

9/27/71

Dear Ned,

I skimmed your outline after you were here and decided to postpone a more thorough examination until your return so it would be fresher in my mind.

Often, and in this case in particular it may be true, doctrine and approach can not be determined by a reading of a proposed outline, so to a degree I may not clearly detect what you have in mind. Therefore, some general comments.

I think what seems to be an Oswald focus is wrong. But in that context, it is more than just could he have been a lone assassin, it is could he have been an assassin?

It seems to me that we are well past this point and that one of the things that can discourage commercial publishing interest is anything that can be taken as repetition of what is generally known. Therefore, we need new foci, and they should be handled like stereoscopic split-image viewfinders.

As you will understand better after finishing the new third part, my central focus is on the character of the investigation, the non-accidental character of that character, who was involved in it and for what purposes. Here the *cul bono* becomes more important, and one of the new elements you will see has added significance after the Pentagon Papers. It is not that new with me. It was intended to be my second work, *TIGER TO RIDE*. There is not a factual rather than a doctrinal focus on the military, the obvious beneficiary. Juxtaposed with this is that for which you will not have space and for which I have taken little, intending that for *TIGER*, is the pro-peace (thus in a sense anti-military) changed positions of the Kennedys, esp JFK. (The Pent. Papers are grossly inadequate in their treatment of his changed policies, which included liquidation of SVN and its actual beginning.) So, what I do not see in the outline, for this and other reasons becomes enormously important, in a sense more in the abridgement than in the unabridged work, the monolithic effort to pin responsibility for everything on the family, esp. Bobby. From this should emerge, and perhaps in the shorter work in a concentrated form, more like a deliberate Kennedy defense than in the more diffuse longer one, a conscious defense of the Kennedys contrasted with LBJ and hangers-on, Hoover and FBI, Commission in the sense of staff but not without the deficiencies of members (and I'd go into the members' pretense that in shunning the best evidence they were doing it in the interest of the feelings of the family. If I feel the family was unannly, I also feel it was innocent of any of these responsibilities.

Whenre there is less space, much more has to be explicit or it will be eliminated of not clear to the perceptive reader and hidden from the unperceptive. Thus one of the problems you face is that you can't enjoy the subtleties, can't use the ellipsis I use. You will have to spit it out or leave it out, and here we get into one of your major problems, the differences in our characters. You address the passion I feel and with which I write in the preface but purge it from the outline. If you are schizo you will fal. It has to be one way or the other, and I think the explicit passion, if in calmer words, is at this juncture necessary. I think this should be not a calm dissertation but a slashing, cutting attack, coldly, perhaps, but vigorous. The only books that have achieved any success on this subject are of this character. All the others fell flat. You may not realize it, but despite the enormous advertising and p.r. effort behind Epstein, I bombed him out of hardback in 10 weeks! And I had not a cent to spend. A pseudo-scholarly approach may achieve literary plaudits but it will have less sale. If I think the new content can overcome some of this, we also have to overcome the feeling that nothing is new. And the character of what is new will make any too-cool an approach seem out of character. It is the kind of things where men's blood should boil, for it address the integrity of society, the total corruption of all the organs of government and in the covering-up, which is not to be confused with the actual conspiracy, large numbers of people who knew better were silent, then and until now.

What I am saying in part is that the outline seems to reflect not a cool approach,

which is excellent and overcomes one of my defects, but a too-cool approach, which it out of character and may come through as an emasculation. Putting it another way, it should not be a defense of criticism of the Report but a fierce attack, yet cool, as an expert swordsman, certain of his skill, could be cold and calculating in a duel.

So the approach should be one of cool heat, bubbling but not burst passion.

I think it a mistake to indicate any number of shots. Perhaps the organization is other than I interpret, but I think assessment in terms of the number of shots as officially postulated is wrong unless with an opening statement that it is arrant nonsense and is addressed only because the Commission addressed it this way. Then it should be explicit that the Commission knew better and lied to reach a predetermined conclusion. The proof need not be explicit, ~~but~~ for it will be overwhelming, but the doctrine must be. As of today there is wittle we can, honorably and definitively say, about the number of shots or when they occurred. Even Z313 is less definitive than you say, one of the ellipsis where I have deliberately left it fuzzy, feeling more specificity is irresponsible, being the suggestion that a shot before 313, as possibly at 284, may have really been the fatal one. This I frequently call 3le the so-called fatal shot, enough, I think, to let the reader know that graphic as the explosion in the head is, we still know too little of it. One of the relevant things omitted, for example, is the still unanswered possibilities of a shot to the left temple, which I do address. It can be but a couple of paragraphs, but it should not be eliminated.

Gradually, as I do this off the top of my head, the unfortunate necessity with everything thing I do, some of my own ideas are coming into clearer perspective. It is apparent to me that we have a combination of problems none too great, but in part because of the differences in our mental processes and attitudes, in part because I can't communicate the ~~greater~~ greater knowledge I have accumulated and cannot and should not make explicit in the writing, for the cost would be a seeming overstatement.

There is always the serious problem of emphasis and excisions in condensation. This is something on which there will always be disagreement, and you know my belief that for the most part the judgement should not be mine, for various reasons, one being my closeness to the work. But I think there should be two things in the approach, a personalized investigation and what it discloses, a conscious, deliberate, calculated covering-up that involved large numbers of people, including the most eminent. Now there are a number of non-ego reasons for the personalized approach, and I am not unaware of the real ego ones. It is not only that I seek credit for my own work, which I do. It is for a variety of reasons. I think you might benefit from a conference with a friend, one of the senior editors at Bantam, Walter Glanze (765-6500, 666 Fifth Ave.). He tells me that style preferences have changed, and there today is a positive value in the personalized approach where it is legit. It makes for dramatic impact. It lends authenticity. It can be much more exciting, and this is the way to make books attractive to the mass audience, and it gives what has always sold my books, the quality of a non-fiction detective story. This is not what attracts scholars, who rarely think of it, but it is what attracts most people. While you have not eliminated this, as for example, in including the suits, you have sublimated it.

Now there are other values not immediately apparant, but they can be of commercial value in the subsidiary rights. They can have a great value if any of the personages turn on, for then their turning-on is focused, and not on Garrison, or Lane or Epstein but on me and this work. The kind of unlikely but not impossible potential I think you have not considered is that which reaches the greatest audiences, film, which is here meant to be movie but does not eliminate TV. Back in early 1967 I had a solid approach from Columbia Pictures, and the people who made the approach went so far as to say that of Columbia didn't go for it, they would organize a group that would. Garrison and the reaction to him killed that. At about the same time, I had a hard approach from a man who represents British film money. He said the time had come. The man who produces for him felt the time had not come. Now, suppose the time does come? What do we want to be the center of attention, who do we want sought out, what kind of approach do we want them to take, how

do we want them to think and of whom? Mark, whose overall effect has been bad, but who is best known? Epstein, who was and is a fink? You will find that although many people came up with the same thing, in almost all cases it is a reiteration of my original work. This can be commercialized, and there is no reason to deliver either the benefit or the work to another, and the importance here is not at all who gets the loot. It is the importance of approach and credibility, the control over what gets attention. Sylvia's, for example, is a truly great work. But it did almost no good and it was largely repetitious. This is in no sense an unfavorable criticism of her work, but it is fixed and static and added little to public knowledge or understanding. That she is a great person, with a spectacular mind, is irrelevant. Her book had no impact. It was not her fault, as it is not her fault that she is locked into a situation where she can now do little but relive the past, as she is doing with such things as her essentially worthless exposure of Bélin, which almost nobody knows about and is a redundancy at best. The one thing it can do is hurry him to the couch.

So, because I am the only writer who is pushing ahead, who has new leads, enormous amounts of unpublished information, all of which has great literary and historical potential, there is the added constructive value of de-emphasizing the de-personalization of the work. At the risk of seeming ego-ridden, I think that there should be the element of a crusade against overwhelming odds in the abridgement. Thus, aside from the values it can have for immediate literary and commercial purposes, it has the overtone of this is where to look for the next what is coming, and that is the notion we want to leave in the mind of even those publishers who reject. I do not want to over-emphasize this, but I regard it as an important element that does not emerge from the outline.

The feeling I get from it is that it is too scholarly, which is inconsistent with an abridgement designed for popular appeal. This comes not from the content, which can be the same for a thesis as for a sensationalized potboiled or crassest commercial focus. Here we have to guard against over-emphasis of my personal feelings. But I do think that we should be explicit in beginning by saying the whole official mythology is that, is unworthy of the consideration of honest and honorable men, had a purpose, served it, to the detriment of the world since, and that our purpose is to destroy it so that the world can recapture its prospects, so that we can recapture our notional honor. This need not boil, but it should be articulated and explicit. This is part of what I meant above in referring to attacking, not defending or even giving the semblance of being on the defensive. I am not talking about wild slashing with a sword, but I am saying that the scapell and the sword are both cutting instruments and each serves a special purpose, with the Ecclesiastes view of each. To mix the figures more, we use the scapell, but after we use the sword. The analysis should be surgical, but the attack should also be present. And, as with all honorable battles, something is being defended. We are not just cutting up a lousy Report, we have constructive purposes.

I have used all this space to try and illuminate a feeling that may be invalid, but one I have gotten, and that is that you have chilled it too much, made it too much the dissertation, too little the book. Let me try and illustrate this from a different formulation of the first sentence of the first chapter (which will turn off the mass audience). Instead of saying "This chapter is dry and factual" (and a minor point is that for a popular book I'd not use "chapter"), you might have a better chance of capturing the attention of non-scholars by ~~the~~ saying "This chapter may seem dry and factual, but" and then say why it isn't. Don't even suggest that any American should be dispassionate on this subject or have no feeling but that of having to sit through a dull recitation of dry things. Don't even suggest that facts are dry, for these facts are not. What you seek to do here is essential. Why not consider adding it to the end of the preface, which begins more excitingly and will carry the reader over the barest restatement of the basis of the official fiction, which does have to be stated. Then the text of the book proper can start more excitingly, and that is the way we attract both readers and potential publishers. However, I don't want to over-emphasize keeping this short, for I did too little of this in my own rewritten intro and am making notes as I edit for things to be added. The difference in approach may be one in which you tell the reader frankly that for him to understand the exciting disclosures to follow, it is necessary for him to have an elemental grasp of the basic allegations of the fiction, which are much simpler

that the need for 900 pages would indicate and that, in turn, is where there were 900 pages and all the tremendous propaganda campaign, that those 26 tomes were not published because they prove the correctness of the 900 pages but to convince the world of a lie, that the 900 pages set forth the truth to the degree man is capable. This can lead into what the book does, go beyond these 26 volumes and those 800 pages, take the reader on a real Perry Mason, step by agonizing step, and let the reader become part of how the people want to know the truth about the assassination of their popular President, etc. (~~"This not the many oaths that make the truth, but the plain, simple vow that is vow'd true."~~ All's Well, Act IV.)

As with readers, so with editors and publishers. You have to grab the mind with the first words, more so with popularization.

A few specific things: to most the Commission's case doesn't and never seemed obvious. It has never been widely believed, despite the enormity of the campaign behind it. It was designed to seem obvious, but it failed. I think the reality is better than the straw man. And throughout, "alleged". Don't ever suggest that any of it is true. Or was ever really believed to be true by those who said it. I can blow your mind by what they really believed, from what Russell told me.

If I.C d includes only news reporting, it should be expanded to include official investigation, FBI and SS and DPD. Perhaps you'd prefer under b. c. should be held down if only because most editors are likely to regard it as old stuff, more likely most readers to whom ms's go prior to editors. Here, however, we may be able to introduce what is new, blown-up frame as Z never seen. There is some risk of a fight with LIFE, but I doubt it and if it came to pass, if the publisher did not fear it, it would make the book. LIFE has never threatened me, and I sued the Z film before anyone else and unlike Tink, on TV, repeatedly. The difference is in how I used it. What might well come in here and what would even where not new seem new is the editing of the Z film, which I did not use.

If what goes before D is made part of the preface, which I think better, D becomes a very good opening for the first chapter, esp. with that being the subject of the book. There should be a general statement of the purposes of autopsies and while it may be good to begin by limiting to the SBT as an illustration, it should be made very clear that this is not the single defect or the single-even major-question. The rest can be inherent as the book develops.

In C a, I think there difference in concept between necessary and vital is what you really mean. Without it no Report and admission of conspiracy. That is vital, not just a need. And under c, the broader importances of the Z film ought be indicated, unless this becomes part of the preface.

Dc is an example of what I mean by excess chilling. This relates to repeated criminality, but just simple, human error. Why keep it secret until a later chapter? Why not use quiet words to inflame and excite the reader so he can't wait until he gets to the promise of d?

II illustrates one of the problems of locking in on the WC approach. It is their third shot. I recommend retitled to alleged non-fatal and alleged fatal to describe shots. There is an admitted third one you ignore, but it is what makes the need of the SBT. A is a reasonable presumption with two shots at least. B b is a good point to limn the character of the alleged investigation, with Happer. For C you should consider what I haven't used, pictures Al Chapman took for me. And is D too understated? Again, in the sense of a book and not a dissertation.

Chapter 2: 2 x c, "discovering" is wrong word. They knew all along, before body got there. Rather than as #b in next chapter, where then it is not explicit, I think the tight military control should be in this chapter, with Finck but confirmation. You will understand this better after you finish the new material. 3B. this is the least significant omission. Are you handling as a sample of lack of care? It is covered by the covering letters and, if not on its face dated, is by other things. 3c I go into this more in new

material. 4-which doctors and when? Do you want to limit to night 11/22? b. should be expanded, for there was nothing they could not have seen. It should include what they refused to see, and that is more than film. What they should have insisted upon and didn't have to. They just avoided.

Ch 3. I think you visualize contracting the panel too much and defuzing too much. You may want to read my correspondence file on this. And the most important part if not in, the exit alleged, the gross mislocation of this large blasted-out hole. 3A is the least significant formulation. Refusal to trace path is more important. Go back to WW and include Finck N.O. Also in new stuff, which you didn't have when you did this.

Until you've finished the new material, there isn't much you can project for Ch.4.

I think it would be better to visualize these chapters as parts and the subchapters as chapters in each part. There is a state against long chapters. If I have often ignored it, that is because of the material in the larger work, but then I tend to break them down. Lane's book is an excellent illustration of the popular form. The editor, Sonnenberg, is one of the world's best. He did it that way. It also makes for faster and easier reading.

Subtitle: consider Secrets of the Suppressed Kennedy Autopsy. And now we have to distinguish between Kennedys.

One of the other important things not provided for in the outline is the inherent and sometimes explicit defense of the members of the Commission, where that is possible. As with the Kennedys, I do not exculpate. But there is a legitimate basis for some defense, and I think it belongs. This is why I laid TIGER aside in 1965, the evil doctrine of the Lane and Epstein writing, that Warren (alone) was to blame, with others, like Rankin, have slight responsibilities. Lane even edited all the transcripts which he then pretended to quote verbatim to eliminate the identification of every assistant counsel. If my basic reason is historical accuracy, it is also important in terms of acceptability. True of Kennedys also. And if it is not addressed throughout the book, the fault of the FBI is hidden. They and Rankin, in my view, are those most responsible. which means Hoover and Rankin. Together with the military omission, I think this becomes a major flaw, especially today and particularly in the context of the cui bono which we must never forget, most of all in the JFK case.

I think it would be better if we discuss this after you read the new material.

The mail has come and there are some things in it I must read before Lil continues what she is typing.

The laways haste,