6-19 (Rev. 12-9-66)

Aftermath

Battle Over The Scavengers

EDITOR:

I arrived in New York and was immediately confronted by a reporter asking me to comment on the article by Richard Warren Lewis, namely "The Scavengers" appearing in *The World Journal Tribune* magazine (January 22).

It is with the deepest regret and humility that I am subjected to such untruths, slander, extortion, etc.

I ask an immediate retraction of the parts (namely) "She makes public appearances pleading her son's innocence, at fees ranging up to $500." This is an un-truth. Also the referral "Marguerite Oswald, the mother of the assassin."

Legally my son, Lee Harvey Oswald, died an innocent man and I expect your newspaper to respect his Constitutional Rights by rightfully referring to him as the alleged or accused, also with reference to me.

MARGUERITE OSWALD

EDITOR:

Slander is the refuge of scoundrels and your columns the sanctuary from which they prey.

Somehow it is honorable to practice your gents-room journalism but dishonorable to write demanding truth and integrity of government. A president has been murdered and consigned to history with the dubious epitaph of an official investigation that answers no questions beyond doubt and leaves more unanswered than it found. You say, "Fine. That's the way it should be." I say, "If this can happen, no president is ever safe, and the institutions of our society are in jeopardy."

Those lawyers who blended and applied the whitewash that so thinly covers our national dishonor find their champions in Schiller, Lewis and you, yet they do not have the courage to defend themselves face to face with me. They have avoided countless radio and television invitations for direct confrontations, as recently as last week and this coming one in New York alone, and they have done this from coast to coast, week after week. *Can* you defend them when they will not defend themselves? They do not try because they know they cannot, for they now know what they have done and are, as they should be, ashamed of it.

59 MAR 21 1967

Tolson
DeLoach
Mohr
Wick
Casper
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Conrad
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Sullivan
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Trotter
Tele. Room
Holmes
Gandy

REC-49

NOT RECORDED
MAR 13 1967

The Washington Post
Times Herald
The Washington Daily News
The Evening Star (Washington)
The Sunday Star (Washington)
Daily News (New York)
Sunday News (New York)
New York Post
The New York Times
World Journal Tribune
(New York)
The Sun (Baltimore)
The Worker
The New Leader
The Wall Street Journal
The National Observer
People's World

Date FEB 26 1967

62-109060

Dare I challenged you as I challenged them: Let me answer the distortions and falsehoods they seek to retail behind the back, not face to face, through those commercial nightsneaks, Schiller and Lewis. Give me what you gave Lewis, and I will do it entirely from the official record. To put it simply, put up or shut up.

HAROLD WEISBERG

EDITOR:

Lewis does not classify as "scavengers" *all* those writers who deal with the assassination but only those who question or challenge the Warren Report. He charges them with a "rush for money" knowing full well that the victims of his malice, with perhaps a single exception, are out of pocket by considerable sums in pursuit of their research on the case. Apparently his personal ethics and experience are such that he cannot even conceive the possibility that others may be motivated by a disinterested commitment to justice or truth. Lewis does not mention, much less denounce, the profits earned by books which attempt to legitimize the untenable Warren Report, published or to be published . . .

I turn now to the insinuation that there is something devious in the monitoring of public broadcasts. Mr. Louis Nizer's error with respect to the Mauser was not singular but one of many travesties of fact in his radio statement of September 30, 1966. I circulated an analysis of his wild inaccuracies among many of my colleagues and not merely to the critic singled out for mention in the article. That analysis is enclosed for your information . . . Mr. Lewis' attempt to dismiss the President's body-recoil on impact of the fatal bullet by alleging the acceleration of the car at the same moment betrays his kindred capacity for blatant misrepresentation of established fact.

I cannot close without protesting vehemently the false and malicious description in the article of the lovable German shepherd dog with whom I became acquainted recently. This noble animal received me, and others who were strangers to him, with utmost affection and courtesy. That he displayed animus toward Mr. Lewis or his companion is a tribute to the dog's fine sense of discrimination between the subhuman and the human being.

SYLVIA MEAGHER

EDITOR:

Richard Warren Lewis' article, "The Scavengers," has just been brought to my attention. In a fairly long journalistic career here and in Europe, I have seldom read anything more discrediting to the profession. We are supposed to seek truths in our profession, not advance theses through the selection and distortion of facts.

In my lectures to journalism classes in American universities, and in my courses in communications in European ones, I will use this as a prototype of scurrilous journalism. Here are only a few of the reasons:

1. Your reporter accepted the hospitality of at least some of those whom he slandered. For example, Penn Jones was carrying that bottle of whisky home precisely in order to serve the reporter his highballs.

2. The piece is densely saturated with traditional fallacies of logic. It is filled with question-begging epithets (such as adjectives like "brazen" preceding the names of people your reporter seeks to demean and noble adjectives preceding those of the pro-Warren report people). *Ad hominem* arguments abound: all of the subjects wanted either money or fame as their prime motives. I know this to be a lie, and I am sure your reporter does also. He has sought few truths but only the kind of details, often totally insignificant, for use in denigrating character: the contents of Penn Jones's newspaper, Sylvia Meagher's listening to Bartok and giving up ballet, for example, and dozens of others. He uses terms like *kooks* and *lunatic* fringe to describe every one of them. I know some of them personally and I have deeply respected some of them as men and women of great percipience, sincerity and sanity.

You printed a hatchet job. This is scabrous journalism of a type one does not expect to encounter in a responsible newspaper these days. Moreover, it is so ridiculously slanted as to be ineffective.

JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN

EDITOR:

In a single paragraph about me, your staff (byline: Richard Warren Lewis) made five errors. I needn't detail them; the proofs are in the notes and tapes of your reporter.

Five errors in a paragraph! I am confident that you scored as well or better in the rest of the article. . . .

Mr. Lewis came out flatfootedly in defense of Lyndon Johnson, Earl Warren, the Kennedy family, the FBI and the U. S. Navy. It is hard to find such courage in these days. . . .

HAROLD FELDMAN

EDITOR:

Mr. Lewis has his chronology all wrong. The Bodley Head Ltd. accepted *Rush to Judgment* for publication after it had been seen in a complete but unedited version by a number of American publishers, most of whom indicated they would be pleased to reconsider it for publication after a final edited text had been written, but none of whom apparently were prepared, as was The Bodley Head, to undertake the costly and exacting work of editing. At no time was *Rush to Judgment* submitted to an American publisher "in outline."

The notion that The Bodley Head then published an English language edition that became such a best-seller that Holt, Rinehart and Winston was encouraged to undertake its American publication is a complete fantasy, without a scintilla of truth. As a matter of fact, the American edition of *Rush to Judgment*, photographed though it was from the corrected page proofs of The Bodley Head type, was published on August 15, 1966, whereas the first English edition of *Rush to Judgment* was published on September 22, 1966. It was only after *Rush to Judgment* had become a bestseller in the United States that other European publishers contracted for its translation and publication.

It should also be noted that a decision to make a movie of *Rush to Judgment* was made many, many months before either the American or English edition had appeared and, indeed, according to Emile De Antonio, the producer of *Rush to Judgment*, they had completed a rough cut of the film by early July of 1966.

The imputation that Holt, Rinehart and Winston was involved in an enterprise of "scavenging" is not only wholly unwarranted but a grotesque distortion of the truth. The corrected galleys of *Rush to Judgment*, received by Holt on March 24, 1966, were read by no less than seven members of this firm, including its legal counsel. It was regarded by us as an important document and deserving of publication and our publishing support. Our role as publishers is not to censor history, but to make it available in all of its complexities and ambiguities.

If indeed it is the case that Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* has shaken public confidence in the Warren Commission Report, then as publishers we are not to be regarded as derelict in our responsibility, for indeed if the publication of books *never* contributes to the making of history, then publishing is finally an unnecessary enterprise.

ARTHUR A. COHEN,
Vice President and Editor in Chief
Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

THE AUTHORS REPLY:

Mrs. Oswald says she has not made public appearances for fees up to $500. We know for certain, however, that on at least one occasion she asked that amount for her services and, when she was turned down, commented: "There are many witnesses, but there is only one mother." We reported this and stand by it. While she may (or may not) be legally correct to say that her son is an "alleged" assassin, in view of the Warren Commission's findings it seems quite proper to refer to him as the assassin, period.

Harold Weisberg asks for equal space; though the decision is not ours, one would think he has had ample space to make his case both in his books and in the numerous articles and reviews quoting him. He says further that if President Kennedy could have been assassinated with no better inquiry than was held, then "no president is ever safe, and the institutions of our society are in jeopardy." The fact remains that our institutions are still intact, and *no* head of state can be absolutely protected against the acts of madmen. President Kennedy himself remarked the day before he was shot that no president could ever be completely safe.

As for Mrs. Meagher's contention that her service in the Housewives' Underground correcting such things as Louis Nizer's having inadvertently called a Mauser a "howzer" is valuable, that is her opinion. Wouldn't it be more beneficial, one wonders, if she were to turn her energies to monitoring Mark Lane's lectures and broadcasts in an effort to straighten out *his* errors and misstatements? Incidentally, the dog to which Mrs. Meagher refers happens to have taken a large bite out of one of us (Mr. Lewis) and, so far as can be ascertained, there is no controversy over the direction the bite came from or the location of its imprint on the person who received it.

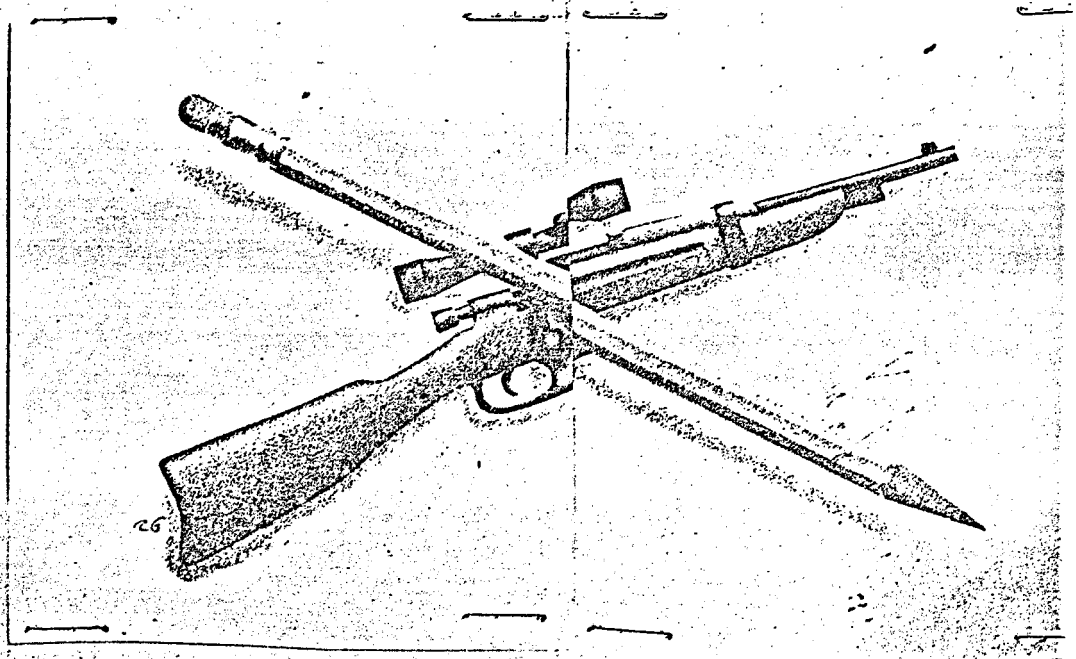
Mr. Griffin neglects to mention in his letter that he wrote the preface to Penn Jones' book. It is thus possible to assume that he has a vested interest in the book's reputation and is therefore biased in his judgment. Concerning the bottle of whisky Jones was carrying: it may have been intended for us, but we didn't get any of it then and wouldn't have been overly enthusiastic had Jones offered us any, since it was 9 a.m. Besides, we don't like highballs. (We did, on a later occasion, have a drink with Jones, whatever that may indicate to Mr. Griffin.) Since Mr. Griffin further accuses us of employing logical falacies, perhaps he should have pointed some out in his letter.

The "five errors" Mr. Feldman refers to in our passage dealing with him were, alas, part of the information provided us by Mr. Feldman's own associate, Maggie Field. This seems to suggest that the critics have yet to straighten out all the facts about each other, let alone the assassination. Mr. Feldman fails to mention that when we found there were, in fact, minor errors in Maggie Field's information about him we tried to correct our article and found it had already gone to the printer. We immediately sent Mr. Feldman a telegram apologizing, for example, for having promoted him to college professor when he is really a high school teacher, that being one of the more serious of our errors. Our apology, for what it is worth, still stands.

Mr. Cohen's correction of our chronology is well taken, and we appreciate it. He obviously went over our article carefully to make the correction. Had he gone over Mark Lane's footnotes with the same care, he may have decided not to print *Rush to Judgment*. In any case, we certainly did not intend to call Holt, Rinehart and Winston "scavengers"—although we did intend to call Mr. Lane a scavenger, since he has based his book upon misleading facts and misleading representations of testimony, and has thus succeeded in pulling the wool over the eyes of the American public. Mr. Cohen states that his firm does not "censor history" but rather attempts to make it available in all its complexities, etc. Perhaps he would be interested in obtaining hard cover rights to our own full-length book correcting the errors made by the Warren Report's critics (paperback rights are gone). A manuscript is available for him to look at on condition that he doesn't show it to Mark Lane.

Generally, it is safe to say that no matter what the outcome of the Warren Report had been, there would have been critics, and we do not object to this; every human being has a right to criticize. But when the critics try to sell the public on their conclusions, they have a responsibility to make certain they have done their homework well, and are not trucking in lies, innuendoes and misrepresentations of fact. The critics all seem to be criticizing the Warren Commission for having prejudged what happened in Dallas. And yet the critics themselves have prejudged what happened: most start from the premise of conspiracy and build their cases from there. If Oswald were alive today and swore he had not been a part of a conspiracy, none of the critics would believe him. Every member of the Commission knew the day would come when people would take rhetorical pot-shots at the Report; the Commission staff voluntarily became fair game for 160 million adults. Now the critics are taking offense at our efforts to set the record straight and we remind those critics that they don't live in a game preserve either.

LAWRENCE SCHILLER,
RICHARD WARREN LEWIS



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