

11/7/74

Dear David,

As things worked out today, I had a guest, Bud was on TV and we didn't go out to the box for the mail until late. I didn't get to look at it until supper time. The uneasy feeling left from Bud's least irresponsible appearance of which I know carries over to parts of your letter and what they betoken, your problem.

From all that Bud said one would never know that anyone else in the world had done any work on political assassinations or the Ray case in particular. The reality is that in real effort and real accomplishment there are few worthy of mention who have not exceeded Bud's effort. He has no real accomplishment, per se or on balance.

The real work Jim and I have done. I am used to not being mentioned and it doesn't bother me. I avoided any publicity in Memphis, believing that it all belonged to Jim, who deserves and needs it. I met with the press frequently, made new press contacts, but said nothing for publication. In fact, my name was not mentioned once.

The choice was mine. Nobody suggested this course. It was never discussed.

However, the choice was not Jim's in Bud's newest self-glorification. The difference is a large one.

I don't really care how you handle me. Not personally. Not with my experiences of the past decade. This is not the real question. What is is the integrity of the work, its faithfulness to fact and as a guide to the inquirers of the future some of whom may depend on it.

Until I have time to read your draft, which I may begin tonight if I clear other things up first, I am limited in the comment I can make. What I plan to do is read and mark the draft first and then if I have time write explanations. If I don't have time, the marks should in most cases at least alert you.

The kind of thought that troubles me is your third graf, which begins, "First, how do I write a history of this thing and make you the major source?" and concludes "Remember the work is intended for historians and their peculiar approach to things."

To paraphrase, history is too important to leave to historians. To explain, first they corrupt it and second they in this case have abdicated totally. There would be no history of any of the political assassinations or of the secrecy about them all if it were left to historians.

My concern is not what you say or do not say about my work, published or fighting secrecy, which I can't tell from your title. Either way I bear a special curse among historians who abdicated, the first to publish (and publisher of the most) and the only one published to really do something about secrecy. There is no other one published who has begun to do as much about secrecy as Jim, to cite an example known to you. And more has been done by two not (yet) published than any other who has published.

This is to say that you have more problems than satisfying professional historians' prejudices if you intend a definitive work. The one problem you do not have is satisfying me. Unless you make specific enough reference to what I have written but have not been able to publish to permit the legion of parasites to filch and corrupt it. This I would expose. One of your other problems you can meet by getting Howard Reffman's Prejudged Guilty, due this month from Farleigh Dickinson University Press. Young as Howard is, I'll be surprised if his is not a major work.

You also say "If after reading this you decide it ought to be published..." That is a decision I can neither make nor influence.

Another expression, even is intended as a figure of speech, also leaves me uneasy:

"but I wish to give additional weight to any statement, so that readers will not say Weisberg is the only brain in the world, etc." Well, I don't think so and I don't think you should and I believe you should not suggest anything like it to your audience or the historians of the future. Much of what I do I do only because if I don't it won't get done. Jim can tell you that I have been wanting to get out of the Ray case since early 1971. But I haven't, I won't and honorably I can't. The real question has nothing to do with big brains. It has to do with quitters, those who copped out and stayed out. And if you focus on doing something about secrecy, if only documenting its exposure, you can't leave Jim out of a major role because he alone has been of real help on this. Take this literally, please. Add all these you can cite from publication together, multiply by a hundred and it totals much, much less than Jim has done.

Now I don't know how you can do this and satisfy the cowards in your profession who left their responsibilities to Jim and me. Unless you address the litigation and its results. For professional historians who abdicated their responsibilities as historians and as citizens?

(And in case you are unaware, professor, we - mostly Jim - have just established a legal precedent against secrecy.)

These are my thoughts, some of them, on reading your letter. Perhaps I will not recall them after I read your piece. Maybe I'll then find them not warranted. But I do take the time to set them out not only in fairness to Jim and others who can't be cited by reference to books, the way you historians have of rewriting history, but to arm you against what you may later regard as something less than you would prefer to have done.

I'll also be surprised if you do not find more on doing something about this secrecy in Whitewash IV than in all that has been published to date. We will be sending them out soon, if Jim has not yet sent you an embargoed copy. I am still, with so little time, trying to sell the ancillary rights so Jim can at least begin to pay off the loan. This was the reason for today's guest.

The dismal truth is that no published writer has done anything about secrecy except me. Epstein cribbed what he added to the paperback of his dishonest work and even Sylvia never offered to repay the cost of xeroxing of what I did get for her.

I don't know how you can cite the unpublished Paul Mech. While for personal and ethical reasons I have broken off with him entirely, the plain fact is that he alone has made more effort to do something constructive about secrecy than all the other writers combined. No single problem for a historian, huh?

Two strong recommendations: don't do anything until you have read the two new books and don't permit, leave alone ask, Jim to criticize until after the rebuttal arguments are filed in the Ray case. He has too much to do that nobody else can do and it is more important than the timing of an historical review.

I do hope that after reading your work I can give you more comfort. What I've said is true regardless of your approach or content. And you are treading in a historian's quagmire. I would not be faithful to friendship not to warn you in advance.

Were I you I'd not be concerned about whether I satisfied any individual or my professional colleagues. My concern would be satisfying myself.

Hopefully.