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sent certified
receipt requested
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Mr. Geoffrey Wolff
Newsweek
444 Madison Avenue
New York, NY

August 13, 1971

Dear Mr. Wolff:

I am currently researching an article dealing with the questionable integrity of the New York Times Book Review. The Times has repeatedly engaged in what must be regarded as deliberate literary assassination of books and authors by assigning biased reviewers and refusing to print rebuttal letters once these damaging reviews have been run.

My purpose in writing to you is that a letter which you wrote to the Times Book Review, and which was published on May 30, 1971 figures prominently in what I believe was a deliberate Times axe-job on Harold Weisberg's "Frame-Up." I have serious doubts as to the accuracy of your letter, however I would like to hear your side of the story before I conclude the article. Perhaps you can shed new light on the matter.

I do not know if you are aware of it, but your letter was not made available to Mr. Weisberg for comment before its publication. In view of the rather serious charges you make against Mr. Weisberg, this seems strangely negligent on the part of the Times. That it was deliberate seems obvious in view of the fact that yours was the only letter to appear in response to the John Kaplan review despite the fact that yours dealt with an admittedly "tangential" subject. The Times received many letters in response to Mr. Kaplan's review, yet it failed to acknowledge receipt to those who wrote, and it printed none. Mr. Kaplan's role as a lawyer with the Criminal Division of the Justice Department, and his 1967 attack on the "revisionist" critics of the Warren Report published in the American Scholar clearly should have disqualified him as a reviewer of Mr. Weisberg's book.

You claim in your letter that you did not decide on a favorable review of "Whitewash" because you had never read more than a few pages of it, thus you were never ordered not to review it. You add that you decided, in aggreement with your editors, to leave the consideration of books about the Kennedy assassination to reviewers better qualified to judge their merits.

I recently spent a week-end with Mr. Weisberg at his home. He gave me complete access to his files which are meticulously dated.. They are also extensive. During the period of his dealings with the Washington Post, Mr. Weisberg was preparing a book dealing with the non-publishability of material attacking the official government line that Lee Oswald alone assassinated President Kennedy. These notes are typed on stationary that without question is several years old. The typewriter that was used is no longer in existence.

According to Mr. Weisberg's notes he paid two visits to your office on the morning of May 14, 1966. During the first visit you were not in. You were in when he returned later: "it developed he had no copy of the book but had just been told about it by Bradlee. He'll do a review if the Post doesn't syndicate, for they never review books they syndicate."

Mr. Weisberg's notes dated May 24, 1966 include: "Bumped into Wolff 23a.m. He has read the book, impressed, interested, and "much better written than you had led me to believe."7."

According to Mr, Weisberg, you told him that the Editor of the Washington Post, J. Russell Wiggins, ordered you to review none of the books dealing with the Warren Report because you were not a lawyer. He told you that this amounted to a policy decision against "Whitewash" since the subsequent books doubtless would be reviewed through Book Week. You agreed, but there was nothing you could do. Mr. Weisberg showed me a carbon of the letter he wrote you on August 28, 1966 following the Book Week review of "Rush to Judgement." It begins: "When I spoke to Mr. Wiggins in May, I told him the one thing I have a right to expect of the Washington Post is fairness. When I spoke to you a month ago and you told me the policy was to review none of the books, I told you this meant you would review all but mine, through Book Week."

Even your letter to the Times contradicts itself. As editor of the Washington Post Book Review it was your job to assign "Whitewash" to a reviewer qualified to judge the merits of the book if you did not feel that you could honestly evaluate Mr. Weisberg's charges. In view of this your statement that "My editors were as pleased to slip me off the hook as I was pleased to be off it,"seems ambiguous at best.

Mr. Weisberg informed me that you had read "Frame-Up" and planned to review it prior to the appearance of the Kaplan review. An inquiry to his publisher requesting information on when your review would run resulted in the response that you no longer planned to review the book because the appearance of that footnote in Kaplan's review had caused you "considerable embarrassment" and that you had written to the Times denying it.

Unless you can supply me with some new perspective on this entire matter I see no alternative but to assume that my current analysis of Kaplan's review and your letter is correct. I certainly hope that you have something to say on this matter.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gerald Policoff