

NEW ADDRESS: Rt. 7, Frederick, Md. 21701:::301/473-6186

12/6/67

Mr. Conor Cruise O'Brien
Professor of Humanities
New York University
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. O'Brien,

There is no reasonable thing you could say about the importance, significance, dedication, or superior quality of Sylvia Meagher's book that would exaggerate, for it is, without doubt, a fine work, worthy of commendatory reviews and a better history than it has had. It is a tragedy, for her and for the rest of us, that it could not achieve publication (through no fault of hers or its) when it was first written. I am more familiar than even she with that problem, having lived with it both longer and more repeatedly. Sylvia has labored long, hard, effectively and conscientiously. I wish she could get the reward I believe she has earned, for she has more than earned what she is likely to reap today.

It is not with the kind things you say about Sylvia that I disagree and for which I write you, but for your factual error in pretending a knowledge of the field and history of books in the field that you do not have and making sweeping and quite wrong statements based on this ignorance.

Your first paragraph of the review in *The Minority of One* is a gross inaccuracy. Not one of the things you say of Lane's book is true. The first two books were by me (completed 2/15/65 and *Sylvan Fox*, published 9/15/65. Publication date of my *WHITE WASH: THE REPORT ON THE WARREN REPORT*, was August 17, 1965. I think that if you read it you will find that remarkably little has been added to it by the others working and writing in the field, save for emphasis on one point or another and a disconcerting amount of inaccuracy and irresponsibility in some respects. Lane was the inheritor of what had been done before him and the beneficiary of a publisher who combined the right mixture of unscrupulousness and aggressiveness, part of which was a vast and eminently successful public-relations and advertising campaign. I think you would put Lane in perspective and give him the greater credit that is his due if you regarded him as the one who before the Warren Report raised his voice in opposition to the frameup then being completed, the one lawyer, may I say, who did this. The remainder of the contribution is by the publisher, for there is little if anything that the content of his book contributed.

But the book that really opened the field and the public appearances and debates that opened the media were mine. Without a publisher, for I had to do it myself when I found more than 100 publishers in one way or another afraid, it outsold Epsteins at the time he was getting the raves from those intellectuals who sought a way out of the embarrassment of their abdications. His books, which has little to do with evidence and that unfortunately too often entirely inaccurately (the best thing in his book is Sylvia's, his references), by its basic agreement with the Commission's basic conclusion, of Oswald's guilt (he never examined it and has since been a Commission apologist), provided what these learned finks wanted.

Your friendliness to Sylvia, which, I repeat, is more than warranted, also

leads you to exaggeration and error. For example, "...she has acquired a familiarity with the basic data which I believe to be unrivalled..." This might be true of the printed data of the Commission, but it is not of the field or the rest of the Commission's data, in the 300 cubic feet of its files. Here you freeze yourself in the mold of the past, probably through lack of knowledge of the field. The data the Commission suppressed is enormous-and vital -more devastating than what it could not avoid publishing. The fact is that since my first book (which I think of its kind and subject Sylvia's alone is as good as or better than her own opinion some time ago favored mine and I have not yet been able to read hers), I have published three from this suppressed data, completed the fourth and have completed the fifth and sixth's research and commenced the writing. My work, to date, is about a million words in length. While this is no measure of its quality, I invited you to form your own opinion of its content.

Its character is such as to invalidate such comment in your review as this parenthetical expression "(where other commentators and the Commission itself rely much more heavily on summaries, citing references only)". I doubt if all the others together quote as extensively as I.

For the past several years, it seems to have been my lot to bear the curse of the first and with it the enmity of protagonists, the envy of colleagues (this is not true of Sylvia, who has been generous), and the fear and vindictiveness of publishers, who I proved to be so wrong and so cowardly (a surprising number have been honest enough to confess this personally). I have learned to bear this, not happily, but fairly quietly.

I have also learned to tolerate that special torment of Mr. Arnoni's, reflected in several quite libelous writings, about which, in deference to his past and his objectives, I have also been silent. On this subject he has been quite irrational. However, it is unfortunate, although I am confident that he would not dictate to you and that you would not accept dictation, that a review that is so hyperbolic, appears in his publication.

The great tragedy of Sylvia's book is that it appears when it is repetitious, for she wrote it when it was not. It none the less is an important and valuable addition, and I commend you for your praise of it.

What I deeply regret is that you, ^{and} so many others, had to be so ~~grossly~~ unfair to me and to base this discrimination on ~~ignorance and~~ ~~your~~ ~~unfortunate~~ ~~consequence~~.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg