

File copy

16 November 1970

Mr Paul Hoch  
1735 Highland Place #25  
Berkeley California 94709

Dear Paul,

Your letter of 29 October 1970 with various enclosures in an envelope postmarked Berkeley 30 October, by first-class mail, was delivered to me on Friday the 13th of November, in perfect condition. You may wish to report this incomprehensible delay to your post office.

You ask me to reconsider my doubts and denunciation of your draft paper in the light of your supplement of 23 October 1970. I have read it and noted the correction, modification, and retraction of a number of your initial assertions and arguments, in response to criticisms of evidently irresistible force from a number of us. Even so, you continue to claim a degree of legitimacy for both your melon experiments and for the WR thesis of a single shot from the rear that struck the back of the head, although your commentary is pockmarked with expressions of your uncertainty, lack of relevant information, personal opinion, and intuition.

However, in none of your letters to me or to others have you dealt with the fundamental ethical question I posed in my response to your draft paper—that is, what moral or intellectual basis there could be for any authentic critic to expend a major effort in an attempt to prove that the WR was correct in spite of itself. As you now put it, your experiments "tend to counter one of the more persuasive arguments against" the WR conclusion that Oswald was the lone assassin. This must be regarded against the background of your public reticence during five or more years as a critic of the WR, during which time you have not, to my knowledge, challenged the Commission's findings in published work or public discussion on radio or TV or any other medium. Now you have written and circulated a paper which was prepared with a view to ultimate publication, but it is not an attack on the tainted and discredited WR—it is an attempt to "counter one of the more persuasive arguments" against it. Try as I may, I simply cannot comprehend why you regard the original paper or the supplement as testimony to your commitment to justice or truth, or why you are surprised by the anger and disgust your paper provoked, not on my part alone but so far as I can judge from the considerable copy correspondence made available to me, in every critic to whom it was sent.

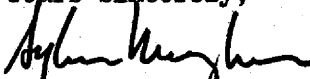
Much single-spaced typing has criss-crossed from one coast to the other and north to Ontario since you circulated your draft paper, at a regrettable if unavoidable cost in time and energy that might better have been expended in productive effort to advance the critics' case against the official findings. I do not intend to give you a paragraph-by-paragraph critique of your supplement, although I disagree with much of it. I note, however, that it still remains for you to acknowledge and correct the misleading quotation in your draft paper of Thomas Stamm's description of the backward, leftward thrust, published in full in Accessories but excerpted in your paper in a manner that reverses a central argument by truncation. This was called to your attention after your supplement was written, I realize, and in fairness to Stamm I think you should circulate copies of his letter to you to all those who received your supplement. I am

embarrassed that I overlooked this when I read your draft paper in August, when I skipped over material quoted from my own book on the assumption that I was already familiar with it and that your excerptation would preserve the sense of the original material.

I note also the statement on page 5 of your supplement that you feel that further experiments would not add much unless the conditions of the assassination were carefully duplicated. Add much, to what? Your melon experiments established nothing of value or relevance since they flagrantly failed to simulate the conditions of the assassination even when such fidelity was feasible and possible—in the matter of the weapon and the ammunition, to mention only one example.

In this and in my earlier letters I have tried to address myself to the salient issues of principle and of evidence which arise from your draft paper. No contest of eloquence is involved. In any case, I have every confidence in your ability to use the English language to defend your position in the written word, if you can defend it in purpose and substance.

Yours sincerely,

  
Sylvia Meagher  
302 West 12 Street  
New York, N.Y. 10014

cc: Stamm et al

Pernabei

Weisberg

Thompson

Wecht

Newcomb

Ferrick