

10 July 1968

Mr. Clay Shaw
1313 Dauphine Street
New Orleans

Dear Mr. Shaw,

I greatly appreciate your letter of 8 July 1968 and the trouble you took to elaborate your views. If, as you say, your amended pleadings (I have not seen the text but only a cursory press report) would have the effect of compelling the Attorney General to defend the Warren Report in open court, then I am indeed cheered and gratified. But I would hope that the Attorney General would be required to defend the Report against authentic, responsible, documented criticism and not merely against the transparently specious, inaccurate, and indiscriminate charges by the New Orleans District Attorney.

You argue that the Warren Report is an official government document and that a jury should be allowed to decide whether it or Garrison's case is factual and true. I do not accept the premise that if Garrison's case is contrived and false—as I am convinced that it is—then the Warren Report is correct and honest. Both cases can and do co-exist in the sordid realm of non-truth and cynical infidelity to plain fact, although I do not equate the clumsiness of Garrison's gambit with the subtlety and sophistication of the Warren Commission's product. Ironically, the pro-Garrison critics of the Warren Report incline to argue that since the Report is fraudulent, Garrison's "investigation" and "findings" must therefore be legitimate. Surely it is not an instance of "either/or."

I am pleased to learn that you have read Accessories After The Fact and I am grateful for your complimentary remarks about the book. I hope that you have also read Inquest by Ed Epstein, The Oswald Affair by Leo Sauvage, and Six Seconds in Dallas by J.D. Thompson. It seems to me indisputable that these works, individually or in the aggregate, throw the gravest doubt on the central conclusions of the Warren Report (indeed, destroy them), and raise serious questions about the probity of certain Commission members and lawyers—to say nothing of the Dallas Police (I have documented outright perjury by certain officers on pages 85-89 of Accessories, and a Commission lawyer himself accused two other officers of perjury) and the FBI (which engaged in intimidation of witnesses and misreporting of their statements, among other practices), on whose investigatory services the Commission relied. You may not believe that the Commission committed deliberate fraud but since you do concede blind spots, prejudices, and sins of omission and commission, then it seems to me that you must also concede the possibility that those deficiencies led to erroneous and insupportable findings. As for the eminence and distinguished reputations of the men who comprised the Commission—I can only repeat what I suggested in my book: that the evidence cannot be judged in terms of the reputations of the authors of the Warren Report but that, on the contrary, that the authors of the Report must be judged in the light of the evidence. In short, explicit misrepresentation and manipulation of testimony and documents cannot be dismissed because, on a philosophical or hypothetical level, those responsible were considered incapable of doing what they did.

Lee Harvey Oswald's psychological structure and biographical history are subject to a variety of interpretations and evaluations, of differing degrees of subjectivity, influenced by or predicated on the crimes of which he has been accused. His "portrait" changed radically, as you may have noted, from one day to the next--the intervening event of his execution having caused the immediate reversal of pronouncements about his mental stability and the like. But Oswald's personality and orientation become irrelevant if, as the critics have demonstrated, he did not have the motive, the means, or the opportunity to commit the assassination. The benefit of any doubt in this respect inalienably belongs to Oswald, not to the venerable Chairman of the Warren Commission or his associates and assistants.

You, more than any man in this country, know that it is possible for a wholly innocent man to be accused by high officials of conspiracy to murder the President. Perhaps in time and with tranquillity, you will come to agree that Oswald, too, was falsely accused. In closing, I should like to reiterate my confidence in your complete exoneration and my good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher
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