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Mr. Richard Pollak  
Editor  
More  
P.O. Box 2971  
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New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Mr. Pollak;

Although you may not remember me, we met briefly at the A.J. Liebling Convention in Washington. I am the author of the piece that appeared early this year in The Realist: "How All the News About Political Assassinations in the United States Has Not Been Fit To Print in The New York Times" (the long-winded title was Krassner's, not mine).

I am writing about some recent behavior by The New York Times which I thought might be of interest to you and your readers.

You may have noticed a review in the Sunday Book Review on November 18 by Priscilla and George McMillan dealing with the newly published book: "November 22, 1963: You Are the Jury," by David W. Belin, a lawyer who served on the staff of the Warren Commission. The review was quite favorable, although it ignored the substance of the book and dwelled more upon the psychological profiles of the critics of the Warren Report. Four days later Mrs. McMillan again graced the pages of the Times, this time on the Op-Ed page commemorating the 10th anniversary of the assassination. This piece praised the Warren Report as "the most completely documented story of a crime ever put together." Again readers of the Times were given a lesson in psychiatry. The reason so many doubt the lone assassin findings of the Commission has nothing to do with the overwhelming evidence of conspiracy, but rather, according to Mrs. McMillan, they are involved somehow in personal guilt feelings about "paricide, the murder of the father by the son... "We hold onto conspiracy theories because they are a defense, a screen, a barrier, against having to hold those feelings in ourselves."

The Belin review and Op-Ed piece are just the latest chapters in a 10-year campaign by the Times which I think I documented pretty effectively in my Realist piece. In this case, however, Harrison Salisbury, the fickle defender turned critic turned defender of the Warren Report, has demonstrably engaged in a deliberate and somewhat shady propaganda blitz aimed at readers of The New York Times, for Salisbury was made aware of some highly questionable conduct by David Belin as a lawyer for the Warren Commission and has subsequently made every effort to supply Belin with a forum to liable the critics and defend the Warren Report via distortion, omission, and half-truths (the same tactics Belin attributes to the critics).

Salisbury, you may recall, was an early defender of the Warren

Commission. He wrote the introduction to the Times/Bantam edition of the Warren Report. He later modified his views, and wrote a biting attack on the Commission in the December, 1966 issue of Progressive magazine (although he re-affirmed his belief that Oswald had acted alone, more or less on faith). "The Warren Commission," wrote Salisbury, "far from quenching the flame of rumor, has become a principal source -- the principal source -- of the ever-broadening tide of hypothesis, speculation, guess, and challenge of the verdict that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, shot and killed the President... "there are questions -- some of them of major importance -- that must be answered." Salisbury called at that time for a new investigation, conceding that the Warren Commission had overly concerned itself with "national image" and "national morale" and had taken upon itself the task "of damping down rumors," rather than "a frank facing of the unresolved and unresolvable dilemmas." Salisbury outlined some of the questions raised by the critics which troubled him the most. These questions are all either ignored or unsatisfactorily answered by David Belin in his book. It is interesting to note that shortly after the Progressive piece Salisbury headed a task force of Times reporters looking into the questions raised about the Warren Report. The investigation was terminated in mid-course while Salisbury was in Hanoi. It was never resumed and no report was ever written.

Getting to the heart of the matter at hand. Writing in the August 13, 1971 Texas Observer, Sylvia Meagher, undoubtedly the most respected of the Warren Commission critics (the jacket of her book bore the endorsements of Congressmen Ryan and Kupferman) raised serious questions clearly implicating David Belin in misfeasance and suborning of perjury. The article regarded the testimony of one Charles Givens, a major witness before the Warren Commission who testified before Commission Counsel David Belin that he had returned to the sixth floor of the Book Depository where he worked, at about 11:55 AM (he had departed for lunch at about 11:30AM) to retrieve a pack of cigarettes which he had forgotten. Upon his return, just minutes before the assassination, he encountered Oswald lurking near the Southeast corner window, the alleged sniper's nest. The testimony was quite important, for it placed Oswald in the right place at the right time to have committed the act attributed to him. Unfortunately, however, Givens testimony was false, and Belin knew it. In sworn affidavits to the F.B.I. and Dallas Police on November 22, 1963 Givens said nothing about returning to the sixth floor, however he did say that he had last seen Oswald at about 11:50 AM in the first floor reading room of the Depository where he was reading a magazine. An internal memoranda dated February 25, 1964 co-authored by Belin and fellow counsel Joseph Ball cites Givens original statement and notes that it was supported by the statements of three other witnesses who also testified to seeing Oswald during the crucial pre-noon period on the first floor. Givens was interviewed again by December 2, 1963 by the Secret Service and again on March 18, 1964 by the FBI. On neither occasion did Givens say anything about returning to the sixth floor. However, there is a most revealing report of an interview by the FBI of Dallas Police Lt Jack Revill dated February 13, 1964 in which Revill "stated that

Givens had been previously handled by the Secret Service Bureau of the Dallas Police on a marijuana charge and he believes that Givens would change his testimony for money." Moreover Givens testimony before Attorney Belin is further discredited by the sworn affidavit of another Depository employe who told the FBI on November 23, 1963 that he had been on the sixth floor about noon on the day of the assassination and had seen no one there. Needless to say, the testimony elicited from Givens by Belin was given great prominence in the Warren Report while the affidavits and memos that unmasked it as perjury were not even published in the 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits (it required diligent perusal through the National Archives by a great many dedicated researchers to discover these items and many more that equally unmask the Warren Commission as a body out to "prove" a pre-determined verdict).

Belin chose the Meagher article as the forum to break his long silence. He replied in the same issue of the Texas Observer. His reply, however, ignored the documentation offered by Mrs. Meagher. Instead Belin attacked the "assassination sensation- alists," insisted that Lee Harvey Oswald had killed Kennedy and Officer Tippit, and assured one and all that David Belin was a man of integrity. The Texas Observer editorialized that it was "the slick, irrelevant reply of a lawyer who doesn't have much of a defense to present."

Among several people at The New York Times to whom Sylvia Meagher sent a copy of the exchange with Belin was Harrison E. Salisbury. The result? On November 22, 1971 the feature article on the Op-Ed page was a piece by one David W. Belin entitled: "THE WARREN COMMISSION WAS RIGHT" which re-affirmed that Oswald had slain JFK and Tippit, attacked the "assassination sensationalists" for duping the American people into believing otherwise, and insisted that David Belin was a man of integrity. Mrs. Meagher sent a second copy of the Texas Observer exchange to the Op-Ed page following the appearance of the Belin piece. She received back a form card regretting that they could not use her manuscript. She wrote to Harrison Salisbury noting that she had sent him (Salisbury) documented material on September 27, 1971 and again on November 22, 1971 demonstrating misrepresentation by the Warren Commission of the evidence elicited by its investigators and lawyers and which clearly implicated David Belin in serious impropriety and misfeasance. She noted that he (Salisbury) had neither questioned nor challenged the evidence she had made available to him and instead he had provided Belin with a forum to influence the readers of The New York Times. "Your 1964 paen to the Warren Report," wrote the usually moderate toned Mrs. Meagher, "may have been merely gullible or unprofessional; but your 1971 propoganda on behalf of a discredited Government paper puts you in the same class with Herr Goebbels. But he, at least, did not wrap himself in sanctimony or pretend to seek truth or serve justice."

Salisbury's reply read: "Do forgive the form card which went back to you. That was a product of our bureaucracy, I'm afraid. I didn't see your letter, alas, having been out of the office for a few days. "With every good wish, Harrison Salisbury."

Two years later what do we have but a book by David Belin published by Quadrangle, the publishing company of The New York Times with an introduction by Harrison Salisbury (who else?). And who does Belin give special thanks to but Harrison Salisbury "who was the catalyst in my undertaking to write this book." As for Salisbury's introduction, the man who once found the Warren Report so lacking (and Belin's book contains nothing to warrant recantation of that criticism) now says: "Let us be realistic: In the ten years since John Kennedy's death not one important clue or fact has been added to the mountainous store so painstakingly and, on the whole, carefully inquired into by the Warren Commission."

As for Priscilla McMillan, she herself was one of the more fascinating witnesses to appear before the Warren Commission, and it is hard to imagine a less likely choice to review a book about the Warren Report (I would venture a guess that John Leonard had nothing to do with her selection). Here are a few facts about this renowned literary critic:

- 1) As Moscow correspondent for The North American Newspaper Alliance one of her acquaintances was Svetlana Alliluyeva. She was later the translator of the latter's book following her CIA engineered defection to the United States.
- 2) She interviewed Oswald in Russia shortly after his defection at the request of John A. McVickar, the American Consul, who asked her to see and interview Oswald because he had shown a reluctance to speak to officials at the Embassy. "Who's Who In The CIA" identifies McVickar as a long-time CIA operative.
- 3) Although she filed no story on her interview with Oswald, she did give McVickar a full report. McVickar's memorandum on the McMillan/Oswald interview is a Warren Commission exhibit.
- 4) By her own testimony, Mrs. McMillan often interviewed defectors and was aware of them even when she did not talk with them.
- 5) In the 30's, according to her testimony before the Warren Commission, she had gathered tales about "fellow travelling or Communists" in the journalism trade "because she was interested in them."
- 6) According to her own testimony, she was highly suspect by the Russians who kept her on a one-month visa and only let her stay even then "because of the Spirit of Camp David."
- 7) In an affidavit the Warren Commission chose not to publish, Jack Lynch of the Security Office of the State Dept. identified Mrs. McMillan as an employe of the State Department.
- 8) Mrs. McMillan (then Priscilla Johnson) filed a story with the Boston Globe on November 22, 1963, practically before Oswald had been charged: "The Stuff off Which Fanatics are Made" dealing with the fanatical impression Oswald left with her during that Moscow interview in 1959.

The story appeared on November 24, 1963. On November 23, 1963 she was interviewed by the Christian Science Monitor, and she authored a piece which appeared in the April 1964 Harper's. All helped to build the public image of the hapless fanatic, and all are exhibits in Volume XX of Warren Commission Hearings and Exhibits.

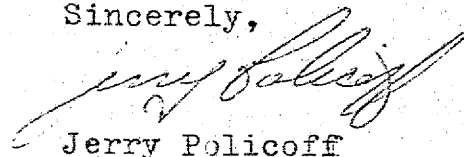
- 9) Shortly after her appearance before the Warren Commission Mrs. McMillan somehow gained entree to Marina Oswald and signed a contract with Harper & Row to write a book with the widow of the alleged assassin. The book is yet to be published. Incidentally, Marina was so closely sequestered during this period that her mother-in-law and closest friends were not permitted to see her.
- 10) McVickar's notes of his briefing by Mrs. McMillan following the Oswald interview convey anything but the impression that Oswald was a fanatic.
- 11) Priscilla McMillan had twice previously graced the Op-Ed page with Freudian pieces about Lee Harvey Oswald and public reaction to assassination and conspiracy (November 20, 1970: THE REAL LEE HARVEY OSWALD; and October 19, 1972: THE PRESIDENCY: TOO SOON TO LOVE AGAIN.)

As for David Belin's book, the definitive answer to the critics refers to only two, Mark Lane and Edward Epstein (of course there is no reference to Sylvia Meagher). It has no footnotes. It contains no reference to anything not contained in the 26 volumes, thus eliminating the same evidence from consideration which the Warren Commission saw unfit to lay before the public. Even in what he takes from the volumes, Belin edits, distorts, and omits. The book is not only dishonest, but it is incredibly incompetent.

I'm sorry for having laid such a lengthy case before you, but I felt that it was difficult to outline the circumstances effectively. If you decide that you would like a piece on the above I would like to collaborate with Ross Ralston a law student from Minneapolis who has done a great deal of research on Belin as a Warren Commission attorney.

Thank you for taking the time to read this lengthy letter.

Sincerely,



Jerry Policoff