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~~(for Sylvia Meagher, Accessories After the Fact)~~

INTRODUCTION

In 1965 Sylvia Meagher produced her Subject Index to the Warren Report, and Hearings and Exhibits, which may someday be remembered as the only index to have altered the history of U.S. politics. If she had written nothing else, ^{she} ~~this index~~ would have been remembered for the way ^{this index} ~~it~~ drew order out of chaos, defined a subject matter for serious scholarship, and invited anyone who cared to drive a wedge between the findings of the Warren Report and its own twenty-six volumes of published Hearings.

Two years later, with Accessories After the Fact, Ms. Meagher showed how effectively this analysis of published documentation challenged, not just the conclusions of the Warren Commission, but the methods of distortion, suppression, and apparent intimidation, ~~and misreporting (pp. 23-24)~~ which were used to arrive at untenable conclusions. She was not the first to labor in these Augean stables, and she herself freely acknowledged the invaluable help and support she had received from other early researchers.

But, just like Linnaeus in the age of the great botanical voyage^{rs}, Sylvia Meagher's ^{in her} second book, as much as ^{her} first, brought a new degree of order and method

to vast tracts of previously unmanageable detail. The nearly encyclopaedic scope of this task produced a book which, like any encyclopedia, is coherent in particular sections rather than its entirety. Its coherence and importance lie rather in its method: its demonstration that, in ^{the} this great welter of irrational rumor and falsehood, rigorous analysis is both fruitful and urgently needed.

The first press response to her book confirmed her charge that important elements of the media had taken over the defense of the indefensible Report. Of the six reviews quoted in ~~the~~ Book Review Digest, only one can be called favorable. The New York Times dismissed the book as a "bore" without "any important disclosures;" it predictably did not mention her disclosures about the New York Times (cf. infra, p. ⁴⁵⁸ ~~600~~). John Sparrow, Master of All Souls' College, Oxford, writing in the Times Literary Supplement of London, dismissed Ms. Meagher as a "demonologist" with a "gift for innuendo" and deplorable vituperation, "ready to sling at the authorities any stone and any mud that presents itself." These were revealing charges from a don who readily admitted that he had "not had time to study" the book.

Despite such reviews, and with no promotional campaign to correct them, the book ~~still~~ managed quietly to sell out within three years. Since that time ~~the book~~ has

proliferated in bootlegged xerox copies, while searchers for the original have driven the second-hand price to fifty dollars or more. In all these years the reputation of the Warren Report has continued to sink, and that of Sylvia Meagher's critique to grow.

This is not to claim that Sylvia Meagher is infallible. The second edition of this book has had to correct a few slips and misunderstandings, a few apparent anomalies for which explanations could later be supplied. The miracle is, how few. Her main charges still stand. John Sparrow, Master of All Souls, like the rest of his breed, has not yet backed up his invective with a single specific refutation. He is not likely to.

The worst that can be said of Sylvia Meagher's book today is that it did not have access to facts learned since 1967. Most of these have come from the thousands of unpublished Warren Commission documents and memoranda in the National Archives. Some of these are still withheld; some are slowly being released. The rest are slowly being read and compared by researchers, many of whom (like myself) would still name Sylvia Meagher's book as their chief inspiration and guide.

Some day ~~the~~ new information may supplant Ms. Meagher's book; to date it has ^{for the most part} mostly strengthened it. Here I can give one example from a story that ^{didn't break until early September 1975} ~~broke only six weeks~~ ago. On pp. 215-16 of this book Ms. Meagher assembled

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evidence to support the hypothesis that, despite sworn testimony to the contrary, Lee Harvey Oswald had met with Dallas FBI Agent James Hosty, had for some reason been irritated with ~~him~~^{Hosty}, and "had stopped at the downtown office of the FBI...and left a note." This was not only a direct challenge to the claim of the Report (and the FBI) that Oswald had never contacted Hosty or the Dallas FBI, it was pertinent to her larger claim that the FBI was covering up the truth about its relations to Oswald (p. 210), that it initially withheld from the Commission the presence of Hosty's name in Oswald's notebook (p. 211), and that the Warren Commission never (as it claimed, WR 327) made an "independent review" of FBI files to determine whether or not Oswald was an FBI informant (p. 350). Sylvia Meagher concluded that:

Wendell [The real relationship between Oswald and the FBI remains to be uncovered, and the tactics used to conceal it merely increase suspicion of the nature of that relationship (p. 219).

On the initial issue of fact, Sylvia Meagher has now been proven right, the Warren Commission wrong, and the FBI deceitful. On August 30, 1975, FBI Director Clarence J. Kelley confirmed that Oswald had left a threatening note for Hosty at the FBI Office; according to Time, the FBI, on orders from Washington Headquarters, had later destroyed the note and perhaps altered FBI records to conceal it. Thus her concluding suspicion is even more

justified than it was before. Meanwhile, readers of Clarence Kelley's admission were only able to appreciate its significance if they knew the related facts in Sylvia Meagher's eighth chapter.

In another example, equally important, unpublished documents have corroborated Sylvia Meagher's charge that the Warren Commission covered up misbehavior and lies of the ~~the~~ Dallas police. On pp. 304-09, Sylvia Meagher assembled facts to challenge Dallas Police Chief Curry's sworn testimony that Oswald "was arraigned for the assassination of the President" and that Curry himself "was present at the time" (4H 156). This was audacious skepticism in the face of considerable ~~supporting~~ ^{in support of Curry} testimony ~~under oath~~ including that of Detective Captain Will Fritz (4H 221). ~~Instead~~ Sylvia Meagher was one of the first to entertain seriously Oswald's own surprising claim that he had not been charged with the murder of President Kennedy, or even heard anything from the Dallas police about such a charge (WR 201, cf. infra, p. 306).

Astonishingly, the unpublished Warren Commission Documents support Ms. Meagher against the alleged "eye-witnesses." According to an early FBI report, based on information from Fritz's office, Oswald was arraigned only on the charge of murdering Officer Tippit;

(10.22.64) } No arraignment on the murder charges in connection with the death of President Kennedy was held inasmuch as such

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arraignment was not necessary in view of the previous charges filed against Oswald and for which he was arraigned. (Commission Document 5, p. 400)

To review such examples is to see even more clearly the social pathology of the Warren Commission syndrome in this country, to see the importance of Sylvia Meagher's healing challenge, and the difficulty of that challenge's being heard. To believe Sylvia Meagher is to entertain the possibility that FBI agents could lie, that Dallas police could lie, and that a blue-ribbon Commission of leading public figures could transmit these lies in the form of an elaborately footnoted report. For many Americans, to adjust to such possibilities is to tread oneself on the borders of paranoia. It is to accept that someone, something, has gone insane.

Sylvia Meagher's book promises even worse discomforts for the reluctant reader. It is not just that Oswald had unexplained relationships to the FBI, or Jack Ruby to the Dallas police. There is also the unexplained behavior of the State Department, where Sylvia Meagher rightly detected a "radical deviation from orthodox practice where Oswald was involved" (p. 336). There is ^{the} serenity of the CIA, along with the FBI and State, in the face of Oswald's alleged threats to disclose classified data to the Soviet Union. Ms. Meagher, like most researchers, ^{saw} ~~sees~~ this serenity "as an indication that they knew there was nothing to get excited about" (p. 342). She showed how the Warren

Report, despite contrary evidence, simply altered the chronology of Oswald's travel to the Soviet Union, to reconcile it with the CIA's account of the available commercial air flights (p. 331). "There is reason," she added, "to wonder if he went on a commercial flight at all."

In confronting these anomalies and irregularities in high levels of government, the unaccustomed reader may mistakenly think that the only alternative to the Warren Report is an ^{vast} ~~an~~-englobing conspiracy of thought control and the rewriting of history at every level of U.S. society. Here I think the more recent experience of Watergate will help us to dispel such paranoia, and to understand the mechanics of the Warren Commission syndrome in a more rational perspective. If Oswald had ever, at any point in his career, been involved with any government agency or in any national security matter, it is clear (we now know) that numbers of relatively innocent public servants ~~were~~ would participate in a cover-up where they ^{were} ~~are~~ told that national security ^{was} ~~is~~ involved. What was possible in 1972 would have been even more possible in 1964, when the CIA's and FBI's numerous illegal activities had not yet been exposed and documented.

Sylvia Meagher herself concludes, ^{her book} in a bold chapter entitled "The Proof of the Plot," with a hypothesis that would, if correct, have provoked just such a bureaucratic cover-up in the name of national security. Oswald and

Ruby, she suggests, may have been involved in anti-Castro activities of the CIA. She points out how anti-Castro Cubans, and also Americans involved in their conspiratorial activities, were related to the Oswald case in a way which no non-conspiratorial hypothesis could explain. The strong support of the CIA for these Cubans, the quick disaffection of President Kennedy for the CIA's

indeed } incredible bungling... suggested an early end to what has been called 'the invisible government,' and a threat to their Cuban proteges (p. 385).

Sylvia Meagher notes ² that Oswald exhibited a sustained interest in Cuba and had contact with Cuban intriguers. The same was true of Jack Ruby. A retired U.S. Army colonel had reportedly seemed to be "playing the role of an intelligence officer in his contacts with the Cubans" in Dallas, and "trying to arouse the feelings of the Cuban refugees in Dallas against the Kennedy administration." She asks whether it is far-fetched to postulate the formation of a plot amongst members of such circles (p. 386).

Such speculations seem much less outlandish today, after the Watergate break-in, and after the arrest of some of the CIA's other top Cubans on serious narcotics charges. Since Sylvia Meagher wrote, we have also learned that the CIA was collaborating closely on anti-Castro matters with figures from the underworld of organized crime in Chicago, and we know more about Jack Ruby's extensive links to that same underworld. Once again, unpublished Warren Commission

documents corroborate Ms. Meagher's disturbing hypothesis, and it is surely significant that some of the key documents in this sensitive area are still withheld.

The implications of Sylvia Meagher's hypothesis are so serious and far-reaching, that it will indeed be difficult for any Congressional committee to explore the matter further. The wound is too painful to be re-opened gratuitously; the public must understand and insist on the need for the truth. But that is precisely why it is so urgent that this book be widely read, and ^{that} the demand grow that its questions and criticisms be answered. What is at stake, I believe, is nothing less than the political and spiritual well-being of the Republic, the choice whether reason or unreason will prevail.

Peter Dale Scott

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