



Then you published Thompson's compendium of thievery and deliberate error salted with ignorance and peppered with ego, pretending it was in some way new and significant revelation, whereas it was a blatant effort to evolve a formula that would preserve what seemed possible of the government's fraud of a Report. You even invented a new kind of non-conspiracy for this - three men acting together in disunison.

Now you serve David Wise's cheap blend of commercialism and political propaganda. You have become good at it. You pretend you have and publish the "secret evidence", whereas you have and publish none. You distill from almost 300 pages of Commission executive-session transcripts a few phrases making a greater villain of Earl Warren and whitewashing those who really did the dirty work. And you wind up this gimmicked pretense of criticism of the government with a lusty defense of its suppressions.

Early in his story Wise presents, as though they were typical and quite inappropriately calling them "samples", a few of the infrequent comprehensible descriptions of the Commission's files. It is for all the world as though the gibberish were meaningful English. To give you a fair sample, here are photocopies of the first three pages. Marginal "x's" mark still-secret files. Note that in the first 68 descriptions there is but one that makes sense, some that do not exist, and that almost all are variants of "Oswald - Internal Security - Russia", the meaningless political insanity that guides the FBI.

Because you are a publisher and should be interested in the sanctity as well as the freedom of the press, I also give you a photocopy of page 40 of the listing and call your attention to the first two items, Files 479 and 480. Still suppressed - and unworthy of your attention - is the FBI espionage on those who question the government, in this case the mother of the accused man who was murdered only because public authority made it possible. Two radio broadcasts - actually broadcast - are still secret! And there are more. This is how the FBI protects the right of Americans - by secretly spying on them - and how it "investigated" the murder of our President. Try this on your own "guidelines", if you cannot on those of the government.

If this kind of writing is from accident or ignorance, there still is no excuse for it. You have spent a fortune on "professionals" who know nothing and care less about the subject and the tragedy when solid information and decent scholarship are and always have been available to you. If lifelong trafficking with instant experts acclimates you to literary triviality, as a mature man, if not an experienced writer, you should have known this is a subject like no other, demanding wide knowledge, the highest integrity, the utmost responsibility, the closest possible fidelity to fact. Dependable means of assuring yourself (and your vast and consistently misinformed readership) of the accuracy of what you intended publishing was always available to you, free, if the enormous sums you spent on high-priced hacks strained the budget.

But if you did that - tried to write and print accurately and honestly - you'd not be accomplishing what is by now the very clear result, defense of what may for a few days longer still be preserved of the fake epitaph with which an American President has been consigned to history.

Of course you are independent of the government. Of course you are not CIA. But could you, for pay, better serve their urgent needs? In fact, is it not your independence and seeming impartiality that makes yours a greater service to them than could be bought?

If publishers had the regard of grocers for their customers and their reputations, you'd spend a few of those many dollars you have learning how good your product is. Most canners of beans do try to keep the rat-hairs out of their product. For this they hire outside experts. Has the Saturday Evening Post the integrity of ordinary merchants? Try me out, if you have. Do you fear learning the truth about what you have done? Or do you know it?

It was the second great tragedy that, at the moment of the assassination, those upon whom we normally depend for leadership and information, the intellectuals, the lawyers and the prominent writers and publications, all failed, all abdicated. It is the unended tragedy that there is not a single important U.S. publication that will make a solid study on its own or give expression to a single thorough and informed writer who genuinely says and proves the government is wrong. What a commentary on the state of freedom of the press in the United States today!

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg