

2/24/71

Dear Sylvia,

I return herewith the copy of the Epstein you were kind enough to send. Paul Valentine, a Washington Post reporter who has become a friend, send a stat of his copy, which had certain advantages to which I'll return. As you will know, because it is enclosed, I have read and roughed a very rough and entirely unread commentary on it.

As I wear (unevenly - a bit more in the knees than in the head, I think), I try to find ways to pace myself. Having known for a week that I'm going to Memphis tomorrow, I've spent most of the time since then cleaning up various things, including the rather large amount of material I had to gather to prepare that book I submitted in response to the government's latest motion in my suit for pictures of the clothing. Late yesterday afternoon a bit of painting in the cellar, out for dinner with friends, a crap on TV after a bit of work following return, gave me a bit of time for thought, something I didn't have in drafting the enclosed on Epstein.

Together with Paul's markings, they lead me to believe that we had better rethink him (how Orwellian it sounds this way!). I suggest we can no longer dismiss him as a moral leper, your apt description.

First of all, this was a really skilled job. In some ways it is too sophisticated for the Department of Justice flacks. Second, it was carefully aimed and it hit center target. For the pimps for whom he whores, this reminds of me some of late-coming education in what used to be considered the seamier side of life. One of my New Orleans informants ("a source in a position to know") once told me that the best whores are lesbians. They go about their occupation like the most skilled craftsman. In this piece, Epstein is like the lesbian whore. He did it right. If you'd seen the Washington Post editorial and heard the Cronkite broadcast that I caught by accident only, you'd know how perfectly he had those hidden sphincters coordinated, pulsating in just the perfect rhythm. While, as I said yesterday, it is really irrelevant to know whether this is a new career for him, sort of a downtown replacement for Jerry Cohen, whose masters were in the suburbs, the role he serves is significant. Aside: I think it might be helpful, if you can bring yourself to it, to phone Jones Harris and discuss this with him, to detect anything you may in anything he might say, any nuances or suggestions, even of approval. Jones claims to have been responsible for Viking's interest in Inquest. But so did the lawyer, whose name escapes me for the moment. ^{Each} ~~Each~~ told me he was responsible for its publication, Krakower (now dead) with some heat when I said Jones claimed credit.

My friend wound up looking in Epstein's mess for what would justify the criticism of the press. What he marked, in not a single case, is what casts doubt on the writing. In every case it is what casts doubt on Garry, used as a substitute for repression in the article. Some members of the press really do agonize about the misleading influences of some of their writings. I haven't seen what, if anything, the Times has done with this, but the post devoted most of its editorial space to a single mis culpa malded with praise for the stinker. Which makes me wonder just how it is that the Post got an advance copy of Inquest and did the exceptional, jumped the release date by a month or more. And just in time, to let them cop out on a deal they had with us on Whitewash. Strange things then, immediately, happened on the Post - they can, of course, be entirely unrelated, but the man who was raving over WW, one of their top men, Dan Kurzman, was suddenly taken off, given a sabbatical year, and never returned. ^{olite:} ~~olite:~~ fired.

The DJ boys have advanced from the Whiteheads to the Overstreets, which represents a kind of sophistication for them. They took the clue from CIA, from which all the funds not from USIA mentioned in the enclosed came (and the USIA's could have come from CIA, of course).

With the shrinking of the genuine critical community to less than a corporal's guard, and not realizing when I began that this think might be of interest to others, I made but two carbon, one enclosed, the other sent to another mature friend unknown to you. I think, however, we should give thought to what this moral leper/lesbian whore is really up to. With whom and for whom. That Charles Garry used an exaggerated number is hardly worth the time, effort and space. So, we have a schizo character, one who in his other form is a running dog.

Your own emotional involvements may not enable you to understand this, but believe me, he fell far short of the legitimate criticism of Garrison that could then have been made and weakened his case with all sorts of needless rubbish and stupid error. If we explain this way away by saying he was engaged in propaganda, no more, we are still left with unanswered questions that now ought be in mind. One is that he did make such errors, which can indicate other than sloppiness. One of the more obvious explanations is that he was using what was supplied him. I am without doubt that he was not in N.O. long enough to get more than a feeling of Garrison as a person, not to get all that stuff. I know, because he told me (and, incredibly, remained on the staff) that he had helped Epstein. Matter of fact, the day that New Yorker article came out, I drove Tom to a Quarter newsstand and drove around the block while he got copies for us.

I expect no visible reaction from the Post. My friend there is a decent, serious reporter who wants to follow the old and respectable standards of the craft. I think he'll think about what I sent him. I mailed it yesterday. He might even get it today. If he does and he reads it tonight, he'll have time to phone me before I leave for Memphis tomorrow. I have a hunch he may ask if he can show it to others. He and the present managing editor came to the Post from Atlanta together, when they left the once respectable Constitution is simultaneous disgust. He may ask Ben Bagdikian (of whom Matt Herron could not have spoken more highly) to read it. He may do nothing. Or, the Post may not. But, if they are at all resentful, they just might, on a long-shot chance, look into what is behind this kind of thing. They were not happy when they learned the possible consequences of their departure from the callings of the craft at the time of the Bay of Pigs, when JFK enticed them.

In any event, if you have any thoughts, I'd welcome them. And, about Jones and Tucker, under whose tutelage Epstein did his first thing.

Pub date on FRAME-UP has been set back to 3/24, which is not a bad idea for reasons other than what caused it. I doubt the books can be in the stores before then. The reason was to permit time for further efforts at selling the subsidiary rights. Typically, the publishers have not enlightened me, nor have they wanted my help. One of the consequences is that in one area, through friends, I know more about the current situation yet may not do anything. However, with my experiences of the past, I was never hopeful of big-time interest. They made a big mistake not to arrange, as I asked, for some collateral writing on the side issues, which would have attracted more interest of the kind I address above. I suggested, among other things, trying to interest the NY Review (which also doesn't like me) in a piece on the writer's intrusions into the processes of justice, meaning the three different methods and approaches of Huie, Kaiser and me. In short, a different kind of inspiring of agonizing and in an Establishmentarian context. Another was to use my incredible DJ correspondence, in which nobody ever failed to lie, and often, in excessive letters, established independently that they were lying. When you consider that this was all under Ruckelshaus and involved Kleindienst, you can see the potential this would have had had they done it when R was up for confirmation to head pollution, which is all we can expect of him.

Thanks for the piece. If you ever find a spare one not marked up, I'd just like to have it in file in the event I later want to write of it and thus could use facsimiles were I able to use offset. I fear Epstein is now a part of the old story.

Best,