

Warren Report Shortcomings Outlined

Shortcomings in the publicly announced portions of the Warren Commission report which dealt with forensic sciences were described by panelists at a session of the 18th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in Chicago.

The panelists made clear that their review of the Warren Commission report on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy was not intended to be overly critical of its purpose and good efforts. They sought specific aspects and unanswered questions where addition of information would have strengthened it.

Autopsy Incomplete: From the viewpoint of a forensic pathologist, Cyril H. Wecht, MD, LLB, who is associated with the Pittsburgh, Pa., coroner's office, said, "By standards found in most good medicolegal investigative facilities, the autopsy report would not be deemed to be a complete one. Certain essentials are missing, and many questions have been raised and have gone unanswered, at least officially, because of the absence of such information in the official autopsy report and in the subsequent testimony given before the Warren Commission."

Among the questions which might have been publicly revealed through the autopsy findings, Dr. Wecht said, were: (1) if President Kennedy had Addison's disease (an issue raised in the 1960 presidential campaign), and (2) if the first shot which struck the President inflicted a wound of such "fatality" that he could not have survived.

Lack of Information: Dr. Wecht stressed, however, "In this particular case, all of us are handicapped by not having been involved in the autopsy (with the exception of those few Armed Services pathologists who were called in to perform the autopsy). Consequently, we are limited in our evaluation to those portions of the record that have been made public through official sources.

"The only other medical facts that we have are those that were released by the physicians at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, where President Kennedy was taken and treated before being pronounced dead officially. Thus, we must preface any re-

studied any portion of the data gathered throughout these otherwise intensive interviews for the purpose of professional psychiatric opinion."

Dr. Tuchler said that the Commission, "a body of outstanding attorneys, appeared to follow that practice common to a group of intellectuals of functioning as 'lay' psychiatrists." He emphasized that he is "reluctant to accept the evaluation of critical and of significant witnesses interviewed by legal or investigative personnel whose training, however extensive, does not qualify them for the important task of evaluation of motivation."

Weaknesses Cited: Attorney Jay Schwartz, Kenosha, Wis., was critical of a number of aspects in the handling of the case. He said, "The government is weak because it cannot establish a decent chain of evidence. It is weak because it spoke before it was ready. It is weak because it failed to maintain original notes. It is weak because all of the volumes of the report are based on assumption which must be taken on faith rather than fact. The [Warren] Commission inherited all of these weaknesses."

Schwartz made these observations:

• "It is worth mentioning that the Parkland

Hospital notes are probably the only original notes still in existence. Commander Hume [Bethesda Naval Hospital pathologist] burned his original notes, Police Captain Fritz, who interrogated Oswald, didn't 'keep his,' and [FBI] Agents Hosty and Bookout as well as Secret Service men who were present didn't make any notes during Oswald's 12 hours of interrogation. One might have expected a stenographic report or tape recording in such a situation, but there were none."

• "The Commission found that there were between two and six shots fired, the best guess of the Commission is three shots based upon the proposition that there were three spent cartridges found at the Depository [building]. It claims that one shot missed and one shot ran from the President's shoulder, through his neck, through Governor Connolly's back, chest, wrist and thigh. No witness including Dr. Hume or Gov. Connolly believes that. Circularly then the number of shots is determined by belief that all the shots were fired by Oswald. This in turn is based on the uncorroborated autopsy which set forth the wounds of entrance and exit."

• "If, in fact, there were four shots, Oswald could not have fired all of them. It is doubtful that he could have hit two out of three as the Commission contends he did. Three master marksmen had difficulty in so doing, and there is no credible evidence that Oswald, who had missed a set-up on General Walker (if that testimony is believed) could compare with them."

• "If the body and the limousine had remained in Dallas [instead of being taken to Washington, D.C.], in accordance with the law, Dr. Hume, the FBI and the Secret Service need not bear the responsibility they bear."

marks, particularly any that may seem to be critical, with the caveat that we are not in possession of all the facts. Also, we can appreciate the fact that the pathologists who performed the autopsy, being members of the Armed Services, may not have been permitted to publicly release all their findings."

'Conspiracy' Disproved: Psychiatrist Maier I. Tuchler, MD, Phoenix, Ariz., pointed out that the Warren Commission report "put to rest irrational apprehension and anxiety created by the assassination of our President at a critical time in the nation's history." The findings reported, Dr. Tuchler explained, "are sufficiently detailed to negate rumors of a conspiracy," and they point to Lee Harvey Oswald as "a lone assassin."

But in his study of the past history of Oswald as developed in the Warren report, Dr. Tuchler said, he was "astonished to find that, of the 522 witnesses interviewed and of the thousands of reports presented to the Commission, not one psychiatrist

Jury's Panelists Hit Inquiry on Assassination

Medical Tribune—World Wide Report

CHICAGO—A national school of interdisciplinary aspects of the investigation of President John F. Kennedy brings into focus a major weakness in the practice of forensic science, the main goal of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences said here.

Those active in the forensic sciences, Jack L. Sachs pointed out, have been "teaching and educating each other" but have neglected to bring to outsiders an understanding of the purposes of this multidisciplinary group of specialists.

Mr. Sachs, a Chicago attorney, urged educational measures to remedy this "burying of our heads in the sand" and to make the public aware that case law offices should make use of good medical-legal autopsy performed by pathologists, forensically trained if possible.

Panelists at the academy's annual meeting cited examples of errors in judgment, some on the part of physicians, that were made because of an apparent lack of understanding of forensic problems from the time President Kennedy was shot to the issuance of the Warren Commission report.

Medical Aspects Criticized

Medical aspects of the Warren Commission report came in for the greatest share of criticism, with other alleged defects including lost documents, incomplete investigation and jurisdictional disputes also pointed out. Commenting from the panel or the audience were members of the academy, which includes pathologists, psychiatrists, toxicologists, coroners, lawyers, and specialists in criminalistics and questioned documents.

Despite the fact that "the acknowledged leaders in the forensic fields in the world" are in the Academy of Forensic Sciences, it was not called into the Lee Harvey Oswald case, Mr. Sachs said. The reason for the omission, he said, might be traced to the academy's lack of identification with "its very reason for existence"—the health, education, and welfare of the public.

The clinicians, who performed well in attempting to save the life of President Kennedy at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, Tex., erred in not spending two minutes in a cursory examination of the surface of the body after death, said Dr. Cyril H. Wecht of Pittsburgh, who was formerly attached to the coroner's office in that city.

Such brief examination, he said, might have been helpful in view of the tremendous number of questions and speculations that ensued, from the press and the public, regarding the number of shots and the possibility of an organized insurrection. He also suggested that it had been unwise for the attending physicians to immediately make public statement that there was uncertainty regarding the directions from which the bullet had entered the body, since these statements created apprehension.

Dr. Wecht declared that it was surprising that the pathologists at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., did not first get information from the attending physicians at Parkland before making the autopsy. He said that the pathologists were also handicapped in making complete studies by the fact that the bloodstained suit and shirt of Governor John B. Connally of Texas were first cleaned and pressed before reaching them.

He observed that one of the purposes of the examination of the body was to help allay any misapprehensions on the part of the public, yet it was made solely by the pathologists in the examination. The same misapprehensions were also created by the "rumor" that a number of witnesses, of which there were a number from Birmingham, would have a gun who, he said, in view of the not uncommon suspicion by Americans of opinions exclusively by "governmental officials."

Noting that the attending physicians at Parkland had to type the President's blood, Dr. Wecht said it would have seemed logical that someone close to the President at all times should have had this information.

Adrenal Gland Report Causes Jealousy

He declared it his personal opinion that the "quibbling" over the lack of a post-mortem report on the state of President Kennedy's adrenal glands—to disprove or prove earlier claims that he had Addison's disease—was unnecessary. The answers would not have saved the President's life nor aided the investigation, Dr. Wecht said.

"The Warren Commission, a body of outstanding attorneys, appeared to follow that practice—common to a group of intellectuals—of functioning as lay psychiatrists," it was charged by Dr. Maier I. Tishler of Phoenix, a psychiatric consultant to the Arizona State Health Department.

He said he was "astonished to learn that

of the 522 witnesses interviewed or deposed and over 25,000 reports presented to the commission, no psychiatrist studied any data gathered by the formal and official sources or by the investigators and attorneys for the commission."

The commission, he said, hired two historians but no psychiatrists. It heard only two psychiatrist witnesses, one of whom saw Oswald just when the latter was 13, the other of whom saw only Jack Ruby.

The report is deficient in establishing motive, Dr. Wecht concluded.

Jay Schwartz, Kenosha, Wis., attorney formerly attached to that state's Attorney General's Office, noted "the unfortunate conduct" of a spokesman for the Dallas bar, "who pronounced Oswald rational to the world press."

Lawyers Not Psychiatrists

"It must be understood that as many lawyers believe themselves to be psychiatrists as there are doctors who believe themselves to be lawyers," Mr. Schwartz remarked.

The Kenosha attorney also said that the conclusion that Oswald fired all the shots was based "solely on the pathologists at Bethesda . . ." and is subject to question.

"The commission found that there were between two and six shots fired," Mr. Schwartz said. "The best guess of the commission is three shots, based upon the proposition that there were three spent cartridges found at the Book Depository. It claims that one shot missed and one [the nonfatal] shot ran through the President's shoulder, through his neck, through Governor Connally's back, chest, wrist and thigh. No witness . . . believes that."

He said that the Parkland Hospital notes "are probably the only original notes still in existence," others having been destroyed or not having been made in the first place during the interrogation of Oswald. Corroboration for the pathology reports, he added, might have been possible, but "pictures and x-rays given to the White House physician and Secret Service, many of them undeveloped, were never seen by the commission."

James W. Osterburg, a Bloomington, Ind., criminalistics expert, called the event the "most demanding homicide investigation ever undertaken" and said that there are "some areas in which the basic research necessary for the objective evaluation of evidence has yet to be performed."

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ASSASSINATION STUDIES TMO-66

No suitable purpose is served by a continuing analysis of President Kennedy's assassination. The Right blames the Left and the Left blames the Right.

The important point is that the person or persons who fired the fatal shots were extremists, whether "rightist" or "leftist." Let's drop the issue lest history equates Aronson, Hunt, Welch, Hargis *et al* as persons who "proved" the conspiracy theory.

Tucson, Ariz.

WM. S. CHICHESTER
Lt. Col., USAF (Ret.)

Your editorial, "Dallas Revisited," a companion piece to Vincent Salandria's articles on the assassination, expressed thoughts that have been plaguing my own mind. I hope that you will be able increasingly to expose the tie-up between JFK's assassination and the present war-making stance of the Administration.

San Pedro, Calif.

(Mrs.) GENE BIRCH

ROBERT KENNEDY'S DISSENT

Your April, 1966 issue was stimulating, in keeping with previous issues. However, the photograph, caption and editorial matter, involving the Senator, on page 4, stimulate this office to raise a protest. Dissent certainly does not preclude the common politeness of greeting the President of the United States when he is encountered at a social engagement as was the case when your photo was taken.

Washington, D.C.

WES BARTHELMES
Press Assistant to
Senator Robert F. Kennedy

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