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Personal

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New York, N.Y.

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Dear Mr. Liebeler,

The American Psychiatric Association was kind enough to provide me with a thermofax copy of your paper on Oswald, which I found of special interest and value. In particular, I was impressed by your account of how investigation corroborated Oswald's story that he had picketed the fleet at New Orleans and how this and related information led you to abandon your tentative "fantasy" theory.

As a close student of the case, I had been struck, before reading your important paper, by similar instances of Oswald's "lies" which suprisingly turned out to be truthful statements. I have in mind especially his claim that he had seen a rifle handled in the Depository two days before the assassination and the mistaken assumption of the chief counsel, Mr. Rankin, that Truly had denied this, only to correct himself later when a check of the record revealed that Truly had confirmed Oswald's story.

I had been struck also by the passage on page 183 of the Warren Report on Oswald's questions to James Jarman, Jr., during the morning before the assassination, which suggested that he was not aware before this dialogue with Jarman that the motorcade was to pass the Depository. When I read this page of the Warren Report early in October 1964, I was rather electrified by the implications of Oswald's questions (assuming that they were honest)—it seemed clear that he could not have planned to shoot the President as the motorcade went by the building, if he was not aware of that route, and that he must have returned to Irving on Thursday for reasons unrelated to the assassination. Consequently, he could not have brought the rifle back to Dallas with him nor committed the vile crime which took the life of President Kennedy.

Subsequently, in mulling this over, I had to acknowledge one other possibility: that Oswald genuinely was not aware that the route would bring the motorcade past the Depository, as his questions to Jarman suggested, but that he was aware of the Presidential visit and had planned to commit his loathsome deed from another point along the route.

I was disappointed to find no indication in the Report of the Commission's reasoning or its evaluation of Jarman's testimony on this conversation with Oswald. I was also surprised, when I thought about it, that the conversation was mentioned in relation to Oswald's statements under detention rather than under the discussion of advance publicity on the exact motorcade route, which demonstrated that Oswald could have learned the exact route as early as November 19, 1963. The implication appears to be that the Commission classified Oswald's remarks to Jarman as disingenuous, and therefore reported them in the section dealing with his untruthful statements to the police while under detention. Is that assumption correct?

When the Hearings and Exhibits were released, I searched them for further information on the incident but found only Jarman's testimony (3H 200-201), which did not shed much more light nor resolve my uneasiness. Therefore, I should be very grateful if you would be good enough to indicate how the Commission evaluated this matter and the general contours of its reasoning.

I continue to feel troubled about this conversation between Oswald and Jarman, I must confess, especially when it is viewed against Oswald's statements and behaviour after the shooting of the President, as reported by other witnesses. Several witnesses reported that as he was being dragged out of the Texas Theater Oswald shouted several times that he was not resisting arrest. Does that not suggest the possibility that he feared that he might be killed on grounds that he was attempting to escape the police? His reading habits suggest that his knowledge of cases in which suspects were shot on such grounds was a sophisticated one. Can you suggest any other reason for his declaiming that he was not resisting arrest? (7H 6; CE 2003 pages 81 and 91)

It is striking also that Oswald refused the opportunity to conceal his face from bystanders, as he was being taken into the police station, saying that he had done nothing to be ashamed of (7H 59). Most of all, I was given pause by Combest's testimony (12H 185) that Oswald, when he knew that he was dying, shook his head to indicate that he had nothing to tell the police, even as his life was running out.

Many people and perhaps the Commission itself have been troubled by Oswald's unwavering assertion that he was innocent of the assassination and the other murder, in the face of being confronted with stunning evidence which appeared to incriminate him. When only the Report was available, I discussed this with a psychiatrist with whom I am acquainted, only to be told, with an air of authority, that he would have confessed. I am not aware of any scientific foundation for such a judgment; but of course psychiatry is an art, not a science, I believe.

Now I find from the Hearings that Oswald, in effect, maintained his innocence even when he was moribund---that is one possible interpretation of Combest's testimony, as you perhaps will agree.

Since, according to your APA paper, you have particular competence in the area of Oswald's personality, motivation, and psychiatric status, I am taking the liberty of requesting your comments on these various points and, if possible, an indication of how these matters were evaluated by the Warren Commission in formulating its conclusions. Perhaps it is unnecessary but I should make it clear that my request is not inspired by idle curiosity but for a serious purpose---a comparative study which I am in course of preparing between the Warren Report, on the one hand, and the corresponding raw material in the Hearings and Exhibits. I am reluctant to make inferences which may prove unjustified in the light of further information on the process of the Commission's reasoning and the nature of its appraisal of facts and circumstances which, on the basis of the circumscribed information presently available to me, raise some serious problems.

I assure you that I will be very grateful indeed for any clarifications which you may be willing to provide.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Neagher