

JDW,

Your 2/10/75 comments on Undercover

2/15/75

You observed and noted what I did not in some cases, like on characterization of wife as human being (which differs from his portrayal in Give Us This Day) and in what I agree is late correction on 324 beginning line 12. I've looked at that and believe it is the nature of the change, that rather than mere editing it was a change in content. It is a point at which he might have the need to say other than he did about the meeting with the prosecutor.

This would fit with a feeling I had throughout the book, that he was not expert in egg-treading and his apprehensions show.

I also got the feeling that his actual views must be close to monarchical and that he requires this kind of feeling of both authority and its propriety for him to do whatever he does and did. He knows it to be wrong and this makes it "right."

His central problem is incompetence. He is a natural bungler who got away with so much merely because it was sneaky and people didn't expect it and because he had power behind him. He does not portray himself as a really able man. Not even in getting ahead, where he regularly discloses using others, father as you note.

He had still another problem: what he did was without value, regardless of what he told himself. He followed bad policy and successes in dirtyworks in pursuit of it wound up without significance or benefit to the country. I think there was some realization of this, particularly after Nixon's switch in policy, to pretense of detente. So except for games his life and career as a spook are without genuine meaning as he looks backward, no angel.

Most of all his problem was skirting around all that would make a significant book. He could not - and did not - begin to tell the story he could have told, especially re Nixon and the reasons he could blackmail and get away with it. He now can't tell because he'd blow the whole thing if he did. And it could be a change of this nature you noted on 324.

He also had to ease past his domestic activities.

In short, he could be honest about nothing, not even himself.

As you perceive, he can't even make himself a hero or an imposed-upon hero. He is wood in other than style, in fact, as he sees himself.

Some of the inadequacies of content can be explained. You are right on Chicago. But he had a thin cover story, so he had to treat it slightly. And could he say that Dorothy was carrying CREEP money, whether for passing to the peons or not? Another illustration that comes to mind is Jackson. He could not begin to tell the real reason for what in the draft I call The Non-Mysterious Non-Disappearance. Bennett/Mullen and his work there or its duration. He had all these secret to keep while pretending to tell all. No simple matter. Especially not for one ridden by a desire to appear to be important and saddled with the secret inner recognition that he was nothing, an incompetent, a failure. (I think the preoccupation with money and what it can mean is because it represents overcoming failure to him. Money = success.) Is non-mention of the stroke part of the self-portrait of Superman, above such manifestations of the feebleness of man?

Perhaps also he didn't really want to write this book, recognizing all the many factors, perhaps some not consciously, but driven to it by the six-figure loot it meant. And by the chance to depict himself as other than he was in CIA and for Nixon. Perhaps also by the chance to pay off on the blackmail, which he did, having no real choice. As I think I've noted, he drops few cookies. And does make what the informed could take as a couple of strong hints: beware and leave me alone now.

If only one skilled in the workings of the mind had the knowledge of fact, what a study this book and Give Us could make! More than the novel, which also lend themselves to the same endeavor.

It is a book by a man of lifelong dishonesty, with himself and in his several professions, a dishonest book because neither the man nor it can be honest, yet compulsively and helped by poor editing a book in which truth and fair self-portrait break through despite all if too infrequently and without this being the intent.

The strangest twist of all is that he is now libelled - even that he can be!

best,