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Dear Professor Packer,

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Thank you for your note of 15 October 1964. I have read your article "A Measure of the Achievement" with much interest. It is a very reasoned analysis, if one accepts your premise that the Warren Commission has established its central findings beyond reasonable doubt. That, I am unable to do as yet.

I am unable to do so because on certain fundamental elements of the evidence, elements on which the whole structure of the case depends, the Commission's findings border on the absurd. On the number and direction of the shots, for example, the Commission asks us to believe that a bullet which penetrated the President five and a half inches below his coat collar and exited at the Adam's Apple was following a downward trajectory. On this absurdity hinges the contention that a single bullet struck both the President and the Governor, which becomes untenable, as do the conclusions concerning the number and direction of the shots. The raw data on the number, accuracy, and speed of the shots all but eliminate the possibility of a single assassin.

I have other difficulties of a serious nature with the report. Perhaps some will be resolved when the volumes of hearings and exhibits are published. Until that time, I continue to feel considerable scepticism about the report. It is hard to understand, however, why you should suspend judgment until those volumes become available, since you assert that the central core of evidence demonstrates beyond peradventure that Oswald acting alone fired all the shots. I wonder how these volumes could affect your appraisal, since you have no reservations about the finding that Oswald was the lone assassin and since you have already answered with an emphatic negative the questions which test the Commission's impartiality (although you do acknowledge that the impression of prejudgment was created in part by the Commission itself and that its fact-finding mission was compromised by the appointment of counsel to "represent Oswald's interests.").

Why should the quality of the Commission's fact-finding process as it will be revealed in those forthcoming volumes matter, so long as the Commission arrived at the correct and unassailable conclusions, as you say it did? Perhaps it is this very criterion that produced the excessive reticence of the Commission toward the Dallas police and District Attorney Wade of which you complain in your article. They too, despite their "ugly and squalid perversion of the law-enforcement process," arrived at substantially the same unchallengeable conclusions as did the Warren Commission. (I would quarrel with your claim that the case made to the press by the Dallas authorities is not the case made by the Warren Commission. The differences are negligible.)

I was somewhat surprised to find that you make a categorical statement that the Commission did not refuse to deal with evidence inconsistent with its hypothesis and did not suppress evidence. Among the papers I sent you on 13 October 1964 was a copy of an affidavit by Seymour Weitzman, the existence of which has not even been acknowledged by the Warren Commission. Do you think that the statement by the Warren Commission that Weitzman had only a brief glimpse of the rifle and did not handle it is consistent with the contents of his affidavit? Do you think it reasonable and impartial that the Commission has given no explanation of how District Attorney Wade and Police Captain Patrick Gannaway (whose name is not to be found in the report) became the purveyors of a constable's erroneous identification of a Mauser? Do you find it unsingular that when Captain Fritz later announced that the rifle was actually an Italian weapon he indicated that it was "of an unusual, undetermined caliber" (N.Y. Times, 23 November 1963) despite the fact that the Commission

asserts that the rifle is marked "CAL. 6.5" but fails to explain how Fritz overlooked this marking? I find it difficult to accommodate the notion that a man who did not handle the rifle was able to describe it in detail, including its caliber, while a man who did handle it was unable to describe the caliber although it was clearly indicated on the weapon.

You say that "the minimal case against Oswald is far stronger than that against many criminal defendants who are with perfect propriety convicted and sentenced every day." But those defendants have counsel, and the opportunity to cross-examine prosecution witnesses and present defense evidence. Even so, occasional miscarriages of justice come to light after an innocent person has already served ten or more years of an unjust conviction.

Forgive me if I say that it was snide of you to couple Mark Lane's name with that of Revilo Oliver. Even more regrettable is the fact that you made the unfounded charge that Mark Lane at this time "devotes himself to the easy but now irrelevant task of attacking the inaccuracies in District Attorney Wade's cafish public statements." I have heard Mr. Lane twice since the Warren Commission's report was issued and he addressed himself specifically to its contents, mentioning earlier versions of the evidence only in so far as they were indicative of the metamorphoses which hardly any of the evidence has escaped. No doubt you were following the precedent of Justice Warren, who told the press that he had no reason to believe that Mr. Lane's allegations (about a telephone conversation with the witness Mrs. Markham) were true but who failed to retract his slur on Lane's integrity even when his testimony proved to be true and that of Mrs. Markham, false.

I am neither acquainted nor associated with Mr. Lane but I have considered it a matter of conscience since the 22nd of November last year to scrutinize all available information on the assassination tirelessly and critically, lest I become a passive accomplice to further perversion and degradation of justice. Evidently this strikes you as tiresome and mischievous and you consider that we deserve attention only if we can demonstrate that the central findings are false. It seems to me that a careful reading of the report shows that the Commission itself has demonstrated that the finding that all the wounds were inflicted by bullets fired from the rear and above, is false, by specifying that a bullet supposedly travelling a downward trajectory entered some inches below the point of exit. I think that this meets your condition for "attention" since it is a legitimate question about a basic defect in the Commission's reasoning which, if it is sustained, casts grave doubt on the Commission's consequential conclusions. I should welcome your comments on this point if you agree that it merits consideration.

I am not sure why you expected your article to provoke considerable discussion, since it conforms closely with the views expressed by a broad range of publications, from the New York Daily News to I.F. Stone. I shall watch for signs of controversy.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher

P.S. Did you notice that the report contains no information whatever on six hours of interrogation of Oswald on the day he was arrested? or on the four crucial hours between 8 a.m. and noon before the assassination?