no questions beyond doubt and leaves more unanswered than it found. You say, "Fine. That's the way it should be." I say, "If this can happen, no president is ever safe, and the institutions of our society are in jeopardy."

Somehow to you it is honorable for Louis Nizer and Congressman Ford, the first to be paid for writing in support of the untenable conclusions of the government, the former, for all his eminence, not yet having understood what he so glowingly endorsed and the latter having already been paid by you and me to do better than he did as a Commissioner. It is honorable for the Congressman to lend his name and make a profit from what he did not write though the book bears his name, and it is honorable for William Manchester to become a multimillionaire from a vicious and rare commercialization of great tragedy.

Yet, as I asked Schiller and Lewis, the authors of the "Revolving Whitewash" to whose prostitution you open your doors with fewer qualms than the madam of a whorehouse, is it somehow dishonorable for Mark Lane's book to be a success while saying the government is wrong?

What standards are these, yours and Schiller's and Lewis's, when you ridicule those who seek truth and justice and slander them for it while deifying those who get wealthy from the proclamation of falsehood and distortion?

With the unerring instinct of the journalistic jackal that he is, Larry Schiller asked all of us for help in what he falsely represented as an unbiased work of scholarship aimed at universities, and we, without profit or the prospect of it, sought to help him. In return, he abused and violated our confidence, quoted us out of context, and does not meet his contractual obligations. There is not one of those writing about the fault of the official investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy of whom I did not speak some good. Of Mark Lane, I said he is the only lawyer who was true to the noble traditions of American lawyers, law and justice, the only one who stood and insisted this miserable man Oswald had been denied his rights and that ours is a society in which this may not happen.

There is no doubt in my mind how history will judge him for this, especially as compared with Schiller, Lewis and you.

Penn Jones, a courageous editor true to his glorious traditions as you are not, is defamed because his children put Batman pictures on the wall of his shop, and I because I love animals and earn their trust; but Manchester, who wrought a national scandal to become a multimillionaire, is unmentioned.

Those lawyers who blended and applied the whitewash that so thinly covers our national dishonor find their champions in Schiller, Lewis and you, yet they do not have the courage to defend themselves face to face with me. They have avoided countless radio and television invitations for direct confrontations, as recently as last week and this coming one in New York alone, and they have done this from coast to coast, week after week. Can you defend them when they will not defend themselves? They do not try because they know they cannot, for they now know what they have done and are, as they should be, ashamed of it.

Yet this is a more decent motive than yours. It is not Excalibur you wield, but in a grotesque caricature it is a simulated sword of rotten wood.

But I challenge you as I challenged them: Let me answer the distortions and falsehoods they seek to retail behind the back, not face to face, through those commercial nightsneaks, Schiller and Lewis. Give me what you gave Lewis, and I will do it entirely from the official record. To put it simply, put up or shut up.

So you can drink the full measure of your personal shame and your own departure from the once-honorable standards of American journalism, I enclose a copy of an as-yet-unanswered letter I sent Schiller and the President of Capitol Records more than two weeks ago.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg