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THE WARREN REPORT

Mark Lane replies to Adam Roberts

In an article published in the October 16 issue of Peace News, Adam Roberts criticised some of the statements about the Warren report made by Bertrand Russell, chairman of the "Who Killed Kennedy?" Committee, and by Mark Lane, chairman of the Citizen's Committee of Inquiry (New York). Mark Lane has sent the following reply to Adam Roberts. A comment by Adam Roberts appears on page 10.

Thank you for your letter of November 2, 1964, in reference to the attack upon Bertrand Russell and myself, published in the Peace News of October 16, 1964. I thank you also for an opportunity to answer the charges that you made in that issue and in subsequent issues which have come to my attention. I understand that it is now somewhat fashionable to "disassociate" oneself from Lord Russell's analysis of the Warren report. Indeed, Lord Russell has been severely attacked in the respectable press in the United States, including such journals as the New York Herald Tribune and the Washington Post. You, therefore, take a rather popular position in your assault upon Lord Russell; but, inasmuch as you have indicated that you will continue to permit a dialogue on the basic issue in your publication, you differ from some of the other publications. The editor of the Herald Tribune and the editor of the Washington Post have written that they will refuse an offer to Lord Russell to reply to their charges.

I, too, wish to indicate my differences with Lord Russell's published analysis of the Warren report and the reasons, in my judgment, for those differences. Lord Russell's judgment is supported by almost a century of experts and by both British and philosophical understatement. Lord Russell has not stated publicly, to my knowledge, that those who signed the Warren Commission report did so knowing they were signing a false document. In my view, the facts do not permit any other conclusion.

Finest hour

Lord Russell has commented upon some of the errors of omission and commission which must be credited to the Commission. For that, he has earned the vindictive attack of those who should know better, including any publication which presumes the title Peace News. History will have great difficulty in determining the period and the area of endeavour in which Bertrand Russell made his greatest contribution to mankind. I should not be surprised, however, if its judgment is that in the later years of his life when he stood alone on the world scene and held up for all to see the officially torn and trod upon banner of truth regarding the assassination of President Kennedy, that this was his finest hour.

You seem amazed that Lord Russell could so quickly draw conclusions after the release of the Warren report. You are aware, I am sure, that months before the report was released, the New York Times, the U.S. News and World Report, Time magazine, and Newsweek magazine published with unerring accuracy the "conclusions" which the Commission had already reached. If premature criticism is a matter of concern for you, should not the "leaking" of the entire document to the media months before it was published also concern you? Inasmuch as the "leaks" were accurate, it was possible many months ago to assess the report before its "official" publication. As you must know by now, Lord Russell's office had in its possession, which it secured through our office, an official copy of the Warren Commission report a considerable period of time

before the release date of that report. That one segment of the media which made the report available to me has now released me from a previous commitment not to discuss that matter.

One would think that the media of the world, confronted by scores of questions left unanswered or badly answered or some untruthfully answered by the Warren Commission, would not abandon that inquiry in order to delve into the fabricated mystery of how, when, where, and why did Lord Russell first receive the Warren report. With your permission, may we begin to consider those matters to which you have given less attention but which nevertheless seem to loom larger on the scene.

Not permitted

Does it concern you, as it concerns Lord Russell and those among us who have continued this investigation, that the majority of the witnesses to the assassination of President Kennedy were not permitted to testify before the Warren Commission nor permitted to give a statement in any form which reached the Commission? Does it not concern you that the majority of the witnesses who had testimony to offer regarding the murder of President Kennedy were not permitted to testify or to make a statement in writing which reached the Warren Commission?

You concede in your October 16 article that "I have not read the whole of the Warren Commission report." May I direct your attention, nevertheless, to Appendix 5, beginning at page 493, which bears the heading "List of Witnesses." In terms of the omissions of the Commission, this list is a valuable guide, for it contains, as it explains at the head of that list, the names of all those who either testified in person before the Commission or from whom statements in writing which reached the Commission were taken.

You said that you read portions of the Bantam Book edition of the Commission report. May I refer you to page x in that edition, which is a reprint of an article written by Tom Wicker, the only New York Times correspondent in Dallas on November 22. In that article, typical of the articles published all over America on November 23, Mr Wicker quotes one of the key eye-witnesses to the assassination: "Mrs Mary Norman of Dallas (the correct spelling of her name is Moorman) who was standing alongside of the Presidential limousine and was with her companion, Mrs Jean Hill, a Dallas public-school teacher, the closest spectator to the President when the first bullet struck him. On the very day that the report was released, September 27, 1964, CBS-TV presented a documentary programme regarding the assassination and presented as one of the most important eye-witnesses Mrs Mary Moorman, who described in detail that which she saw.

We now have secured the name of a witness known by the American people through the efforts of almost all of the reporters who discovered her after she had been extensively questioned by the FBI, Secret Service and the Dallas police, on November 22; and then almost ten months later she made her most important statement known through a network television broadcast. Although known by those who read the newspaper, those who watch television, by the FBI, the Secret Service and the Dallas police, Mary Moorman remains to this day a stranger to the Warren Commission, for, if you examine the list of witnesses referred to herein and above, you will note

that the Commission does not even know of her existence or declined to call her.

Standing under the very window from which Oswald allegedly fired the fatal shots was O. V. Campbell, who stated through the New York Times, scores of other newspapers, and through radio and television conferences held on November 22 and November 23 that "the shots did not come from the Book Depository Building. If they were fired from above me, I would have known that. They came from the rally area, that wooden fence running up to the overpass." You will scan the list of the witnesses in vain for the name of O. V. Campbell.

Four witnesses, employees of the Dallas Morning News, stood on the grassy knoll in front of the wooden fence from behind which the shots very likely came. Their statements are not secret, for they were published in a feature article on Page 3 of the Dallas Morning News on November 23, 1963. They said the shots came "from behind us and a little to our right," indicating the wooden fence near the overpass on the grassy knoll. Not one of those four witnesses was permitted to testify or to make a statement to the Warren Commission, as the list of the Warren report reveals.

The fact remains that we can, with no difficulty, present the names of scores of witnesses to the assassination - all of whom differ with the Commission's conclusions - none of whom were permitted to testify.

In reference to the Tippit killing, the Commission comes forward with one eye-witness who said to them that she can identify the man who killed Tippit. She had previously stated to a reporter for the Dallas Morning News and to me thereafter (in a conversation which I have recorded and submitted to the Commission) that the man who killed Officer Tippit was short, somewhat stocky, and had somewhat bushy hair. Since the Dallas police described Oswald accurately as a man who was medium height to tall, slender with thin receding and light-colour hair, one wonders about the absolute case against Oswald for the murder of Tippit.

One witness

The Commission's one witness asserted that she is absolutely certain that she remained with Tippit from the time he was shot until the time that the ambulance arrived to pick him up some twenty minutes later. Since Tippit was shot at 1.16 p.m. and placed into an ambulance and removed from the scene before 1.19 p.m., one questions the validity of the testimony of the Warren Commission's one identifying witness to the Tippit killing.

The Commission might have called Mary or Frank Wright, the couple who reside at 501 East 10th Street, very close to where Officer Tippit was killed, who heard the shots and then ran to the phone to call an ambulance. The Commission might have called the ambulance dispatcher at the Dudley-Hughes funeral home to find out at what time the call came in and was recorded. The Commission might have called Clayton Butler, the ambulance driver, or his assistant, to determine the time that they arrived at the scene and information regarding who was present when they arrived. The Commission might have called an eye-witness to the murder of Officer Tippit, Aquilla Clemmons, who has said to numerous investigators, including to the Dallas Police Force, that the man who killed Tippit was short and fat.

The Commission, however, in its selective search for the truth did not call any of the witnesses I have referred to in this paragraph. Although described as "the most massive detective job in the history of the world" by the New York Times, the Warren Commission neglected to call witnesses who, out of necessity, would have been compelled to testify in

any ordinary murder case were the defendant still alive.

And, yet, you say of the report: "I am convinced that it is a very fair and careful document." Of course, you cannot by reading the report know what has been omitted by the Commission, either through an incredibly poor investigation or worse. I refer you, however, to the section regarding the capability of the murder weapon, urging you to bear in mind this injunction by Mark Twain: "Who so clinging to a rope severeth it above his hands, must fall, it being no defence to claim that the rest of the rope is sound." If the rifle were not capable of the performance the Commission alleges it gave in Oswald's hands on November 22, the case against Oswald as the lone assassin must fall. The rifle is not capable of that performance in the view of rifle experts throughout the world. One suspects that the Commission itself is aware that that is so, for they declined an offer to test the weapon under comparable circumstances.

Oswald was allegedly firing at a moving target, and if Governor Connally's testimony that he was struck by the second bullet (a conclusion completely substantiated by the motion-picture film) is accurate, then Oswald fired three accurate shots with an inferior relic in approximately six seconds. We invited the Commission to test the weapon under similar circumstances, securing the assistance of men somewhat more skilled with the weapon than Oswald's "poor" rating with a much better weapon in the Marine Corps indicated.

Experts missed

The Commission secured the services of three of the best riflemen in America - all listed as "masters" by the National Rifleman Association, the highest category of expertise. They were asked to fire at three stationary targets - not moving targets. Each target was a body silhouette approximately four times the size of the target allegedly visible to Oswald on November 22 - that is, from the shoulders to the top of the head. Even under these circumstances, the experts missed five out of eighteen shots.

The Commission concluded this was proof that Oswald could have fired three accurate shots at a much smaller moving target on November 22. Six, the test was a fraud in that it was not comparable to the conditions allegedly facing Oswald on November 22, and the conclusion drawn by the Commission is, on its face, ludicrous. Is this the careful and fair study that you made reference to?

On page 145 of the Warren Commission report it is stated that Howard Brennan "was unable to make a positive identification" of Oswald in the police lineup on November 22. Almost a month later, after hours of briefing by FBI agents, Mr Brennan saw the light and the Commission reports on the same page: "In an interview with FBI agents on December 17, 1963, Brennan stated that he was sure that the person firing the rifle was Oswald." In the next sentence the Commission reports that Brennan, in a subsequent interview with FBI agents on January 7, 1964, again stated that he could not identify Oswald. On page 250 of the report, as the Commission sums up its case against Oswald, it states: "Howard L. Brennan made a positive identification of Oswald as being the person at the window." Is that a fair assessment of the evidence, even as presented by the Commission 100 pages earlier?

There is not a page of the report which is not similarly susceptible to the analysis we have presented herein to some of the pages. Neither time nor space permit a more lengthy examination here. I urge you to reread the report. In doing so, retain some of the faith which you have recklessly squandered upon the Commission for yourself.

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