W+Post

3/26/78

George Lardner
Newsroom
Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Wash., D.C. 20005

Dear George,

Enclosed is the latest critical silliness from someone calling himself "CFD."

Like the earlier ones I've received this one was mailed in Denver.

Since we spoke last I've obtained and begun to read and annotate Epstein's Legend. Because I am annotating and will be making extensive notes my progress will be slow. However, I have gone far enough to have no reluctance in speaking without any hesitation or equivocation.

Your comment, from what by then you'd read, is that he appears to have done his homework well. Not so. The few errors of fact, fact on which he builds his theorizing, that I cited to you from the Digest condensation are characteristic.

The Digest and book are not identical on so-called fact. I might guess that a belated effort was made to rectify error in the Digest. As on when Oswald left England. The magazine switches to an entirely different source, one not available for checking. But it is also impossible.

Feeling that I have to let you know what I see when you have expressed a different view and I know you are doing a review or at least have had it assigned is awkward for me. So you can re-examine my words if you so desire is why I write rather than phone. It is not just about the crudeness of the error and its recurrence.

There now is absolutely no doubt at all that this whole business will figure in at least one lawsuit and will have the possibility of a thorough airing. As it now looks this is probably going to be when your review will be fresh in many minds. Im am reluctant to carry this farther or to be more specific because it may appear that I am trying to influence your review. I am not. If you write a favorable review I will be able to use it to my personal benefit.

There is no way I can distinguish between this book and an official black book. If you can it is because you do not know what I know.

While the text is remarkably dishonest, aside from the theorizing, the so-called notes are atrocities against decency. All of the writing is dirty and angled in a way that abuses the trust of the reader, including those who may be inclined to read critically. Too much detailed knowledge is required of even the skeptical reader. Too much knowledge of what is omitted and ignored also is required, including the testimony of the people he claims to cite.

I'm sorry for the position in which I think you are. You are not alone in this. With all the money Readers Digest has lavished on the project and all the help it has I can see few not taking the book at face value. Reviewers will not even know which face to look into. (If there are reviews I've not seen any. If you get copies I'd appreciate them for their historical value. I feel confident the Times will go for this pseudo-scholarship)

Meanwhile, if you think it would make a story for the Post to catch someone systematically stealing the garbage of a lawyer who is handling many cases against the government, including the CIA and the FBI, let me know. Please regard this as confidential except for possible story needs and purposes.

Sincerely,