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THE FAKED PORTRAIT OF
LEE HARVEY OSWALD
by Sylvia Meagher

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A Psychiatrist's Retroactive "Clairvoyance"

by Sylvia Meagher



Now it is clear at last: Oswald's repressed lust for his mother, Marguerite Oswald, subconsciously motivated him to murder President Kennedy; Ruby, tormented by a similar secret incestuous impulse to kill his father, in the symbolic role of President, killed the assassin who had acted out his own subconscious desire to kill in order to expiate his inner guilt-feelings. It all harks back to Oedipus.

Dr. Renatus Hartogs might have been well-advised to remain silent after his inglorious performance as a Warren Commission witness. Instead, he and his co-author, Lucy Freeman, have elected to give us a Freudian interpretation of the crime of the century which completely disregards the political setting in which the crime took place as well as the feeble and defective nature of the evidence against the accused assassin.

The fashion is for a writer to disclaim responsibility for what his publisher places on the dust-jacket. It must be asked if Dr. Hartogs can really escape all responsibility for the claim on the dust-jacket of his book that he, "ten years earlier, had recognized the explosive furies in the 13-year-old Oswald," or for the pure fiction that Hartogs had concluded that, "this child is explosively dangerous and we can expect him to commit an act of violence during his lifetime if he does not get help in understanding his fury"—a finding which appears nowhere in Hartogs' contemporaneous report on the young truant, Lee Harvey Oswald, who passed through Youth House on the assembly belt.

Hartogs actually concluded in his May 1953 report on the boy Oswald that "no finding of neurological impairment or psychotic mental changes could be made," and that Oswald was emotionally disturbed, "under the impact of *really existing* emotional isolation and deprivation."¹

In his Warren Commission deposition, Dr. Hartogs testified without having reviewed his 1953 report, relying solely on his memory of the boy he had seen briefly more than ten years before. He stated that as chief psychiatrist at Youth House in 1953, he had spent about half an hour to an hour

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¹ *The Two Assassins*, Appendix I.

found on preliminary screening to be seriously disturbed were transferred immediately to a mental hospital and were not, like Oswald was, permitted to remain at Youth House.) Hartogs, still without access to his 1953 report on Oswald, testified that,

"When I examined him, I found him to have definite traits of dangerousness. In other words, this child had a potential for explosive, aggressive, assaultive acting out which was rather unusual to find in a child who was sent to Youth House on such a mild charge as truancy from school."²

When Warren Commission counsel Wesley J. Liebel asked Hartogs what recommendation he had made to the court in respect of Oswald, Hartogs replied,

If I can recall correctly, I recommended that this youngster should be committed to an institution.

Liebel. What type of institution, do you recall?

Hartogs. No; that I don't recall. No.

Liebel. But you are quite clear in your recollection that you recommended that he be institutionalized immediately because of the personality pattern disturbance; is that correct?

Hartogs. Yes; that is right. That I remember; yes.²

Liebel proceeded to elicit from Hartogs the added information that he had told the FBI after the assassination that in 1953 he had found Oswald potentially dangerous and had recommended that he be institutionalized; and that Hartogs had made similar statements on television in the aftermath of Dallas.

Liebel then confronted Hartogs with his actual report of May 1953. The report showed that Hartogs had *not* recommended Oswald's institutionalization, but probation.

Hartogs admitted that the report "contradicted his recollection," but he refused to concede that his recollection of Oswald might be based on contacts with a completely different boy among the hundreds who had passed through Youth House a good many years in the past.

Liebel. It would not appear from this report that you found any indication in the character of Lee Oswald at that time that would indicate this possible violent outburst, is there?

Hartogs. I didn't mention it in the report, and I wouldn't recall it now.

Liebel. If you would have found it, you would have mentioned it in the report?

Hartogs. I would have mentioned it; yes. . . I did not say that he had assaultive or homicidal potential.

Liebel. And in fact, as we read through the report, there is no mention of the words "incipient schizophrenic" or "potentially dangerous" in the report.

Hartogs. No . . . here it is not.²

² Warren Commission Hearings, Volume VIII, pages 214-224.

having been forced to acknowledge that his recollection of Oswald was faulty and that his public pronouncements after the assassination were completely unsupported by the record, Hartogs has reverted nonchalantly to his discredited claims. He writes in the preface of *The Two Assassins* that, "I would describe Lee Harvey Oswald at the time I saw him as being potentially explosive." The transcript of his Warren Commission testimony gives him the lie.

The book, insofar as it deals with Oswald, bases itself on a spurious premise of his potential violence which cannot be justified in terms of Hartogs' written report or his admittedly insecure memory, or in terms of Oswald's life history up to the time of the assassination.

Hartogs attributes Oswald's emotional disturbance largely to his fatherlessness at birth and to the excessive influence of his mother's strong and somewhat unwholesome personality. He does not succeed in demonstrating such negative or traumatic features in Oswald's childhood—compared with his siblings or with the many children in the same generation from fatherless or broken homes—as would account plausibly for Oswald's alleged violence or supposed homicidal acts as an adult. Once one assumes that Oswald is guilty as charged by the Warren Commission, nothing is easier than finding all sorts of morbid influences and impulses in his earlier life to demonstrate the inevitability of his alleged crimes. Hartogs, in his search for such material, seems to have made a careful examination of the testimony and documents published by the Warren Commission. But he proceeded from a fixed preconception (as the Commission itself did), extracting from the record uncritically and selectively material that would advance his thesis. Thus, we find Hartogs attaching inordinate significance to the allegation that Oswald, at the age of 16, said that he would like to kill President Eisenhower. That intelligence derived from William E. Wulf, who had been acquainted with Oswald as a youngster. Many of Oswald's schoolmates and boyhood acquaintances "remembered" him as evil and twisted, once he was stigmatized as the assassin, but even if Wulf's report is accurate, what does it prove? One could grow rich by collecting a dime for every person who voiced the same thought sometime during the Eisenhower Administration. But the ex-President is still among us.

Sanctuary

Watching citadels raised around us,
I, glass-crypted, only contrive
To hear wild hearses for sixty-five,
Blasting from life's petarded box.

See the birds hanging 'round us!
My Celestial Stereo maddens these:
They smash down from ornamental trees
To sacramental barbecue spits.

Neon orchards blaze around us,
As I praise, in air-conditioned arbors,
Days burgeoning with good neighbors,
White and three-car'd Christian replicas.

—R. D. Lakin

Hartogs, keeping step with the Warren Commission, regards Oswald's supposed attack on General Walker as established fact when it is open to serious doubt. But he proceeds where even the Commission feared to tread and accepts as authentic Marina Oswald's story that she foiled Oswald's plan to shoot Richard Nixon at a time when he was not even in Dallas. The Commission could not bring itself to swallow that, nor Marina Oswald's claim that she foiled the attempt by locking Oswald into a bathroom which locked from the inside, nor other contrived or incoherent elements in her Nixon story. Hartogs, holier than the Pope, seems to take the story for gospel and uses it as added evidence that Oswald was a homicidal maniac.

Neither Hartogs nor the Commission found in the debacle of Marina Oswald's "Nixon story" the self-evident reason for questioning her reliability as a witness. In the light of her untenable allegations about an attack on Nixon and her self-contradiction on many other matters, the real issue is not what Marina Oswald revealed about Oswald's psyche but what she betrayed about her own.

Hartogs points out that one of Oswald's first acts when he was in the Soviet Union was an attempt at suicide. He quotes from the report of a psychiatric examination of Oswald at a Moscow hospital where he was taken after cutting his wrist:

"He tried to commit suicide in order not to leave for America. He claims he regrets his action. After recovery he intends to return to his homeland. It was not possible to get more information from the patient."

Hartogs does *not* quote what is really the salient finding of that psychiatric evaluation, perhaps because it comes into direct conflict with his own thesis. That finding, as published by the Warren Commission in its Exhibit 985, was that,

"According to the conclusion of the expert, the patient is *not dangerous to other people.*" (Italics added.)

Nor does Hartogs mention the interesting fact that Marina Oswald, on whose testimony he relies frequently, also tried to commit suicide, about six months before the assassination. She did not wish to discuss that with the Warren Commission, which obligingly changed the subject. Oswald's suicide attempt seems to have been nothing more than a stratagem to extend his stay in the Soviet Union. If his wrist-cutting is to be regarded as evidence of psychosis or capacity to take human life, the same sauce must be served with other would-be suicides.

Oswald was evaluated as being no danger to other people, after his attempted suicide. Perhaps Hartogs places no credence in the findings of his Soviet counterparts, for professional or political reasons; but that is no excuse for omitting findings of such high relevance. Furthermore, Oswald submitted to psychological screening when he enlisted in the Marine Corps, and to medical treatment (including hospitalization) during his three years of service, with absolutely negative findings. There is no indication whatever in his Marine Corps medical records

of maladjustment, psychological difficulty, or any deviation from the norm.

The very absence of such findings throughout Oswald's medical history as an adult is the strongest argument against Hartogs' thesis that he was a homicidal maniac. Indeed, he strains heroically for evidence to support that self-serving and parochial proposition. For example, he points out that Oswald shot three times at President Kennedy and three times at Tippit; that the number "three" in psychoanalytic thinking symbolizes the masculine genitals; and, therefore, that homosexuality may be one unconscious motive for the murders.

Very neat, Dr. Hartogs—but Tippet was shot four times, not three. Perhaps that makes Oswald a transvestite?

"Psychoanalytic thinking" falls frequently into such fatuous pronouncements, since the practitioners have so little interest in or respect for mere facts.

The Two Assassins is composed of chapters on Oswald alternating with chapters on Ruby. By means of that artifice, the authors purport to reveal substantial parallels in the histories of the two men, and in their ultimate deterioration. In his evaluation of Ruby Hartogs achieves somewhat greater objectivity than his presentation of the Oswald diagnosis, perhaps because he had no direct involvement with Ruby and no need for self-justification. Also, he had the benefit of access to the findings of various psychiatrists who had examined Ruby in connection with his trial, and a rich body of evidence of Ruby's overt violence and brutality over a long period of time before his act of murder.

Hartogs makes a convincing case for the thesis that an uncontrollable explosion of rage forced Ruby, without conscious volition, to shoot Oswald down on sight. But his case is not completely convincing, because Hartogs disregards the time-lag between Ruby's first opportunity to kill Oswald, on Friday night, and the so-called explosion of fury on Sunday morning.

The Warren Commission has been criticized for failure to obtain competent psychiatric evaluation of the accused assassin and his motives, which remain a complete mystery. Dr. Hartogs has tried to fill the gap but he does not succeed in increasing the grounds for confidence in the Warren Report. His conclusions collide with those of his Soviet confreres, which he has quoted only partially, and with the negative Marine Corps medical records, which he has not even mentioned.

But Hartogs' main transgression against ethical norms is his renewed attempt to reinstate and legitimize findings which diverge sharply from his actual findings on Oswald as a boy. That fundamental deformity compromises any claim of *The Two Assassins* to objectivity or authoritativeness.

Hartogs treats Oswald's guilt in the assassination and the Tippit murder as proven beyond doubt. He might have been prudent enough to observe the legal niceties and refer to Oswald as the *alleged* assassin. The whole case against Oswald may be overturned suddenly—that surely is theoretically possible and, in the view of some students

of the case, inevitable in practical terms, in the light of hitherto-unseen official documents which have become accessible at the National Archives (see, for example, Vincent J. Salandria in *The Minority of One* for April 1966). Should such a development take place, a dogmatic work like *The Two Assassins* will not enhance the reputation of psychoanalysis, which, as a social tool, has already suffered some disenchantment.

The book does perform a service, perhaps inadvertently, by calling attention to the existence of John Rene Heindel, who had served in the Marines with Oswald and who stated in an affidavit to the Warren Commission that he was often called "Hidell," as a nickname and not an unintentional mispronunciation. Hartogs suggests that "this was the name that Oswald later assumed as his alias." That news may startle readers of the Warren Report, which not only fails to mention the existence of Heindel/Hidell but asserts repeatedly that Hidell was not a real person, merely an invention of Oswald's for his own purposes.

Hartogs, without commenting on the surprising omission of Heindel and his affidavit from the Warren Report, proceeds to tell us that "it is interesting that the name Alek J. Hidell contains the same letters as Jekyll-Hyde, taking into account Oswald's poor spelling with an i substituted for the y." (What happens to the a?)

Perhaps he will forgive us if we find it interesting that the name "Renatus Hartogs" contains the same letters as "trash outrages," and "strange authors," . . . and, to be quite clinical, the same letters as the two words describing a part of Thor's anatomy and its size.

The Two Assassins, by Dr. Renatus Hartogs, M.D., Ph.D., and Lucy Freeman, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1965.

From
Readers' Letters

THE WARREN REPORT

The Warren Report is often wrong, full of unchallenged contradictions in witness testimony, and based on a closed-minded approach.

For these reasons there is no doubt in my mind that the judgment as brought in by the seven commission members—"lone assassin"—will be overruled.

To believe otherwise would be to disbelieve in America, reason and justice.

Also, I would like to state, that in my opinion it was un-American of the seven Commission members not to include the words "alleged" or "accused."

You will note that my son, Lee Harvey Oswald never received his Constitutional right of a trial by jury.

Fort Worth, Texas MARGUERITE C. OSWALD
Mother of
Lee Harvey Oswald

I don't approve of your dragging the Kennedy assassination skeleton out of the closet, for even if you could prove that any of the higher ups had any hand in it, the U.S. citizens would pay no attention to this. Do you remember that when it was found that the Maine had been blown up from the inside (by some hired agent of the sugar trust), and not by Spain, this didn't raise an eyebrow of the American people? You are just wasting six or more of the pages of your valuable magazine.

H. L. HUMMEL
Susanville, Calif.

Together with previous impartial books and articles analyzing the assassination testimony, Mr. Salandria's articles just about demand a conclusion that a conspiracy did exist to remove President Kennedy from the political arena. After all, he was one of the few truly

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sophisticated officials—the very antithesis of LBJ—who stood in the way of the plans of our Hitlerian warlords. One of your letter-writers rightly points out that the longer LBJ reveals his smug and callous fanaticism, the more likely it appears that some of his pals were part of the superclever plot. Dragooning being their specialty.

Surely, posterity will find that the Kennedy assassination, which LBJ never mentions, was promptly followed by the desertion of a wandering Oswald by his accessories plus evident attempts to kill him on November 22 and the actual killing of him on November 24—constitutes an example of a common practice of criminals: to kill principal witnesses. That alone indicates the existence of conspirators.

About the only enigma is, how wily-LBJ's Earl Warren, C.J. could have failed to note the flaws in the Report? Especially the fundamental one, *that the whole thing is illegal by the rules of U.S. and English law, Why? Because not one of the hundreds of selected postmortem witnesses was cross-examined. Why did he sign the Report, without at least alluding to that undermining and fatal omission?*

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