

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

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Many arguments, good and not so good, and poor or downright spurious, have been invoked in the controversy raging about the Warren Commission and its Report, that is, about the official American explanation of the assassination of President Kennedy on Friday, November 22, 1963, in Dallas.

Compared to the atmosphere of smug complacency which prevailed in the U.S. for nearly two years, the fact that there now is a controversy represents, in itself, a tremendous progress. For the sycophants, today, ~~and the sycophants, today, and the sycophants, today, and the sycophants, today,~~ <sup>have lost their monopoly</sup> critics, finally, have a chance to see their books published, radio and television are open to them, and the public has the possibility to make up its own mind. Thus, when someone tries to start a righteous crusade against "the scavengers", the public may ~~wonder~~ <sup>start</sup> wonder <sup>if</sup> whether, after all, in this case, "scavenging" is not better than pushing evidence under rugs and burying corpses in closets, archives, or Fort-Worth cemeteries.

What ~~seems~~ <sup>seems</sup> to have particularly irritated the New York Times is the fact that critical books ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> quite well, one of them ~~even reaching~~ <sup>even reaching</sup> its bestseller list ~~for many months~~: "Debate on the accuracy and adequacy of the Warren Commission's work", the paper peevishly wrote in a September 1-st, 1966, editorial, "is now approaching the dimensions of a lively small industry in this country".

The Times, of course, knew what ~~he~~ it was talking about, I mean, knew all about that type of industry. Competing successfully with the U.S. Government Printing Office in Washington, D. C., it had brought out in record time a paperback edition of the Warren Report at \$1.00 apiece which achieved tremendous sales. This was at a time when no American publisher was willing to publish anything conflicting with the conclusions of the Warren Commission, and when some American publishers went so far as to break signed contracts rather than breaking the taboo.

The Times' editorial, however, was not relevant to the Times paperback. For the editorial was editorializing only about the "debate on the accuracy and adequacy of the Warren Commission's

work", while the paperback, "with a special introduction by Harrison E. Salisbury and other material prepared by The New York Times exclusively for this edition", was trying to convince people that the Warren Commission's work, "comprehensive, careful, commendable and competent", should be considered as above debate.

But it so happens that the Times' patriotic endeavor was convenient, contributive, compensating and commercial as well. ~~The~~ The same can be said about the other, quickly brought out paperback edition of the Report, endowed with a no less "special" introduction by Louis Nizer. Rather hastily, it ~~was~~ <sup>appears</sup> today, Nizer praised the Commission for "effectuating domestic tranquility and overcoming foreign skepticism", ~~and expressed the opinion that was not to be envied.~~ He also admitted quite openly, however, ~~that~~ though he didn't seem to apply it to himself, that there was such a thing as "neurotic adherence to a conviction in which one has an investment of pride or a more ~~worldly~~ sordid interest".

Making headlines out of the Kennedy assassination has been from the beginning a very profitable operation, and the success of a few critical books since ~~the~~ 1966 still cannot compare, ~~with the many millions of dollars~~ <sup>the</sup> as far as financial returns are concerned, with the millions of dollars brought in by the cynical, <sup>or</sup> hypocritical ~~and~~ <sup>in</sup> any case, uncritical-exploitation of the official themes.

For this deadly big industry has not been stopped by the demand for ~~truth~~ <sup>truth</sup>. On the contrary, ~~rather than~~ ~~and~~ thanks to an apparently ethical conflict which no advertising agency would have dared to invent, the year 1967 has given it, ~~it~~ with William Manchester's Death of a President, its biggest money-maker. ~~For~~ Whatever may be said about Manchester's commissioned gossip column (and I'll say it's cheap sensationalism), it certainly does not suggest any "debate on the accuracy and adequacy of the Warren Commission's work".

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Well, Sylvia Meagher's book does, and very much so, and I hope its sales in the bookstores will give new reason for complaint to the New York Times.

Though many of her readers may not know it, Accessories after the Fact is not Sylvia Meagher's first book dealing with the Warren Commission. In March 1968, ~~she~~ <sup>she</sup> had quietly ~~published~~ <sup>produced</sup> ~~it~~

Published by Scarcrow Press, New York (3)  
and London, in March 1966. This Index 15

a 150-page Subject Index to the Warren Report and Hearings and Exhibits, something absolutely indispensable but which the Commission's staff had omitted to provide. <sup>in the Index</sup> There was no commentary, no "debate" of any kind, not even an argumentative foreword, just an "Explanatory Note" giving some technical information. Sylvia Meagher's Index has nevertheless become a major weapon in the arsenal of the critics of the Commission. For, as the author had hoped and as the Commission seems to have ~~been~~ been afraid of, it has enabled people "to test the assertions and conclusions in the Warren Report against their independent judgment, on the basis of fidelity to the source data and impartiality of selection by the authors of the Report". This was the scholarly but potentially explosive conclusion of ~~the~~ the "Explanatory Note" in Sylvia Meagher's Index.

Here, now, is Accessories after the Fact. In the "American Postscript" of my book The Oswald Affair, I wrote that Sylvia Meagher is "the only person in the world who really knows every item hidden in the 26 volumes of Hearings and Exhibits", that is, the evidence on which the Warren Report is ~~now~~ supposed to be based. I should have added that she also knows all the items missing in those 26 volumes, that is, the evidence the Commission's members -or, more often, lawyers- preferred not to see, or, <sup>when they could not help</sup> seeing it, to forget.

But Accessories after the Fact does not only confirm the author's scientific mind and the exhaustive thoroughness of her research. The book also reveals the penetrating insight she has brought to the study of the case and the logic of her reasoning. I thus have been made aware, ~~through~~ through her book, of the possible significance of certain sets of circumstances which had not impressed me, ~~at~~ at first, in my own research: The presence, for example, at the scene of the crime, of alleged Secret Service <sup>agents</sup> ~~men~~ who, <sup>according to the testimony and documents issued by the WC</sup> ~~if we are to believe the Warren Report,~~ must have been <sup>impostors</sup> ~~false Secret Service~~ men; or the unexpected use by the Dallas police, on the very day of the crime, of Oswald's old Elizabeth Street address when the Dallas police claimed never to have heard about Oswald up to then.

Of course, being the <sup>latest of the critics</sup> ~~last~~ one to publish (though not to think), Sylvia Meagher is not the first <sup>one</sup> to make certain

points. Even so, she is often able to add <sup>e</sup> new information, sometimes a new angle, and always her presentation of the point under discussion is the most documented, the most scrupulous as to accuracy, in short, the most reliable. ~~From~~ <sup>Of</sup> all the books written on the Kennedy assassination, including the Warren Report, Sylvia Meagher's Accessories after the Fact comes closest to being <sup>the</sup> reference book.

Meanwhile, let's not forget that if the same points have been made, about some of the evidence, in many or even all of the books criticizing the Warren Commission, it is not only because those points are particularly significant but because they are particularly obvious. It is, indeed, hard to ~~believe~~ understand how the members and lawyers of the Commission could fail to notice, how they can still go on pretending not to be ~~was~~ aware of, the gross inconsistencies and flat contradictions which their unbelievable clumsiness made visible to the critical eye at first sight. There even is a defender of the Commission - or, at least, critic of the critics - who writes without any irony: "We ~~are~~ must give this much credit to the Warren Report: though in places it may read like an indictment of Oswald, it has provided much evidence that runs counter to its main contentions". ~~and it is true~~

True, but since the Commission denies that ~~it~~ its Report contains any such evidence, <sup>(since that evidence)</sup> and therefore has <sup>been</sup> provided ~~is~~ unwittingly, why should the Warren Report be given credit for it?

One last point. Richard H. Rovere made it before me in his Introduction to Edward Jay Epstein's Inquest, though I ~~wouldn't be~~ <sup>am unable</sup> able to ~~say~~ <sup>say</sup> what my brilliant American colleague has done since ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~order~~ to correct the situation he deplored. ~~is~~ Noting that "Mr. Epstein's scholarly tools happen to be those employed day in and day out by journalists", Rovere had regretted, "as a journalist", that "the press left it to a single scholar to find the news". I fully agree with Richard H. Rovere that this should have made "journalists envious and ashamed". But it didn't, for, ~~journalists~~ <sup>journalists</sup> as of this writing, American journalists, including Rovere, still appear reluctant to challenge the Warren Commission; and Sylvia Meagher is not a member of our profession.

Well, the loser is the profession...

Léo SAUVAGE

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