

Dear Jim,

8/27/81

Glad to learn from your 8/13 that Howard got in touch with you promptly. I think I wrote you about this but my letter had not yet reached you. I hope that by now you've gotten together for lunch. Howard did tell me that the person involved is a former newsmen and he hope that would get the two of you off on the same beam.

I don't know what they would want by way of help but in time one of you will tell me. All I knew is that if they were planning a film on China they'd need someone who had some knowledge of the place and people. And who better?

Hope it works out and is interesting.

Apropos of the Lifton book, your recollections is correct. Most of the sycophantic works and some of the critical ones were turned out by those with an ax to grind and who knew in advance, as you say, that the works of criticism were refutable. Clarkson Potter, for example, turned out several sycophantic works, including a book that had been hanging around for years, when clearly there was little or no market. After the first he knew this first-hand. Yet he kept publishing that kind of junk. I have since suspected that he (which may mean Crown) was subsidized, and who is more likely that the CIA?

With Macmillan it may well be different with the Lifton book because it was partly redone into a formula book, the b.s. about his lone struggle against all odds and greatest power. They could see in this and his special and more than merely refutable conjecture, which at best was no more than a conjecture, what with considerable effort could be sold. While the best-seller figures do not include returns, I think they sold his book well, and that it was a best seller. They did make that effort.

It interests me that the CIA is not mentioned in all those pages. And that the agent who handled the book, Peter Shepherd, is with the Ober Agency. Harold Ober and his wife started it. Now it happens that the CIA guy in charge of the illicit domestic intelligence operations also was named Ober. He has to skedaddle when that started coming out, with some who worked for him. He and some of them wound up at NSA, which is even more secretive.

There are prepaid deals, but in this case, whether or not it there is anything to an Over view, so to speak, I am confident that Macmillan saw the probabilities of the combination and ran the risks. I'm sure they made a very heavy investment. And were as dishonest as success, in their terms, required.

Little new here. I get and work records over and prepare memos on them, most recently De Mohrenschildt records, including the ms of his book, "I Am a Patsy! I Am a Patsy!" (Not much to it but an interesting and probably accurate picture of the Oswalds.) Search worksheets that disclose the claimed destruction of a large number of Garrison records. Theoretically prohibited and clearly a law violation to destroy. But they did it. Hope to have a press conference in D.C. after we file the new affidavit and I'll have to start preparing for it soon. Getting a little work in outside but not much walking because the little toe and heel give much trouble and I'm enjoined against any sores because there is so little blood available there for healing. Got all my wood sawed, split or chopped and stacked, unless there are tree trunks or branches in the brush that I've not seen. I've had a stalwart boy drag all that stuff I've seen up to the woods behind the pool where I work them up. Slowly, inefficiently, but regardless of the time, and I've been enjoying it. I know of one log the sawmill man left that was not cut up into stove lengths. It was a little too thick for my 14 inch saw and the son of the friend who was using it. Someone else will do it for me. And then I'll split and stack that. I laid aside two copping blocks, so now that I have them both together, I use one as an anvil and table, cool drink and radio. I have a sawbuck and I've taken an old lawn chair there and sit in it while sawing and splitting when I can't stand. ...Bob Cutler, of The Umbrella Man (TUM), was here day before yesterday. He has envelope sealers and pens with the legend, "TUMS THE WORD." Nice guy, though... We've had the most pleasant August in years, save for the first very hot week, and we've been enjoying it. Our best, and we hope you get an interesting connection with Lucas,

13 August 1981

Dear Harold:

Your note of the 7th came in the same day after I had just mailed you the Raznikov piece on Lifton's new book.

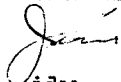
It was kind and thoughtful of you to suggest my name to Howard, and he called today. We had a nice cordial talk and agreed to get together for lunch sometime next week with one of the Lucas producers, named I think Levitt or Levitz or something like that. Anyway he's a former LA Times newsman so we should be able to understand each other to some extent. Howard gave little indication of what sort of information or advice they're after, but I may be able to help them in various small ways if they're interested.

We fixed no time for the lunch, as I'm still waiting to consult with the contractor. He was coming today but called and asked to postpone it until day after tomorrow, Saturday, when he won't be under as much pressure. Anyway, I take it as a good sign that he's interested enough to come and look the job over. When he comes I should be able to give Howard a definite time to meet him for lunch. I'll keep you informed of what, if anything, happens.

Howard says the film they are contemplating would be a sequel to Raiders of the Lost Ark, which concerned the efforts of a swashbuckling archeologist to locate the Ark of the Covenant. It used a lot of background footage taken in the Middle East, and they contemplate using similar background footage taken in China for the sequel which I presume will deal with fictional archeological doings in China. Howard didn't elaborate further. He says the Chinese thus far have been cordial and encouraging.

A minor thought about Lifton's book: It occurs to me that in the past various publishers have been used to publish books by purported critics which turned out to be either ineffectual or clearly off the mark, therefore refutable with credibility, and therefore in assence a disinformation operation. Many of these books were lavishly produced far beyond what a normal publisher would invest in them. In several cases I recall we suspected secret subsidies, but as far as I know no one ever pursued this angle in attempt to prove it. Whether McMillan was one of these publishers I cannot say. It matters little, as some highly respected publishers may have been thus used as well as some who normally don't publish quality books in hardcover. I have been left with the impression that few publishers can turn down such prepaid deals in a business which is otherwise a very risky one. Might be worth keeping in mind.

Thanks again, and best to you both.


jdw