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20734

March 5, 1966

Mr. Leo Sauvage
Le Figaro
50 Rockefeller Plaza
New York 20, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Sauvage,

My "information" that your book had been contracted for came from Joyce Hartman at Houghton-Mifflin. She said it was Random House, which rather surprised me because of my own experience there. No to discourage you, I have offered my book to more than 50 publishers. Of the more than half who have read it, I have yet to get a serious adverse comment. Almost all the editors have gone out of their way to disagree with their bosses, especially on the most common reason, that there is no interest in the subject and hence the book will not sell. I presume yours is a similar experience. We have been at the same place, both together and separately, as perhaps you have already learned. At one house, I was given to understand both books got editorial approval.

The language used in the Washington Post in its too-brief reference to the Academy of Forensic Sciences comment is almost word for word what I used more than a year ago, which rather pleased me. The rest of the story made it seem as though these comments were in general agreement with the Commission's conclusions. I would like sometimes to see the complete thing (as I would also like to see the writings of the Nashes, on which the New Leader has not answered me).

Actually, the treatment I got from Mohrt and Gallinard was an even greater blow to me, for in the two meetings I had with Mohrt I had formed an unusually high opinion of him as a person. He really impressed me, so perhaps my disappointment at my own deficiencies in character determination are involved. My own opinion is that something happened over which he had no control, and in this analysis I have the support of several Frenchmen with whom I have discussed the matter and to whom I have shown my file. I do regret it. But, again drawing upon my own experience only, whatever has happened to the French publishing industry is not unique with it. Someday when we have a chance to talk these things over, I'll tell you what happened (or didn't) to me with British, German and Italian houses and agents. The United States has no monopoly, alas, in the cowardice of its now-prosperous publishers.

As of now, my book has received editorial approval from the two houses which say they are still considering it. The first, a smaller, claims to fear financial loss. The second says that after God knows how many readings (they even asked for a second copy to speed this up before Christmas) they are having it read outside, for "professional advice". I wonder what this is, for the subject is almost libel-proof, and when one restricts himself entirely to the official evidence, as I did, should be entirely immune. But all I can do is wait.

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REVEREND

Your silence had disturbed me. On perhaps a half-dozen occasions I had sought without success to reach M. Chetelain, as recently as yesterday morning, when no one was in the office. What I feared was that you had misunderstood my letter to the New Leader. I had intended no disparagement. I was in a better position than you, for I had no deadlines to meet, etc., and could devote full time to my researches. By the time my book was finished my wife and I had about 7,000 hours in it. Fortunately, from the time I was in college and worked on a morning newspaper at the same time I have been able to get along on little sleep, and I worked not less than 19 to 20 hours a day, sometimes getting no sleep at all, without suffering. Further, my wife had experience that enabled her to help me greatly while I was writing (which took only four weeks of this time). So, I was able to complete my researches relatively early and yet to cover, I believe, the major materials.

There are other things that interest me more, so a book I project on the nonpublishing history of this one will probably remain in the back of my mind for a while, but I do think I may someday write "Dick Daring in the Hell-Box; or How I got Rich in Six Months". The first editor who read my book said this should happen to me, that the book clubs should be fighting for it. The second said if his house did it their initial printing would be 25,000 in hardback. The third said his house (which has done similar things in the past) would make this the best-selling book of 1965. Etc. I have the craziest collection of letters from publishers, some so ridiculous that they gave, as a reason, for not reading the book, the fact that last fall there were going to be four books published on the Dominican crisis.

A rather large percentage of the executive and senior editors, however, volunteered to act as my agent (six would not consider the subject) and introduced the book to other publishers. As a "class", the editors have more conscience and courage, again from my experience.

In my one-way correspondence with Mohrt and Gallimard, where the replies were from the poor secretary of Mohrt, who began each of her letters with "in the absence of Michel Mohrt...", I was told Gallimard was going to publish a "similar" work last fall. My French contacts are few, but I have not been able to learn of the appearance of such a book. I had presumed this was the Lane book, "introduced" by Sartre. Of it all I know is that it supposedly was contracted for by Bodley-Head in hardback and Penguin in paper. My information came from a nice person who claimed to have made the introduction to Bodley-Head. I have heard nothing further, save that there were misgivings about the contents, and supposedly a commission of historians was working it over.

Can you help me with an understanding of this: At Parallax my book was rejected because of the advice of a "knowledgeable" person, presumably on the subject matter. There are very few of this description. I was specifically told fear was not a factor. The advice came from an associate of a part-time editor. Have you any idea of who this might have been? My interest relates to those forces we have faced, not to Parallax. I wonder who pretends such knowledge and wields such influence. It was my earlier understanding that the book had gotten both editorial and legal approvals.

Your comment on press burial of the subject matter is a reflection of the course pursued. I offered mine to two papers for syndication rights. The first, in ten weeks, read about six or seven percent of it. The second, in three months, read the book and could not and did not argue with it and professed respect for it, but said merely that it didn't consider such a thing could happen.

Good luck,

All information contained herein is confidential and should be treated as such. It is to be used only for the purposes for which it was provided and should not be disseminated to other personnel without your prior approval. If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact the source from whom it was obtained.

Harold Webber

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LEO SAUVAGE
NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

March 2, 1966

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Hyattstown, Maryland
20734

Dear Mr. Weisberg,

I am sorry to answer only now your kind letter of January 14th, which had disappeared in a file where I have just retrieved it.

No, I have still no American Publisher and I am curious to know who told you that I have one. The book is still at 2 publishers, but I don't believe anybody will do it until something happens which will break the conspiracy of silence. Did you notice how the critical comments of the Academy of Forensic Sciences have been buried in the press?

I have no idea about what is going on in the French publishing business and I am sorry to learn that respectable people like Michel Mohrt treated you so badly. Is the Lane book going to be published in France? I have seen Jane Stafford's book and read a few pages of it, and then stopped there - because I have the same impression as you of the book.

Again all my apologies for having left your letter so long without an answer

Very cordially yours,

Leo Sauvage
Leo Sauvage