

Examining the Warren Report

Sir,—Professor Trevor-Roper tried his own hand at assassination—the character assassination of the Warren Commission. Such harsh words are justified because what he calls the “central facts” of his case are really bricks of straw. There are weaknesses in the Commission Report, but Trevor-Roper’s accusations based on “suppression and destruction” of vital evidence do not stand up to more judicious scrutiny. Those formerly connected with the Warren Commission have refused to comment on his attack because they do not consider it a scholarly analysis worthy of an official reply.

His claim that the bag in which Oswald carried the rifle was destroyed and replaced by a replica was effectively dealt with last Sunday by John Sparrow. It is still in existence. Similarly the claim that “the doctor was persuaded to adjust his medical report” is incorrect, as Mr Sparrow shows by referring to the Warren Report.

He says that “it cannot possibly be true” that the Dallas police kept no record of Oswald’s interrogation and such records are made “in the most trivial cases automatically.”

According to experts familiar with police practices in this country such interviews are rarely recorded except from the time the suspect makes an incriminating admission or confession. Oswald never confessed anything. As to the F.B.I., their routine instruction is for the agent to destroy his original notes after he has written his report. One reason for this is a Supreme Court decision on the basis of which defence counsel can claim access to these original notes. These procedures may not be the best, but they are apparently standard practice here.

The reason for saying that the

U.S. Press replies

Weeks before [the Report] came out, we had put together a list of all the questions raised by those who suspected the original conclusions. There were 100-odd questions; and when the report came out we went to look for the answers. . . .

. . . I don’t believe that Mr Roper has dedicated nearly as much time to reading the report as American newsmen.

—New York Times assistant managing editor, Harrison E. Salisbury.

The truth is this tragic event has been more thoroughly investigated than any assassination in history, not only by the commission, but by the Press as well.

—Associated Press general manager, Wes Gallagher.

Quoted in “Newsweek’s” review of Professor Trevor-Roper’s article.

Brennan report was “most probably” the basis for the police description of Oswald radioed was an unnecessary caution by the drafters. Those familiar with drafting the Report say that his report was, in fact, the only basis. Trevor-Roper is wrong in saying that “any police description leading to an attempted arrest must have been based on some definite evidence.” Tippit was not trying to make an arrest; he was making a routine inquiry that could be made with any citizen. In Oswald’s case it would have led to arrest because he carried a gun.

It is correct that the three

policemen did not report Ruby’s admission from where he had entered the police building several days. The Dallas police do not deserve to be defended, but Ruby may have confessed that he entered by the main ramp only later because he did not want to implicate the police whom he was well in with; and the three policemen may have hesitated to give the same information because they did not want to implicate themselves. But this evidence is not a “central fact” that proves anything vital.

It is, of course, true that no one actually saw Oswald carrying the gun into the body depository or witnessed the shooting. But the carefully compiled evidence beginning with the purchase of the gun to the evidence accumulated after the shooting leaves Oswald as the only possible assassin. The doubts have arisen from the bungling by the Dallas police and some of the missing evidence that is impossible to unearth.

Henry Brandon

Washington

Warned?

Sir,—Did the police know in advance of a threat to the President’s life from Oswald himself? If so, it is understandable that a general call should be put out within minutes giving a description, however vague. Moreover, on this hypothesis, the disappearance of a transcript of Oswald’s cross-examination is understandable—practically the only remark which could make that record embarrassing to the police would be the words: “I told you I would do it.”

Professor Trevor-Roper makes the mistake of assuming that because the Dallas police might have needed to suppress evidence, that that evidence is of their complicity in murder; it need not be so.

In addition to the doubts raised by Professor Trevor-Roper, one might ask whether Oswald, wanting to ensure that he killed the President, and no doubt wishing to escape afterwards, would have chosen a room so high up in the building, which was bound to make the actual shooting more difficult, and to complicate his escape.

J M Gilchrist

Fleetwood, Lancs

No powder burns

Sir,—“Oswald”—according to your correspondent George V. Burkholder—“had powder burns on his cheek and his hair and fingerprints were found on the gun.” In fact, as the Warren Report fully confirms, there were no powder burns on Oswald’s cheek; and neither his hair nor his fingerprints were found on the rifle.

Kenneth Tynan

London W1

PROFESSOR TREVOR-ROPER will be replying next week to these and other comments upon his criticisms of the Warren Commission’s Report.

A hearing for Oswald

From the **Lord RUSSELL**
 Sir.—THE SUNDAY TIMES is to be congratulated for being the first major British or American newspaper to allow a fair hearing to the overwhelming case against the Warren Report and the official version of the assassination of President Kennedy. In providing Professor Trevor-Roper an opportunity to publish his wholly admirable article, THE SUNDAY TIMES has allowed the wider public to come into contact for the first time with the evidence we have been striving to make known, heretofore against overwhelming odds.

Not one of the basic conclusions of the Warren Commission Report can be sustained, and in all the important areas the actual testimony is at complete variance with the Commission's summary of it in its Report. Key witnesses to the direction of the shots and the murder of Tippit were not allowed to testify. Professor Trevor-Roper deals conclusively with the identification of Oswald by Brennan, the supposed basis for the circulation of Oswald's description in connection with the murder of Tippit. What is even more remarkable is that Oswald's description was circulated in connection with Tippit's murder over thirty minutes before Tippit was shot.

Considering that the rifle alleged to have been used by Oswald is incapable of the necessary performance, that the number of shots admitted by the Commission requires President Kennedy to have been struck at an angle which does not correspond to the holes in his jacket and shirt, the Report of the Commission not only fails to establish its conclusion, but succeeds unintentionally in establishing that more than one person was involved in murdering the President.

The measure of the achievement of Mr. Lane (who is investigating the case) is that, despite the weight of organised authority and the hostility of the Press, he has accomplished for Oswald in one year what Zola required twelve to provide for Dreyfus.

The independent investigators working for us in Dallas are turning up new evidence continually. I am hopeful that we shall not have to wait very much longer for the answer to the question: "Who killed Kennedy?"

Bertrand Russell, British "Who Killed Kennedy?" Committee

Unsubstantiated

Sir.—Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper is guilty of the very things he criticises in the

his statements such as there is no evidence that Oswald took the gun to the book depository or that he fired it. Oswald had powder burns on his cheek and his hair and fingerprints were found on the gun.

George V. Ruffolo
 London W61

Wrong claim

Sir.—The photograph illustrating Professor Trevor-Roper's article is a farce. This picture was readily accepted by all in America and yet the car used for this photo bears no relationship at all to the kind of car the President was in on the late day. As an artillery man of the second world war I feel that the angle that the President was in at was too important to use an car but the actual one he was shot in.

Gerald Hayden
 Sheffield

No such comment

Sir.—Professor Trevor-Roper says "when Lord Russell organises his dissent, he was attacked in 'Time' magazine and in England by 'The Guardian' as a senile detail whose beliefs could have dismissed and examined." No such comment was made by 'The Guardian' or by any of its contributors.

A Hetherington, Edinburgh
 Guardian

The Editor thanks the many readers who have written to this article. In further selection of letters will appear next Sunday.

Warren Commission Report. He, too, writes an article replete with unsubstantiated "facts." His article brings up the most ridiculous points to be questioned such as how Ruby entered the police station where he was known to be a frequent visitor.

