

[Before I get back to systematic notes on the book, here are some points which have come up over the past few days. Refer also to my 'appendix' of questions for Epstein, and the review Russ Stetler and I have done.]

In checking out one of Epstein's allegations, I have come across what I considered to be an incredibly sleazy and indefensible piece of 'scholarship.' Note the implications of the underlined words from pages 109-110:

"A microscopic examination of Oswald's handwriting in this diary indicates that the entire manuscript was written in one or two sessions. The misdating of a number of events shows that the writing took place at least one year after the events described. For example, in the October 31, 1959, entry Oswald discusses his visit to the United States Embassy in Moscow that day and notes in passing that John McVickar had replaced Richard Snyder as "head consul." This change he points to did not occur, however, until August 1961, twenty months later, when Snyder was recalled to Washington. Another anachronism appears [in the entry for January 5, 1960, which refers to new rubles].... But if the diary was fabricated well after the events described, what was the purpose of this effort?"

The implications of Epstein's comments in New York (3/6/78, p. 56) were comparable: "Oswald's Russian diary was a fake.... I discovered independently [of the handwriting examination] that the diary was full of anachronisms. One of Oswald's 1959 entries mentioned an official who was not in office until 1961."

When I read this in New York, I was impressed; Epstein had made it look as if he had discovered a subtle flaw in the (allegedly) KGB-dictated legendary diary. I was particularly ready to be impressed if the official in question was a Russian, which would have meant that the error might not have been evident to someone who didn't have access to the CIA's full set of traces.

A normal reading of the passage in Legend would be that Oswald had indicated that McVickar had replaced Snyder by the date of the entry, 10/31/59. Here is the text of the entry itself (from CE 24 [16H96] - and here there is no excuse for Epstein's failure to provide a citation):

"... She rises and enters the office of Richard Snyder American Head Consular in Moscow at that time. He invites me to sit down.... His assitant [sic] (now Head Consular) McVickers looks up from his work...." [My emphasis]

So, it is quite obvious that Oswald is writing after the fact; here he is making no attempt to conceal it. Specifically, if this diary had been dictated by the KGB and made to look contemporary, this rather obvious indication that it was being written later would certainly have been removed.

Epstein may in fact have noticed something that escaped the attention of the Warren Commission. I don't recall whether they thought the diary was written later. (That would be neither surprising nor suspicious. There are various indications that Oswald had some literary pretensions after his return to the U.S.)

I find it hard to excuse Epstein's handling of this point. Perhaps one of his researchers observed that the diary had been written later, and Epstein then incorporated that result, and an imprecise description of the diary entry itself, without checking it out. But that's not much of an excuse, since this is a rather important point: not only does the evidence not support Epstein's implied claim that he had discovered a flaw in Oswald's legend, it suggests that the diary was so obviously of later origin that it could not have been an attempt to provide documentary support for the legend. (Of course, the fact remains that the diary is incomplete, and it may well not be an honest document; but the idea that it was prepared under KGB direction - an idea spelled out by Epstein for Oswald's shipboard notes, p. 154 - now seems pretty far-fetched.)

I guess Oswald can be faulted for failing to adhere strictly to the usual connotations of the word "diary."* But Oswald had a rough childhood and didn't have the educational advantages of Edward Jay Epstein, which I think would have allowed Epstein to learn the meaning of "anachronism."

(*: although I don't recall that Oswald ever claimed the diary was written contemporaneously.)

P.S.: Didn't the Commission, the CIA, or NSA do standard handwriting and ink tests on the diary? Does anyone recall the results?

[More non-sequential notes:]

The 44 questions for Nosenko: without going back to reread the book, my impression is that Epstein treats these questions in a very odd way: He brings them up to score a point against Hoover for refusing to let them be asked while Nosenko was under FBI control, and reprints them in an appendix, with little or nothing in between. This raises all sorts of questions. (See questions 4-7 in my appendix.) When did Hoover's authority to forbid certain questioning cease? Didn't the CIA get control over Nosenko fairly soon? (In fact, my recollection of the FBI interview reports is that Hoover pointed out to the WC that Nosenko was in CIA custody.) I guess the hypothesis in the back of my mind is that if the asking of these questions was delayed, other than for a few days by Hoover, it might have been delayed because non-Angleton people inside the CIA had reasons (maybe good ones) for not asking them.

Interception of Oswald's mail: see p. 5 of these notes. The citations for two interceptions (one letter, one return address) are given on p. 5 of the Hoch-Statler review, with a brief discussion. (Pages 103, 169.) As noted there, Epstein said in New York (2/27, p. 30) that the letter mentioning Powers was also intercepted. If this is accurate - and we certainly can't trust Epstein - then Angleton's apparent non-reaction (or at least his apparent failure to notify the FBI and the rest of the CIA) is particularly striking.

Some interesting information from Brad Sparks:

Until 1958 [sic], the CIA's foreign intelligence operations were to some degree under the Defense Department. [I'll try to get exact sources on this.] Thus, it makes more sense than I had thought that in 1959 ONI might be putting its own defectors in Russia. If ONI were proceeding without proper authorization, that might explain certain things. (It would certainly explain their failure to tell the FBI all about Oswald better than Epstein's suggesting, that they were trying to keep information from the Soviets!) Of course, the idea that LHO was ONI should be pursued regardless of the facts about that alleged 1958 change in procedures, but the facts are worth checking.

Marchetti is given as a source on the handling of Nosenko (in the late 1960's, I think). This suggests that he knew what Angleton was thinking about, which makes his novel, The Rope Dancer, more "à clef" than one might have thought. (I am told that this novel deals with an Angleton-type who is after a DCI-type mole.)

It might be worth our while to talk with Barron, in the Digest's D.C. office. (Cockburn says he's upset by Epstein - not surprisingly.) There is surprisingly little overlap between the people on Barron's project, and on Epstein's.

It's rather striking that Epstein seems to overplay the U.S. ties of two people: Snyder and Priscilla Johnson. He reports that Snyder joined the CIA in 1949 (p. 94), served in Tokyo under cover, and was now "acting" as senior Consular officer in Moscow. Epstein omits the reference (a puzzling one, to be sure) to the fact that Snyder "apparently" resigned from the CIA when he went over to HICOG [High Command, Germany?] in 1950. [CIA #609-786] Johnson's objections to being called a U.S. government employee at the time she met Oswald are well known; Epstein refers to her "previous tour" at the Moscow Embassy as if she was on another tour in 1959, and describes the infamous (and, probably, just plain inaccurate) FBI report indicating she was a State employee) as a "State Department document." (Page 99) On the other hand, the CIA ties of Alexis Davison are simply a Russian allegation in a footnote (p. 308, note 17), and nothing is said about the interesting ties of Spas T. Raikin. Most peculiar.

Incidentally, I just found the 44 questions for Nosenko - CIA #583-814.

CD 931 - re LHO's access to the U-2 - might be important. Apparently replying to an allegation that LHO had physical access to the U-2, Helms made a strong denial, but said nothing, really, about access to such things as altitude information.

Is James Jesus Angleton the CIA's answer to Mae Brussell?

Has anyone made a list of the people Epstein interviewed who are not mentioned in the book (at least, in the index)? E.g., Edward Brand, p. 354.

(More to come)