5/13/71

Dear Mr. Hentoff,

Bill Stein suggested this letter when I told him today that John Kaplan had done an "impartial" study of the Angela Davis case for the USIA. Bill was aware of the knifing (as always, in the back)of my and my new book, FRAME-UP by Kaplan in the Sunday Times of 5/2. The enclosed letter to the editor (I did not then know Leonard was the Sunday editor) was written not in the expectation the Times would carry it, or evenmx contract it. It was, perforce, very hastily done as I was about to leave for New York, to make a record and to have for use, if needed, at a press conference 5/4, should I have been needled about Kaplan's diatribe.

To give you independent appraisal of Kaplan's opinions, I enclose the pre-pub review from Publishers' Weekly and Fred Cooke in The Saturday Review.

Parenthetically, the occasion was an award by the Media Workshop for both my investigation into the King assassination and the book, but there was no domestic white coverage, and the London Telegraph's story on a truly sensational London angle was killed in the desk, in London.

I hope you can read this book and form your own opinion of Kaplan, the lawyer, as a reviewer - of what he as a lawyer could hold down. Percy Foreman had more integrity. He had read FRAME-UP, flown to New York to do a TV show, learned he was to face me while his make-up was being applied, and fled without taking it off, scattering threats in his wake. I don't think Foreman fled because he fears debate or confrontation.

A friend phoned Leonard independently to complain about Kaplan's review, having read the book. Leonard said he had received and been somewhat disturbed by my letter, claiming what I can believe, that he was unaware of Kaplan's background. I think he said he also did not assign the review to Kaplan. And Kaplan does have a current book to be promoted. However, somebody, Leonard or a subordinate, had to have read that stuff before it was published. It clearly is not a review, not could it have been unquestioned by anyone who follows reviews, as the enclosed illustrate.

Now it happens that Leonard wrote a review of Jim Garrison's "A Heritage of Stone" for the daily Times. In the first edition, it concluded with two favorable paragraphs. These were deleted in later editions. A graduate student at Wisconsin (Madison) inquired about this and was told the deletion was because of editorializing, which the Times does not permit in book reviews! I asked this friend to send xeroxes to Leonard with a note saying this was at my request. Ditto with the Kaplan writing for USIA.

I invented the underground book. My first, WHITEWASH, in that form, became a best seller, but the daily Times never acknowledged its existence in the book-review section, while getting a total of 14 copies from me! The two subsequent books got about a half-page each as news, but were never listed as having appeared in the book-review section.

I have have my own experiences with book reviewer as executioner. Kaplan's in not the only current case. Hope you continue to press on this issue, for reviews are one of the more effective means of killing books powerful interests find unwelcome. And perhaps expand it a bit to wonder if polemical writing where passion is appropriate must always be regarded as a new literary crime.

Sincerely,
Harold Weisberg