



# P R E N T I C E H A L L

Rec'd  
1/18/87

## TRADE DIVISION

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January 14, 1987

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Dear Jim,

I have received Sylvia Meagher's assessment - and a later addition.

She was very favorable the first time through, and I found myself agreeing with her evaluations, both positive and negative. The strong point of the book is chapter thirteen, though I think the extensions to the Bobby Kennedy and George Wallace cases require more than speculation (what, by the way, do you do with the attempts on Ford and Reagan?). I agree with her that the chapters on Clay Shaw and David Ferrie are the weakest, add nothing to your earlier book, and still are not tied into the assassination itself.

But that leaves the book with two insuperable problems that make any attempt at rewriting useless for our purposes.

First: One of the two most attractive new ingredients in the proposal you sent to me initially (and these were my main reasons for my enthusiasm), was the promise that for the first time we would be able to specify an actual CIA hand in and during the assassination itself: the cut-out agent, Fred Lee Crisman. But as you discovered yourself after your tried an additional chapter and an appendix, the Crisman material was much too flimsy (at this point at least) to permit inclusion in the book. The problem that leaves us is the hole now in the center of the argument: how was it done, and who specifically did it? Without the "smoking gun," I do not think anybody who doesn't now believe in CIA coordination and involvement will be persuaded by your text. The well-written chapter on the pretorian guard then appears to be just speculation developed from the same facts that have long been available.

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Second: The other major new piece of evidence that excited me in the manuscript was the role of the brothers Cabell and the alleged change of parade route. But here, now we have even a bigger problem than above. In her original assessment, Meagher points to the ambiguity of the evidence. You are certainly correct about the map printed in the Dallas Morning News showing an incorrect route. But Meagher points out that both Dallas papers three days earlier printed the correct route. That alone would have been enough for me to insist on further information: which route was really intended? who made the decision? was the mayor Cabell involved and at what point? (as opposed to your hypothetical reconstruction of his last-minute intervention).

But the really startling information Meagher comes up with -- (see her note of December 27) is that the information from Forest Sorrels before the Warren Commission is just the reverse of what you imputed. It is absolutely clear (and I include the complete version of Sorrels' testimony), that Sorrels asserted that the parade had always intended to follow the route up Main to Houston and onto Elm. When he says, in the quote you extracted, that Main Street is the historical route for every parade, he is only explaining why the parade did not go onto the Central Expressway as opposed to the route it actually took.

So with Sorrels now unambiguously testifying that there had been no change in the parade route, and that there was nothing unusual in this route, we are left only with the map -- which is now the inconsistent piece of information.

As it stands then, we have the fascinating fact of the two Cabells, with nothing directly to conclude from it. The change of parade route is at best an unproven hypothesis and at least guilty until proven innocent. We have no information about CIA involvement that goes any further than -- and in fact not as far as -- Summers in CONSPIRACY or Hurt in REASONABLE DOUBT.

As Meagher points out, and was obvious even to me, the evidence you present is really to be found in all the well-known books on the conspiracy. (Evidence in this category includes all the witnesses who reported shots from the knoll; the other rifles observed in the Depository; the various pickups in the Rambler from the Depository after the shooting; the impossibility of Oswald shooting Tippitt; the double Oswald in Mexico and elsewhere).

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My sad conclusion, then, is that what we now have is polemics grappling for confirmation, and a manuscript that is unpublishable. I am deeply upset about this since it is a book that I very much wanted to publish, and one that I hoped would be a major contribution to American political history, so I am sorry to end our publishing relationship this way.

Under the terms of our contract, you have one year to resell the manuscript elsewhere (and, if you are interested, I can supply you with my editorial comments through the manuscript), and repay Prentice Hall the \$10,000 advance, though at the end of the one year the \$10,000 is due in any case.

Very truly yours,

  
Philip M. Pochoda

PMP/kk

enclosures

cc: Peter Miller