

'Ordinary Frenchman' Reacts to Warren Report as Expected

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The American correspondents in Europe report the inevitable.

This is that the well-known man in the street—and, above all, that perfect exemplar of "Gallic logic" who is the Frenchman in the bistro—will never accept the report of the Warren Commission on the assassination of President Kennedy.

The Warren Commission, made up of some of the most distinguished and honorable men in the United States, finds after 10 months of the most scrupulous taking of testimony that a man named Lee Oswald murdered President Kennedy, as had been perfectly obvious all along.

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"European opinion," however—and the reference here is, mostly, to the opinion of an eternally silly and eternally offensive and eternally braying little jackass called "the ordinary Frenchman"—still prefers to believe that it was some shadowy conspiracy. Most of all, it had to be a conspiracy among "the right-wing elements of Dallas."

All this, of course, denies the most elementary of common sense. Not least, it rejects the undeniable and 10-times-demonstrated truth that Oswald was a left-winger and not a right-winger. Not least, it rejects the manifest truth that the city of Dallas is no more subject to this absurd collective indictment than was, say, the city of Paris for the manifest corrupt incompetence of a so-called leadership of wartime France which chose to keep British soldiers all alone before the Nazi hordes.

But "the ordinary Frenchman," being quoted

here is, of course, not in fact the ordinary Frenchman at all. He forms an ugly little hissing minority—too weak to be honest hoodlums, too puerile to be plain blackguards—which all over continental Europe and notably in France has so long slandered a United States which saved a France that had



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neither the will nor the guts even to try to save itself from the Germans.

This two-bit cynicism, this high school-grade skepticism toward the Warren Commission, should surprise no one here. It is only the latest manifestation of a tireless avocation, pursued with a sweaty fury through the years, to hate the benefactor in direct ratio to his generosity to the hater.

On a trip to Paris a few months ago, this columnist found responsible Americans there in deep anxiety about "public reaction" to the Kennedy assassination. The foulest innuendos were being peddled by this "ordinary Frenchman," who is not in fact ordinary at all. There were sadder private consultations among Americans as to how we should "combat" this nasty bilge.

It apparently never had occurred to the winners

that a point comes when the only way to deal with such venomous rubbish is to kick it out of the way, as one puts the toe of his shoe to unpleasant objects on a soiled sidewalk.

For nothing will ever convince that "ordinary Frenchman" that honor does usually dwell in American public affairs—as it does, for illustration, in British public affairs. His mind lusts for "conspiracies," the dirtier the better, because if he can imagine them into existence, he can somehow justify his sick animus toward bigger-minded people and bigger-minded countries.

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I myself saw some of these "ordinary Frenchmen" during the war—happily only a few against the many Frenchmen fighting bravely in the underground for their country—and a splendid lot they were. Their combat distinction lay in such gallant actions as shaving the heads of be-draggled and helpless tarts—after Allied fighting men had cleared their towns and villages of German troops—"for collaborating with the Boche."

It is important, most of all, to realize that while this sort of "ordinary Frenchman" had his counterpart elsewhere in Europe, he is as small in his aggregate number as he is in his attitudes.

It is important not to suppose that he represents responsible French or irresponsible general European opinion—even though no less a man than Charles de Gaulle of France has to his lasting shame demagogically played up, to some extent, this "ordinary Frenchman."