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Editor
The New York Review of Books
250 West 57th Street
New York, New York 10019

Subject: "The Second Oswald: A New Theory of Kennedy's
Assassination", by Richard Popkin, The New York
Review of Books, 7-28-66

Dear Editor:

The critical reviews of the Warren Commission's Report further
the freedoms of inquiry and dissent.

Dr. Popkin, in his brilliant review of 7-28 and in his comments
of 10-6 questioned the effectiveness of the police.

These questioning attitudes toward "law enforcement" recall
some of the bizarre and ironic aspects of the police investigation
of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln of April 14, 1865.
A Washington, D. C. policeman named John F. Parker, assigned as body-
guard on that fateful night, absented himself at the crucial time.
The following quotes are from The Day Lincoln Was Shot by Jim Bishop,
Harper and Brothers, 1955, \$4.95, 301 pages.

"Both guards, John Parker and Joseph Sheldon, had been notified
that they were being drafted, and both had asked Mrs. Lincoln for the
note" on April 4 to exempt them from being drafted into the Army.
(page 47).

Parker was 3 hours late. "This had happened before, and John
Parker's shiftlessness as a member of the Washington city police force
was well known. No one seemed to know who had selected him as a
personal bodyguard for the President. His record, as Crook knew, was

bad, but that too seemed beyond the point right now". (page 181).

"Later, he was charged with insulting a woman who had asked for police protection". (page 182).

"He was thirty - four, sandy - haired, married, father of three small children". (page 183).

"In April 1863, he was charged with being drunk and disorderly in a house of prostitution where he had appeared as a customer". (page 183).

"This is the man who drew the 4 P. M. to midnight shift as personal guard to the President on April 14, 1865. There was nothing sinister in the assignment". (page 183).

"Both the President and his wife took for granted that the character and courage of the men sent to them were beyond question". (page 184).

"Just before nine o'clock" Parker left with Burns and Forbes for ale.

Parker and John Wilkes Booth were at the same bar at the same time that night! (page 234).

Lincoln was assassinated at 10:15 P. M. on April 14, 1865.

"The Major had left the theater, tried to locate the guard John F. Parker". (page 235).

"At one of the police precincts, the man nobody missed, showed up. John F. Parker, unseen since 10 o'clock last night, walked into the station with his contribution to justice. He had a prostitute by the arm and he told the sergeant of her crimes. She was Lizzie Williams. The sergeant looked her over. She was scared and drunk. He shrugged and refused to book her. She was ordered to get out of town.

Parker did not offer to tell the sergeant where he had been all

night, and the sergeant did not ask. The policeman did not ask the condition of the President, nor did he offer to file a report about the assassination. The sergeant advised him to go home and to get some sleep. Parker left. He remained a policeman in good standing for three more years. He was not tried and no charges were filed against him". (page 291).

One puzzling aspect that deserves closer attention is the differing moral evaluations of the assassination.

The Warren Commission considered it a crime. "The assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy on November 22, 1963, was a cruel and shocking act of violence directed against a man, a family, a nation, and against all mankind". (Summary and Conclusion, Chapter 1, Warren Commission Report, Sept. 24, 1964).

The Executive Branch thought differently. In the 170 page report Crime in the United States, Uniform Crime Report - 1963, J. Edgar Hoover, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Dept. of Justice, July 20, 1964, no mention is made, even though a separate page reports on the death of policemen.

This variance in moral and legal evaluation seems to stem from President Lyndon Johnson whose attitudes of the value of human life vary. In early 1965, when requesting more support for his war campaign in Viet - Nam, Johnson said: "For most of history, men have hated and killed one another. But we dream of an end of war and we will try to make it so. What we have done is destroy bridges that don't bleed and radar stations and munitions dumps. We haven't killed people".

("President Speaks for Himself", by Drew Pearson, Los Angeles Times, 9-12-65).

After gaining support, Johnson boasted: "Since I came in, we killed 26,000 of 'em". ("Who Is Lyndon Johnson?", by Lewis Lapham, The Saturday Evening Post, 9-11-65).

This critical approach by Popkin, Epstein, Weisberg, etc. is a fine antidote to Johnson's dream for a nation of sheep. It was articulated by him on 2-5-65: "I would like to see American students develop as much fanaticism about the U. S. political system as young Nazis did about their system during the war".

Very truly yours,

J. Sherman
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