

5/26/71

R. John Leonard, Editor
New York Times -anda Book Review
229 W. 43 St.,
New York, N.Y. 10036

Dear Mr. Leonard,

As you better than anyone else know, the Times can easily kill a book. This is now the clear intent of your reaching across the country to select a blind partisan and a man involved in government propaganda to axe my SHAK-UP when you had six very competent reviewers at your elbow and when this book does precisely that for which the Times would editorially appeal. And when you wait five months for any gesture at rectifying damage and relieving libel, as you do by withholding any response until your August 25 issue, you surely prove your murderous intent.

But in the lengthy selection of some of my detailed refutation of Kaplan's propaganda it demanded the Times to print at all, most of all guided as a "review", and his entirely non-responsive non-spectator, you have not retracted the libel, not undone the damage and not established your own integrity in this matter.

On previous occasion when, perhaps, as is not true in this case, you inadvertently selected a disqualified reviewer who then vented personal spleen, you accompanied that you printed with what amounted to apology and retraction. In this case you avoid that, as you avoid retraction of the libelous lie and defamation by Geoffrey Wolff.

The only purpose served by a five-month delay in doing anything, no matter how inadequate was to ensure the literary bleeding to death of my book. You had the letter you now exempt as soon as you printed your assassination. And in all this time, you were not manly enough to respond to a single one of my letters.

Only the perceptive reader, especially after the long delay you arranged, will perceive that Kaplan's letter proves everything I allege. For you as an editor, however, can be without reason when he says that my letter, only that part of the one you exempted, "proves -adequately" that Kaplan "had to say" when it lists only a few of the checking facts he ignored and misrepresented I'd like to know. And I think you should realize that in doing this you are compounding the damage done and I think intended, making it clear that my letter proves Kaplan's accusations right when the opposite is obvious to you.

The irrelevancy about refighting the "burden of decision" battles -what Kaplan actually does, not I - is of his origin, not mine and is not responsive to my detailed documentation. Whether or not there is whatever to the partisan government propagandist Kaplan whatever he might mean by "substantial evidence" to connect these assassinations, there are abundant substantiations, sufficient set forth in SHAK-UP and also this by uncensored and undenied by anyone, including Kaplan. But a obvious one is the involvement of his former associates in the involvement of justice in both and the fact that in both cases the "investigations" were by the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover, none of the witnesses of whom he disliked, and solved nothing. I challenge you, personally, to prove that "SHAK-UP" does not prove beyond doubt all suppression of exculpatory evidence and the gross misrepresentation of the facts. This is not "substantial", to you or Kaplan, especially when I proved it in a court of law and report it, although you and Kaplan suppressed it, in this book, with facsimiles?

Whether Kaplan think contrary to his performance in your columns that he can "separate the two assassinations in his mind" does not address the undeniable fact of his blind partisanship and his disqualification for any review of any of my work. His performance is adequate reflection of what he considers "normal standards of integrity and scholarship". Whether or not the Warren Report stood "far above any of its vocal critics" is irrelevant in review of a book on the King assassination, but the fact is that it is Kaplan's work that could not get publication because of its libelous excesses and libels and this despite the intrusion on its behalf by powerful people. He is the blind partisan, not I. Were he really familiar with my writing, he'd know that my first book opens with the only defense that can be made of the members of the Commission, and that lies and libels about their work is no defense, no or in history.

In a way he did not have in mind, my letter is not the kind the former Chief Justice could write about the Report he signed but did not write (I do my own writing). Mine is factual and to this day unrefuted. At no point does Kaplan address a single fact in it. These are powerful facts that can't be denied, one of the most glaring is that contrary to his fiction that I depended upon newspaper sources (for all the world as though, were it true, this would be wrong) I actually printed the contracts with which Ray was duped and fleeced in facsimile, the Department of Justice lies in facsimile, the statements of Scotland Yard and many others in facsimile. And yet he accuses me of treating those who did this to Ray and to their once honorable calling "viciously". Where is the clarion call of this noble defender of his profession, the law, that violate one of its canons be published? Where, indeed, to this very day, is any protest about "viciousness" or even unfairness from those he defends - after what they did! In all cases I solicited this in writing and in no case was there a response. I told Percy Foreman in advance what I intended to say and asked an answer I could print, he remained silent. Neither you nor Kaplan apply such strictures, subject your work in advance to such testing.

His concluding paragraph is true to the porresting evasiveness and infidelity of what precedes it. He implies he has read my "six books on the Warren Commission". I dare you to ask him how many I have written and how many he has read, or even understood, and it is, as you know, a flimsy business for even a straw man, the most substantial thing Kaplan has to say either that I sought your coverage asked or had anything to do with the reviewer you selected. This is a crooked and deliberate misrepresentation, the slipperiness of a literary snake. My complaint was not that you had selected a reviewer without consultation with me, but that you had selected a compromised man and a blind partisan and one who had made himself my enemy when prior to that, as you now know, the sole and then indirect contact between us was my offer to help him correct the error of his own writing.

I think you owe me, one of the more serious and troubling and certainly most costly crimes of our history, your employers, the people and yourself is not more than this to - late, too-little, too-dishonest feebleness by way of relieving the evil you have done all. I would like to thank asking an honest reexamination of you is asking you nothing but what a man of honor, with decent concern for his calling and the needs of any kind of representative society and the integrity of his publication, would himself want when he has regardless of motive or lack of it, done what you have. The literary association is but part of this. You have my work, which stands, as it must, alone. You have my detailed and lengthy letters, which remain unrefuted by anyone, unanswered by you. You have enough to show that the Times and John Leonard will at least make an effort to be decent and honorable. Will you?

Sincerely,

Harold Weistberg