

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

By Sylvia Meagher

Now it is clear at last: Oswald killed Kennedy because of a repressed desire to commit incest with his mother, Marguerite Oswald; and Ruby killed Oswald because he had preempted Ruby, ~~whose symptoms~~ frustrating his subconscious compulsion to murder the President as surrogate for Ruby's father.

Dr Renatus Hartogs might have remained silent after his inglorious performance as a Warren Commission witness. Instead, he and his co-author have elected to give us a Freudian ~~improbable~~ explanation of the crime, or crimes, of the century, ^{they} ~~and~~ have succeeded in producing a worthy companion piece to the Warren Report, ^{since} ~~both works abound with~~ ~~conditional~~ conditional, vague, implausible, and selective "evidence" which is quickly recognizable as utter nonsense.

The fashion is for an author to disclaim responsibility for what his publisher places on the dust-jacket. It must be asked if Dr Hartogs can really escape responsibility for the ~~claim~~ description, "the psychiatrist who, ten years earlier, had recognized the explosive furies in the 13-year-old Oswald," or for the reinstatement of the fictional "conclusion" 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"--which appears nowhere in Dr Hartogs' contemporaneous pronouncements on the young truant who passed through Youth House on the assembly belt.

What Hartogs really concluded in his May 1953 report on Oswald was that "no finding of neurological impairment or psychotic mental changes could be made," and that he was emotionally disturbed "under the impact of really existing emotional isolation and deprivation," as recorded in the Warren Commission exhibits and also in Appendix I of Hartogs' book.

In his Warren Commission deposition, Dr Hartogs testified without benefit of reviewing his 1953 report, relying upon memory. He indicated that as the chief psychiatrist at Youth House in 1953 he spent about a half hour to an hour ^{weekly} with each child. Upon arrival, the child was given a preliminary screening and if he was "very disturbed" he was transferred immediately to a mental hospital. Lee Oswald weathered his ~~m~~ screening and remained at Youth House. Hartogs, still without reference to his 1953 report, 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.... 1/

Hartogs testified that he remembered Oswald because he was the subject of a seminar for the staff at Youth House; there were no records maintained of such seminars, which were a regular feature at the institution, and there is some reason to doubt the accuracy of Dr. Hartogs' recollection, which proved faulty in other respects. For example, when Commission counsel Wesley J Liebeler 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.

Liebeler What type of institution, **da** you recall?

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

Liebeler 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.

1/Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, Volume VIII, pp 214-224.

Liebeler elicited from Hartogs that after the assassination he had told the FBI that in 1953 he had found Oswald potentially dangerous and recommended that he be institutionalized, and that he had made similar statements on television. Liebeler then confronted Hartogs with his actual report. He had not recommended institutionalization, but probation. Hartogs admitted that the report "contradicted his recollection," but refused to concede that it might have been another boy rather than Oswald who was the subject of a Youth House seminar.

Liebeler 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.

Liebeler 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.

Liebeler 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.

Having been compelled to acknowledge that his recollection of Oswald was faulty and that his public pronouncements after the assassination were completely unsupported by his own 1953 report, Hartogs proceeded in the preface of his book to reinstate the fiction retroactively--"I would describe Lee Harvey Oswald at the time I saw him as being potentially explosive." The official transcript of his testimony gives him the lie.

Hartogs has built his whole book (insofar as it relates to Oswald) on the false premise of potential violence which is not justifiable either on the basis of his written report or his admittedly insecure and possibly non-existent memory of the boy. He premises Oswald's deep emotional disturbance on his fatherlessness at birth (Robert Lee Oswald, his father, died of a heart attack while Marguerite Oswald was pregnant). By that token, her first child, John Pic, should not be, as he is, a career officer in the U S Air Force and a solid citizen--his father, Edward John Pic, Jr, separated from Marguerite

when she was pregnant with John. He saw the baby occasionally until he was a year old, and then never saw him again. John Pic was scarcely less "fatherless" than Lee Harvey Oswald, although he did have a stepfather for six years during his early childhood who probably compensated somewhat for the deprivation of contact with his real father. In any case, Oswald's childhood was not in itself so exceptional or traumatic, compared with that of his two brothers or with the numerous children of broken homes in his own generation, as to account for Oswald's alleged violence or homicidal propensities as an adult.

Hartogs finds it very significant also that at the age of 16 Oswald is reported to have thought of killing President Eisenhower. That intelligence comes from William E Wulf, who had a brief acquaintance with Oswald at New Orleans. Even if Wulf's recollection is accurate (many of Oswald's school-mates and casual acquaintances "remembered" him as evil and twisted, once he was tarred with the stigma of sole culpability for the assassination), what does it prove? One could grow wealthy by collecting a dime for every person who said at some stage of Eisenhower's administration that he would like to kill the President. No one did.

Once one assumes Oswald's guilt, nothing is easier than finding all sorts of morbid influences and manifestations in his past life to support the inevitability of his eventual crimes. In his anxiety to carry out that process, Hartogs (or his co-author) have made what appears to be a conscientious examination of the evidence and testimony. But they proceeded from a pre-conceived and narrow objective; and they extracted from the record, uncritically and selectively, everything that would assist their thesis. Thus we find that Hartogs keeps step with the Warren Commission in regarding Oswald's alleged attack on General Walker as established fact, when the allegation remains subject to considerable doubt; and then proceeds beyond the point at which even the Commission halted in dismay, by accepting as authentic

the ludicrous story told by Marina Oswald of Oswald's abortive plan to shoot Richard Nixon, at a time when ~~he~~^{Nixon} was not even in Dallas. The Commission was unable to believe the fanciful tale that Marina restrained Oswald by locking him into the bathroom, or other incoherent and contrived elements in this particular allegation by Oswald's widow. Hartogs, being holier than the Pope, takes that for gospel and bases his case for the homicidal Oswald also on this piece of ~~some~~ improvisation, as well as on other allegations ~~in~~ less vulnerable on their surface.

But neither the Commission nor Hartogs find in the Nixon story ~~the~~ self-evident reason ~~seen by the same subjective standards of the case~~ for questioning the reliability of Marina Oswald's testimony. In the light of the debacle of her Nixon story and many instances of her self-contradiction on other matters, the real issue is not what light the Nixon incident sheds on Oswald's motives or mental instability but what it shows about the star witness for the prosecution.

Hartogs points out that the first thing that Oswald did in Russia was to try to kill himself. He quotes from ^{the} report of a psychiatric examination of Oswald in a Moscow hospital after his suicide attempt,

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.

But since it conflicts with his own thesis, Hartogs does not trouble to quote what is really the salient finding of the psychiatric evaluation, which is found in the actual record published by the Warren Commission (Commission Exhibit 985)--that,

According to the conclusion of the expert, the patient is not dangerous to other people.

Parenthetically, one might mention that Marina Oswald also tried to commit suicide, some six or seven months before the assassination of the President. She did not wish to discuss that with the Warren Commission when she was questioned, and the Commission obligingly changed the subject. If Oswald's suicide attempt (which seems to have been nothing but a maneuver by which to extend his stay in the Soviet Union) is said to be evidence of a morbid state, the same sauce should apply to Marina. No one has suggested that she is unstable and that her testimony should be assessed accordingly, on the ground of ^{her} attempted ~~suicide~~ suicide. She did not have the benefit of psychiatric examination after her try at self-destruction; Oswald did, and was found to be no danger to other people.

Perhaps Hartogs places no credence in the findings of his Soviet counterparts, for professional or political reasons. Yet Oswald also came through the usual psychological screening when he enlisted in the Marine Corps, without the smallest indication of any deviation from the norm. He served in the Marines for almost three years, during which he received medical treatment, including hospitalization, without a whisper anywhere in the Marine Corps medical records of any maladjustment or psychological difficulty.

The very absence of such findings in Oswald's medical history as an adult is the strongest argument against Hartogs' thesis of his psychotic state, founded on a defective version of his own 1953 findings.

Hartogs' thinking is both self-serving and parochial, so much so that he ~~indulges in~~ strains excessively to make a point. For example, he points out that Ruby intended to shoot Oswald three times; Oswald shot three times at President Kennedy and three times at Tippit; and ^{tells us} that the number "three," in psychoanalytic thinking, symbolizes the masculine genitals, ~~and~~ ^{he postulates} therefore the possibility of homosexuality as one of the unconscious motives for the murders. Very nice, but ~~Oswald~~ Tippit was shot four times, not three. Perhaps that makes Oswald bisexual?

Alternating with chapters on Oswald ~~there~~ are chapters on Ruby. Hartogs' evaluation of Ruby is somewhat more objective than ~~in the case~~ of Oswald, ^{and no need for self-justification.} perhaps because Hartogs had no direct involvement with Ruby. He had ~~also~~ the advantage of access to the findings of the several psychiatrists who examined Ruby, as well as a rich reserve of testimony as to Ruby's overtly ~~abnormal behaviour~~ violent behavior over a long period before he committed ~~the murder of Oswald.~~

Thus, ~~he~~ ^{Hartogs} ^{relatively} makes out a plausible case for an explosion of rage which led Ruby without ^{conscious} volition to destroy Oswald on sight. That is, it might be a plausible case but for the fact that Ruby's ^{first} encounter with Oswald occurred on Friday night and the explosion ^{of rage somewhat later,} on Sunday morning.

The Warren Commission has been criticized for ~~not employing~~ failing to ^{employ} ~~employ~~ qualified psychiatrists in its investigation who might have provided competent opinion on Oswald's motivation. Dr Hartogs has tried to fill the gap, without, however, increasing the grounds for confidence in the official findings. He has stated conclusions which collide with those of his Soviet confreres and with the negative Marine Corps psychological findings on Oswald, without giving a fair account of the former and without even mentioning the latter. But his main transgression ^{against} ~~an~~ ethical norms is the reinstatement of findings which diverge sharply from his actual conclusions about Oswald as recorded in his 1953 report, and that fundamental deformity of course compromises any claim to authoritativeness, even within the narrow limits of the author's expertise.

While Hartogs makes conditional pronouncements about Oswald's psyche, he treats his guilt in the assassination of the President and the murder of ~~him~~ J D Tippit as proven beyond doubt. Might it not have been more prudent to respect the legalities and regard Oswald as the alleged assassin? ~~and~~ The whole case against Oswald ^{may be} ~~may~~ suddenly overturned, which is theoretically possible and, in the view of some, realistically inevitable in the light of hitherto-unseen official documents now accessible in the National Archives (see article by Vincent J Salandria in The Minority of One, April 1966). Should such a development occur, the ~~grounding~~ ^{ex post facto} dogmatizing which is found in The Two Assassins will hardly increase confidence in ~~the~~ ^{already suffering} profession of psychiatry. The head-shrinkers may fall into the disrepute of being regarded as the head-shrunk. *Some disrepute.*

Hartogs does do a service, perhaps inadvertently, when he mentions in his chronological review of Oswald's life as seen in Freudian terms that Oswald had an acquaintance with a fellow Marine named John Rene Heindel. Hartogs states that Heindel provided an affidavit to the Warren Commission in which he indicated that he was often called "Hidell," a nickname and not merely an unintentional mispronunciation. Hartogs explains that "this was the name that Oswald later assumed as his alias." That ^{news} may come as a startling ~~surprise~~ ^{surprise} to readers of the Warren Report, which ignores the existence of Heindel-Hidell and asserts repeatedly that Hidell was not a real person but merely an invention of Oswald's for his own purposes.

Hartogs proceeds to say 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 equally significant that the name "Renatus Hartogs" contains the same letters as "trash outrages" or "strange authors"--or even "Thor's Great Anus."

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