

Hyattstown, Md. 20734 September 1, 1966

Miss Sarah Unwin, Assistant to the Editor
The Evening Standard
47 Shoe Lane, London E.C. 4, England,

Dear Miss Unwin,

I was about to recall to you our unanswered previous correspondence, for I've heard nothing from you or Mr. Jeremy Campbell since you said the matter had been referred to him, when I received from my agent, Mr. Gordon Harbord, 53 St. Martin's Lane, London W.C. 2 a copy of the truly informative article by Mr. Peter Fairley, from your August 26 edition.

Presuming the accuracy of the information contained in this article, I am taking the time from my continuing writing, for which there is not enough time, for a few comments that may interest your editor.

First of all, the entire matter of the "new" information of the autopsy papers is new only in the manner in which it has become public. I made it available in my article, to be a chapter in the book I am now working on, to Viking Press in a gesture of friendliness and in confidence, to put them in a position to defend themselves against attack. Mr. Harbord has a copy of this article and can show you when he got it, this placing the approximate time of its completion. I now find this material being broadcast in the trade in New York, where it appears also to have been included in the package Viking sold Bentam, whose paperback edition if INQUEST is reportedly due in two weeks. A rather short life for a hardbacked book, whose publication date was June 29, and an unusual return of help.

The entire matter of the withheld autopsy photographs and X-rays is not new and is without the significance currently attributed to it. Even if those films are not released and there is any reason to trust them after this long delay, and they show the wounds in approximately the places alleged, the Report is still entirely false, as the most casual examination of the Commission's own evidence in WHITEHASH proves. It is not the Johnny-Come-Lately's with wealth behind them who first called this to public attention or who did so in

private communications. My correspondence is not yet public, may never be, and certainly will not be until I consider the time appropriate. I do not regard either the assassination of a president or its subsequent investigation as matters to be handled as the sale of autos or depilatories. I have not ^{done} so, I shall not do so, and I believe in the end I shall not suffer.

Your quotations of Mr. Richard Popkin and his wife are both a great public and literary service and, on a personal level, provide me with much pleasure. So Mr. Popkin told Mr. Fairly "today", meaning August 26, 1966, that the evidence coming from my more recent work "lends strong weight to the idea that there were TWO assassins." The not doubt not unintended import is that this is a sudden revelation bestowed upon a startled and unbelieving world by Mr. Popkin and is not something he read in WHITEWASH, completed February 1965, published that summer end, if you'll excuse the expression, "reviewed" by Mr. Popkin in the New York Review of Books dated July 28. Here you will find a remarkable parallel between his title, "The Second Oswald" and the content of his review and my chapter "The False Oswald", which is unmentioned in the "review" that presents its essential information as the fruit of Mr. Popkin's own great labor. The concept of a second assassin did not originate with Mr. Popkin, did not with me, but certainly in those few books on the work of the Commission, of which mine alone is restricted entirely to its official information, it was first and still most thoroughly presented in mine.

The blurbing of the "review" identifies Mr. Popkin as an expert in skepticism. Perhaps this accounts for his repetition of the now famous Trevor-Roper gaffe, a thing I never thought would again appear in the British press ^{and} but I was quite surprised to find in a TV show I was on in New York yesterday. I presume it is a reflection of his own deep deliving, as I recall his thrice-reading of the 10,000,000 words of the testimony and exhibits. He told Mr. Fairley, "The doctor who performed the autopsy said he burned his preliminary notes of it on November 24, 1963". The eminent Regius Professor of History, who more recently in his intense

personal pursuit of the chairman of the former Commission has seen fit to
to misrepresent fact to justify his chase (as I documented in personal correspon-
dence with the U.S. publisher of his introduction to the Lane book), said exactly
this two years ago and retracted it, saying his crow-consumption could be public.
The certification of this destruction, which appears on page 187 of WHITEWASH and
required none of Mr. Popkin's assistance in becoming public, says just that. But
in his testimony the doctor swore this meant not his notes of the autopsy but
what may be even worse, the first draft of it! This you will find on Page 183
of my book. Excerpts of the papers that by now perhaps many others are wishing
he had also burned appear in facsimile on page 198. You may find some interest in
the substantive changes, including the elimination of the medical opinion in
Dallas that the President was, in fact, shot from the front. This continued to be
reflected in the autopsy draft for two days. It was eliminated in the typing,
not even by the doctor, as a comparison of what I reproduce from the holograph
with the fourth paragraph of the typed version will show you.

In justice to the Commission, it must be acknowledged, even if Mr. Popkin
is reluctant to do so, that it did "mention a wound lower down in the President's
back". The Report acknowledges the testimony of Clint Hill, ^(WHITEWASH #, p. 185) the Secret Service
agent, that he saw a bullet strike four inches below the President's collar. The
lack of precision in speaking and writing that is unfortunately characteristic
of those who are following me and are reluctant to acknowledge the blazing of
the trail is apparent. The Report just refused to credit Hill. But it did "mention"
his location of this wound.

No doubt shall forever be indebted for this immortal line: "If a bullet
did strike him in that manner, then in my opinion it could not have come from
Oswald's rifle and suggests that a second assassin fired." The exaltation I
acknowledge is now the due of this eminent professor of philosophy, specializing
in skepticism, ^{what} has nothing to do with ^{as} less respectful commentaries might call
such unpleasant things as (perish the thought!) plagiarism. I must acknowledge,
however, a number of communications along this line and my own participation

in broadcast debates where the Commission's defender expressed much the same thought. No doubt if you read this exercise in selective skepticism which should certainly earn Mr. Popkin an additional degree, as it appears the end of July 1966, in comparison with WHITWASH, written a year and a half earlier, you will form your own conclusions.

Fortunately, as a child, you without doubt learned not to hold your breath. There should therefore be no hazard in your waiting until October, when Mr. Popkin will present the "full details of his finding" in a work that may well shake the literary world, "The Second Oswald". Your statement that it is being "published by the New York Review of Books" will make sense to many of us of something that was earlier not as comprehensible.

I am father distressed that you find this "will be the third major work by independent investigators criticizing the official explanation"; not because you make no reference to WHITWASH, and not because of what has appeared there is nothing of importance that was not already public in it, and not because all of them together do not tell more than an appreciable fraction of what it does, and not because all of them suffer major doctrinal flaws as well as departures from strict accuracy. No, you fail to mention another work by a serious and respected writer issued by a major publisher, "The Oswald Affair", by Leo Sauvage whose personal ethics I can give the highest and the entirely unstinting endorsement of a man who has sincere and profound respect for them.

Your reference to Mark Lane's appearance on NBC apparently alludes to what I have heard British viewers found quite shocking, a retrocast of his appearance on NBC. If that is the same one I heard in the office of a British correspondent in Washington, they should indeed have been shocked, for it is entirely impossible that the witness quoted saw a Secret Service man stand up in the President's own car and brandish a submachine gun. There is, fortunately, an entirely adequate photographic record to which you can refer.

But perhaps most of all I am indebted to you for your quotation of Mrs. Popkin. She comes through as a proper and loyal, a dutiful and loving wife. She said, "His work in philosophy is directed at uncovering influences that have been overlooked." I could certainly benefit from such an inquiry!

Perhaps she was intending to put the writing of her husband in perspective, if not his "philosophy", when she said "He has studied a lot of murder cases and is a keen reader of detective novels." I shall certainly be looking forward to the further benefit of this education and avocation.

Most of all, however, I must acknowledge my gratitude for her reflection of his (^{quite} quite consistently previously unexpressed) gratitude for my own work:

"His luckiest break came was to get hold of the photostat copy of the FBI agents' report." If you, also, would consider this a stroke of rare fortune, I'll be delighted to send you a copy." He should not alone ~~hug~~ hug himself in ecstasy. There is enough to go around.

Because I have learned to ponder deeply the trenchant words of the Popkins, gifted as they are, I also suggest that if Mrs. Popkin was referring to the first report of the FBI to the Commission, and you'd like to see what the important parts look like, be my guest. Look at page 195 of WHITEWASH. And if you want to know what it really means (for it reveals no new medical knowledge, as my chapter, "The Doctors and the Autopsy" will show you), read the preceding three pages. Like all the others, the Popkins find it not at all unusual that the FBI should set the doctrine and inform the Commission fully without reference to either the wound in the front of the President's neck or the shot that missed. I do not expect to shock you in saying I find in this other significance.

It is with genuine and heartfelt sincerity and gratitude that I thank you for Mr. Fairley's brilliant work and express the hope that it will continue and that you will favor me with further such informative articles. I am, indeed, in your debt, if not in that of others.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg