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NEW BRUNSWICK • N. J. 08903 • 201 CHARTER 7-1766

October 4, 1965

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

Dear Miss Meagher:

Your letter of September 29 is the most interesting thing on my desk at the moment so I am answering it with a really culpable promptness since there are plenty of other letters of much older vintage right in the same place.

I am not at all surprised to hear that you are bemused as a result of your work on the Warren hearings and exhibits. As a matter of fact, I have found my own memory so unreliable and my own stories so subject to change and reshaping over the years, that I don't even believe myself when I am certifying to anything. Any law school tries to hammer this point home to first year students and many and many a time you must have listened with astonishment to some friend or relative remembering an event which you remember in quite a different way. Very often the discrepancies are more factual than, so to speak, discrepancies of style or mode or quality. Hardly anybody knows how to observe accurately what is right in front of them--see Kipling's Kim for this. Then what happens is that an assassination of so vast a sort as Kennedy's immediately takes on a mythical quality. The whole problem of good and evil becomes confused with conspiracy and the American mind and imagination is particularly prone to believe in conspiracies and conjure them up.


A nation which believes in competitive business does not describe communism as a competitive threat but instead as a conspiracy. Somebody shot Kennedy. From his death there certainly seems not to have proceeded any foreign advantage to other nations and domestically very little advantage to anyone with the possible exception of the present President whom I do not think was responsible for the act. The very enormity of the crime, however emotional, demands a big, complicated solution. A little narrow, warped Lee Harvey Oswald, if it was Oswald, somewhere living meanly in back streets, hating himself and projecting the hatred on the world outside himself, picking on the President as a symbol of all that was wrong within himself, and making with ~~xxx~~ malicious and petty shrewdness the moves of an assassin. This isn't big enough somehow to satisfy. In Lincoln's day the public demanded a vast conspiracy to account for Booth and it pretty well got that. But what was true about it was that it was a bunch of little, neurotic, warped, bitter, beaten people, and stupid

October 4, 1965

subnormal people who just up and killed the President of the United States because it was the biggest thing in sight to knock over. There hasn't been an assassination in American history of any substance or grandeur about it, or one which was the calculated work of a foreign enemy.

Well, I kind of half envy you the time to dig deeply into the whole case. We are just now publishing a book on whether Shakespeare did or did not write the Two Noble Kinsmen and it will probably have something of a sale because Shakespeare wrote the best plays that have ever been written. Of these the Two Noble Kindsem certainly is not one but the connection is there and so the possibility becomes important whereas if Shakespeare had not written any good plays, if it were a question of some Robin Goodfellow or other, there would be no book.

Cordially,



William Sloane

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