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15th April, 1966.

Harold Weisberg Esq.,
Hyattstown,
Md. 20734,
U.S.A.

Harold Weisberg

Report on the Warren Report

I had hoped to write to you yesterday but was unable to do so. We have now received reports on your work and these we have found to be very interesting indeed.

The one great stumbling block which keeps emerging is whether or not the subject matter is "out of date". I am not, of course, referring to your treatment of the subject, but we are sufficiently interested to ask you if you would be kind enough to give us a further two weeks to complete our consideration of your book.

The reason we ask this is because we have the professional opinions of our readers and of our editors here but we feel that out of compliment to you, as much as to ourselves, we ought to have your manuscript read by a don who is retained by us. We should like to have his report because while we ourselves can act on our own opinion of the manuscript, we feel that we are insufficiently equipped to comment forcefully on a subject of which we have only a layman's knowledge.

cont.....

Harold Weisberg Esq.

15th April, 1966.

We are not in any way trying to prolong this matter - we are anxious to make a decision very quickly but we don't want to do the wrong thing by you and ourselves. The fact that the book appears to be highly controversial is one which is very much in its favour - by and large we are pretty fearless people where questions of the identification of truth is concerned which is why we are going to more than normal limits in coming to a firm decision.

If of course you cannot wait, we will be the first to understand and will return your manuscript air mail to your American address. On the other hand, I hope you will give us the additional leeway in time which we require.

Your sincerely
Leslie Frewin

Leslie Frewin

c.c. Gordon Harbord Esq.

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Copy to H. Weisberg, Esq.

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Gordon Harbord, Esq.,
53 St. Martin's Lane,
W.C.2

20th April 1966

Dear Mr. Harbord,

I am very sorry to have to tell you that we have eventually decided against taking THE REPORT ON THE WARREN REPORT by H. Weisberg. This is obviously a manuscript of very great interest indeed, and we have all along been favourably disposed towards the idea of publishing it. However, careful enquiries among both university and publishing circles have revealed that a book on this very subject, written by an author who commands a large following over here, is to be published very shortly by Bodley Head. Not only that, but Penguin are to do an abridged version of the Bodley book in the Autumn as one of their "Specials".

While there can be no doubting the excellence of Mr. Weisberg's manuscript, from a publishing point of view there would not be room for two full-scale books covering basically the same ground - ie examining the same report and 26 volumes of evidence. Furthermore, the prior appearance of a paperback book competitor, selling at perhaps one-tenth of the price we should have to charge, would point to disastrous economic consequences for us.

Please accept our apologies for the delay in coming to a decision, but you will appreciate that where so much is at stake, we have to survey our ground very closely indeed. But we are really very grateful to you for allowing us to see such a high quality piece of work. I am now returning the manuscript to you, along with the additional material you sent to Mr. Frewin.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Snell
Editor



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6th April, 1966.

Harold Weisberg Esq.,
Hyattstown,
Md. 20734,
U.S.A.

John Weisberg -

I am obliged to you for your kind letter of April 2nd. We should be making a final decision about your book within a few days when you will be hearing from us.

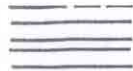
I will of course arrange to talk to Mr. Harbord immediately after our editorial meeting next Wednesday when we will be discussing your manuscript.

Mr. Shepherd got in touch with me and I told him that I could say nothing definite but that we would let him have a look at the manuscript after we decided to do it but I gather he has already been sent a copy.

I had a long talk with Gordon Harbord last night at my office and he has handed me a copy of your letter to him of March 31st, together with the addenda which I have been most interested to read.

*Yours sincerely,
Leslie Frewin*

Leslie Frewin



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6th April, 1966.

Stephen Barber Esq.,
The Sunday Telegraph (London),
1200 National Press Building,
Washington 4, D.C.,
U.S.A.

Dear Mr Barber.

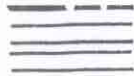
I am obliged to you for your very kind letter of March 30th. I have heard from Mr. Weisberg and Mr. Harbord came to my office for a drink yesterday evening. We have two university dons, who are retained by us, now in the throes of reading the MS and we expect to get their reports the Tuesday after Easter. We have an editorial meeting next Wednesday when we shall consider these without delay and I will thereafter let you know our decision.

Certainly the manuscript looks most intriguing and I am very grateful to you for your kind interest.

Gordon Brook-Shepherd was in touch with me on the telephone and I told him that I would let him have an early sight of the manuscript if we decided to do it, but I gather from your letter that you have already sent him a copy.

Thank you so much for your help and interest.

Yours sincerely
Leslie Frewin
Leslie Frewin



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29th March, 1966.

Harold Weisberg Esq.,
Hyattstown,
Md. 20732,
U.S.A.

Dear Mr Weisberg

I am obliged to you for your letter of March 26th. We got your manuscript from Mr. Harbord early last week and my senior editors and I are going through it as of now. Brook Shepherd of the Telegraph rang me about the book and I told him that nothing can be done for a week or two because it would not be fair of me to start to talk about the book until we had made a commitment with you.

I should like to point out to you that I think it would not be in your best interests at this stage to make any commitment with any newspaper. Of course, if they get on to a property they are inclined to bulldoze through, but if your property is what I think it is then I would respectfully suggest that you ought really to 'play it cool' for the moment because it may well be that if you and I agree on the book, we may get a far, far better offer.

I will come back to you within a few days and give you my reaction and observations.

Sidney Kaufman has promised to get in touch with me as soon as he arrives back in this country and I shall then go into the matter very fully with him, on your behalf, and we will relay our thoughts to you with no waste of time.

cont.....

Harold Weisberg Esq.

29th March 1966.

Do I understand from your wish that I send the carbon copy to Mr. Harbord that he will negotiate on your behalf? I ask this because Sidney apparently gave the manuscript to Harbord, told me about it and asked me to get it from Harbord, which I did within a day. Obviously, we shall have to negotiate and I should be obliged to have your reactions.

It is perfectly true that I gave Mr. Shepherd the impression that I had not yet read the book but we were enthusiastic about it - the enthusiasm was of course engendered by Sidney who told us something about the manuscript and it sounded very much our type of book. Our imprint is essentially one of "books of our time", that is to say, vibrant themes of today.

I should be able to come back to you within a few days but I would sincerely request you not to commit yourself in any way to any newspaper because, as I say, we can probably get a far better offer and it is very important if we do the book to tie in serialisation precisely with the publication schedule. It is, believe me, in your interest as much as our own.

Glad to hear from you - I will write to you as soon as I have finished reading your book.

Yours sincerely
Leslie Frewin

Leslie Frewin



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Harold Weisberg, Esq.,
Hyattstown M.D 20734,
U.S.A

26th April 1966

Dear Mr. Weisberg,

I just want to acknowledge your telegram which reached us yesterday, April 25th. I hope by now you will have received a copy, which we sent to you on the 20th April, of my letter of that date to Mr. Harbord.

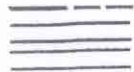
In it, I explained that very regretfully we felt compelled to reject your manuscript, excellent as it is, in view of the imminent publication in both hard and soft covers of a book on the same subject. Once again, I am very sorry about this, but from a publishing point of view we feel we can take no other course.

Yours sincerely,



11. Graham Snell
Editor

(Dictated by him and
signed in his absence)



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22nd April, 1966.

Harold Weisberg Esq.,
Hyattstown,
Md. 20734,
U.S.A.

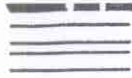
De Mr Weisberg.

I am most obliged to you for your detailed letter of April 18th which we have read with great interest.

You will have heard that we have most reluctantly had to decide against doing your book - I have not the slightest shadow of doubt that your book is the superior of the two but we could not hope to beat the Bodley Head and Penguin - they have such a head start and there simply would not be the sales potential for an expensive production such as your book would have to be after the market has been cornered by the two publishers of the other analysis of the Warren Report.

I am sorry about this because we were very keen on it but I do hope that you have full success elsewhere.

Yours sincerely
Leslie Frewin
Leslie Frewin



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27th April, 1966.

Harold Weisberg Esq.,
Hyattstown,
Md. 20734,
U.S.A.

De Mr Weisberg -

I was unable to telephone you as requested simply because I have not been in the office for two and a half days - I have only just arrived and it is nearly six o'clock after, for example, a full day's sales meeting at the Cafe Royal where I have been deliberating to all the salesmen on our Autumn and Winter List.

Even telephoning you would have been to little purpose. I will tell you this much, that we would have done your book - happily and willingly - and we were vastly disappointed when we had news of the Bodley Head and Penguin editions of the other book. Just before hearing this news we have, in fact decided that, subject to your agreement, we would publish your book and we could have swung it into action very fast indeed with a quality production - I emphasize that we have very high quality in our production but we are also fortunate because we have seven printing houses to call on for priority work.

Alas, there is no question about it but that we would have failed miserably because without any shadow of doubt the market will be taken by the Bodley Head and Penguin books. For example, Penguin are doing the other book as a Penguin 'Special'

cont.....

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Harold Weisberg Esq.

27th April, 1966.

and this means a print order of something like 50 to 100,000 copies and by the time we had achieved publication with your book as a major Autumn work, the market would assuredly have disappeared.

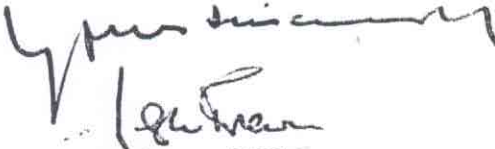
I am as sorry as you are but while I have read every detail of your most interesting letter, we do know our market very well indeed and we would have been asking - nay, praying - for a heavy financial loss on such a detailed and large work as yours.

I know it must be very frustrating to you to have put in so much work and to find so many terrifying obstacles in the way of publication but, as I say, if it is of any comfort to you to know this, we had definitely decided on publication. Four hours later, our 'intelligence' unit uncovered the facts of the publication of the other book.

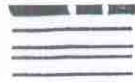
Then another incredible coincidence - out of the blue an English scholar sent me a letter which arrived the day after submitting the idea of his prepared manuscript based on the 26 or so dossiers of the Report - an analytical appraisal with, we learned, largely the same findings as your own - but of course we cannot judge the manuscript because we had to decline it on the basis of the letter. How strange is life!

We are very sorry indeed and but for the facts given above we would unquestionably have gone ahead with publication.

I hope you will give us the privilege of considering your next work, and all power to you in your obviously sincere and earnest endeavours.


Leslie Frewin

c.c. Gordon Harbord Esq.,



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3rd May, 1966.

Harold Weisberg Esq.,
Hyattstown,
Md. 20734,
U.S.A.

Den Ho Weisberg

I am obliged to you for your letter and have read with great interest all you have to say on the subject of your book with your revised idea of a special private print run being done in this country. I am sad to tell you that this isn't on as far as we are concerned because publishing in this country is rather different in many ways to the American system.

We have a heavy schedule of books running right through, even at this time, to the end of next year and while of course we all the time 'inject' new and lively works into the List, we could not do justice to your book in the way you suggest. Our salesmen go out all over the country for three months selling the following season's List and while we have often done a crash book I don't think we could do justice to your suggestion. Why not go to a paper back house in Britain who could, and probably would, do a very speedy paper back job? I am sorry to disappoint you but I think the time would not be on our side and I don't think we could do justice to the effort that you yourself have made. Better by far that a paper back house should tackle it.

cont.....

Harold Weisberg Esq.

3rd May, 1966.

I am very conscious of your great enthusiasm and your tremendous belief in your book and I am quite sure that you will 'get it away' in Britain. If I can give Mr. Harbord any help at all by confidentially passing on to an interested publisher our reaction and that of our readers, I will be happy to do so but ethically I cannot let the reports out of this building. I am sure you will understand.

All power to you and I hope that one day we shall be associated in a publishing enterprise.

Yours sincerely
Leslie Frewin

Leslie Frewin



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31st August, 1966.

Harold Weisberg Esq.,
Hyattstown,
Md. 20734,
U.S.A.

De Harold Weisberg -

Thank you very much indeed for your kindletter which I was most interested to read.

You certainly deserve the success which your book 'Whitewash' is obviously achieving, but despite that success and all your fine efforts for us to take on 'Whitewash' for this country would be courting suicide and I will tell you why.

Two major books are announced on this subject in the Bookseller and there is also the Penguin edition of one of them. This means that there is going to be another surfeit. Bodley Head have announced 'Rushed to Judgment' by Mark Lane for September 22nd and we would unquestionably come in at the tail end which would be fatal.

You must, too, realise that while the subject is a vital one for the American public, although there is interest over here there is nothing like the same interest in Great Britain. Hutchinson bring out Edward J. Epstein's 'Inquest' on the 26th September and I gather the French, Italian and German rights have been sold.

Much as I would like to give you comfort we could not possibly compete in all the circumstances and if we were to compete we would be courting disaster and you may take it that I am not talking off the top of my head when I say this.

cont.....

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Continuation sheet



Harold Weisberg Esq.

31st August 1966.

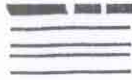
What I would like to do is to have an early look at your second volume and you may be quite sure that if this fits in with our programme and is 'our kind of book', we shall be happy to make you an offer.

I am sorry to be so dampening but publishing today in Britain is a fiercely competitive business with very small margins and while we are as 'on the ball' as any firm over here, we do have to face up to the facts of life.

I wish you continued success with 'Whitewash' and I congratulate you most warmly on your tenacity and achievement.

Yours with sincerity
Leslie Frewin
Leslie Frewin

c. c. Gordon Harbord Esq.



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26th September, 1966.

Harold Weisberg Esq.,
Hyattstown,
Maryland 20734,
U.S.A.

Thank you for your most interesting letter. The two books were published here last Thursday (simultaneously) and they have caused a bit of a riot. I think every newspaper did big feature reviews on them and both authors were in Britain and were liberally televised and radio interviewed. "Rush to Judgment" seemed to come out of it best and I have no doubt that they will be best-sellers. My regret is that we would have met with such unholy competition and we could not have done the job in time, otherwise we would have gone ahead.

I am delighted that the book is selling so well and I must say I have a great admiration for you, for your courage and tenacity. It is rather marvellous in this day and age to find somebody who will back his beliefs as you have done.

The Sunday papers were full of reviews and on receipt of your letter I have just telephoned my wife to ask her to salvage them and I hope when I get home tonight they will be so salvaged, in which case I will mail them to you tomorrow and I am sure you will be enormously interested.

cont.....

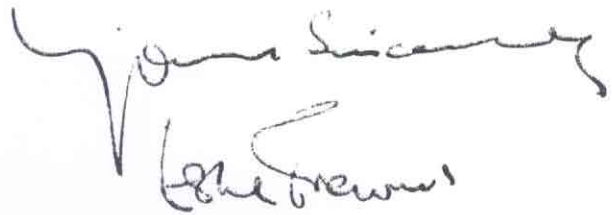
Harold Weisberg Esq.

26th September, 1966.

I am most interested in your plan for a book in six years time but if I am any judge of your ability and tenacity, I rather think you will produce it somewhat earlier ...

I gather that Mrs. Kennedy has asked Jim Bishop not to write his book - it will be interesting to see what he does about the request.

In case I forgot to send you one, here is our current catalogue. Keep at it and all success to you in your efforts.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Leslie Frewin".

Leslie Frewin