

CBS Blesses the Warren Report (Again)

Draft

If it is not enough that the American public was given a farcical official report on the assassination of President Kennedy, CBS has now delivered ~~itself of a preposterous commercial~~ ^{television} report on the same subject. To no one's surprise, the ~~commercial~~ ^{CBS} inquiry arrived at the same conclusions as the official investigation. Wasn't that the purpose of the exercise?

On four successive nights at the end of June 1967, CBS television presented one-hour programs purporting to review the main criticisms and controversies which had arisen, particularly during the preceding year, and had progressively eroded public confidence in the Warren Report. The most recent public opinion polls ~~before the CBS extravaganza~~ had shown that a large majority of the people did not believe that the Warren Commission findings were correct and did not accept the fairy tale of the lone assassin. When seven out of ten people doubted the Government's report, a harder sell was needed. Various news media spontaneously and voluntarily undertook to do the public relations job that the Government

had flubbed, ~~and~~ ^{attempting} to rehabilitate the badly discredited Warren Report.

Even before CBS performed its heroic four-hour propaganda feat, NBC

devoted an hour of prime viewing time to an all-out assault on the

notorious "investigation" of the New Orleans District Attorney, Jim

Garrison. The Garrison investigation was already strangling in its own

grotesqueries, but NBC flogged this dying horse so savagely as to create

an illusory martyrdom for the hapless Garrison, which was scarcely NBC's

^{and the problem with}
^{him going back to his}
 intention. In the same week, the Associated Press published its own

study of the Warren Report and its critics. The AP report took up five

pages of the Washington Post on June 25, 1967, the same date on which

CBS began to telecast its four one-hour programs. The AP conclusions

happened to coincide with those of CBS, and with the conclusions of the

Warren Report, even though all three differed with each other on the central

points of evidence on which their conclusions were based.

The first two CBS hours went through the motions of presenting and reviewing evidence—both the Warren Commission's and evidence of its own,

gathered by going over the same ground as the Commission or by tests and

experiments and expert opinions commissioned by CBS itself. By the third

ranged from 15.3 to 20.6 frames per second. By taking the slowest speed (15.3 frames per second) and adding 20 frames to the section of the Zapruder film (frames 210 to 318) said by the Warren Commission to encompass all the shots fired, CBS triumphantly raised ~~Crowd's~~ ^{the} available time for ~~the~~ firing ~~of~~ ^{the} three shots by almost three seconds, or an increase of about two-thirds ^{over} of the Commission's estimate. The 20 frames were added at the bottom of the Zapruder film segment. CBS considered that the first shot had been fired at about frame 186 instead of frame 210, and that this shot had missed.

The earlier timing of the first shot was postulated by CBS on the basis of findings by a photographic expert it had commissioned to analyze the Zapruder film, frame by frame. This expert, Dr. Luis Alvarez of the University of ^{Berkeley,} California, had noticed that in certain of the frames the picture was very blurred. ~~A distinct series of identical objects merged, in the blurred frames, into a single streak.~~ ^{He took this to} ~~This might~~ indicate that the cameraman had been startled by the sound of gunfire and had involuntarily jumped, jerking the camera and causing the blurs. From this data, CBS concluded that the first shot had been fired at frame 186 (not frame 210); the second, at about frame 223 ; and the third, as everyone agreed, at frame 313.

There is a small flaw in this postulate: In addition to the three blurred frames cited by CBS and its expert, there are at least six ~~other~~ ^{which are equally} ~~right-angle~~ frames ^{no less} blurred. And no one, whether critic or apologist for the Warren Report, ~~seriously conceives~~ ^{argues} that there were as many as nine ~~shots~~ shots.

Before leaving this fascinating piece of ^{CBS} detective work, we must revert to the problem of the camera speed. The FBI had made a definite finding that Zapruder's camera was operating at 18.3 frames per second, a speed which CBS apparently rejects. On what basis does CBS challenge this finding? There are grounds for challenging it, but not those suggested by CBS. The FBI conducted reenactment tests, including a reenactment of the Zapruder film, on May 24, 1964. Zapruder's own camera was used during this experiment. But the segment of film that took 5.5 seconds in the original Zapruder film took only 3.5 seconds in the FBI replica film! In other words, the camera which was said to be operating on November 22, 1963 at 18.3 frames per second was operating on May 24, 1964 at 26 frames per second. Indeed, critic Harold Weisberg in December 1966 declared, *on the basis of* that the Zapruder film had been photographed at a speed of 24 frames per second, not 18.3, ~~according to~~ Warren Commission documents which he had

← unearthed in the National Archives.

At that speed, Oswald would have had only 4.5 seconds to fire three shots, under the Warren Commission's reconstruction (and only 5.3 seconds under CBS's). But the Commission stipulated that the mere operation of the bolt action on the assassination rifle, if it was fired three times, required 4.6 seconds without counting aiming time.

CBS did not ignore Weisberg's claim that Zapruder's camera was operating at 24 frames per second on the day of the assassination but *acknowledged*, ~~even seemed to confirm~~, in passing, that it was possible for the camera to run at that speed, if one of its levers was depressed. But CBS certainly did not accept the 24 frame speed, nor even the FBI's 18.3 frame determination. Both were rejected, without supporting argumentation other than the speeds of the five cameras tested for CBS, ~~is~~ a test which proves absolutely nothing but serves to confuse ^a ~~the~~ mass audience which has little acquaintance with the evidence produced by the Warren Commission and certainly no expertise in evaluating it.

Another ~~major evidentiary~~ ^{Central} problem which CBS did not shrink from tackling was that of the marksmanship required for the shooting of the President and the Governor. The Commission's marksmanship tests were generally conceded to be irrelevant, if not travesties, since they utilized master riflemen

shooting from an elevation only half as high as the Depository window, at stationary rather than moving targets. CBS set up its own tests, and to its credit tried to ^{achieve} ~~introduce~~ genuine comparability with the original ^{physical} ~~specifications~~. Rifleman were stationed in a tower corresponding with the height and angle between the Depository window and the Presidential car as it traveled down Elm Street, and targets were placed on a track moving away from the tower at eleven miles an hour. Certainly these CBS rifle tests appear at first glance to have the scientific validity missing from those of the Warren Commission (which seems to have had less zeal or a smaller budget than CBS). The physical arrangements for the ^{CBS} tests closely ^{conformed with} ~~duplicated~~ the scene at Dealey Plaza. ⁹ Did the CBS riflemen possess the same level of skill as Oswald, which is no less a prerequisite for the validity of the results? CBS did not enlighten us. Mr. Kronkite told us merely that eleven volunteers had fired a Mannlicher-Carcano rifle of the same model as the alleged assassination weapon (it may be assumed that the replica rifle did not suffer, as did the original, from a defective bolt, a defective trigger, or an unusable scope). He did not give us all the results but only the results achieved by four of the eleven volunteers (and it may be assumed that these were the best ^{score,} ~~not~~ the

worst ~~misses~~). Volunteer I, a State Trooper, got two hits and one near-miss (a miss is as good as a mile, no?) in 5 seconds. Volunteer II, also a State Trooper, got 1 hit and two near-misses in 5.4 seconds. Volunteer III, a weapons engineer, got 3 hits in 5.2 seconds. Volunteer IV, a technician, got 1 hit and two misses in 4.1 seconds.

State Troopers are officers of the law who must qualify at a fairly high level of skill as marksmen and who must maintain their skill by regular practice. Weapons engineers and technicians, too, undoubtedly engage in considerable shooting exercise in the normal course of their work. There is every reason to assume that these four volunteers were good ^{or} ~~to~~ excellent marksmen. The other seven volunteers have not been specified or otherwise identified by CBS. If anyone regards that as virtual proof that their marksmanship was distinctly superior to Oswald's, I would not be inclined to dispute him. Oswald last shot for record shortly before he left the Marine Corps in 1959, achieving a score of 191 --or one point above the minimum on a scale of 60 (190 ~~floor~~ to 250 ~~ceiling~~). The Warren Commission established no target practice by Oswald at any time in 1963; under its own reconstruction, the rifle was not even in his possession for at least two months before the assassination.

In effect, then, a ~~working~~ State Trooper was equated by CBS with a man who was a maladroit rifleman in 1959. ^{Some} evidence suggests that even his ¹⁹⁵⁹ score of 191 was ^{unearned,} contrived by an officer who did not want to spend another two weeks coaching this oaf, and had little or no subsequent rifle practice. That is "comparability"?

Mr. Kronkite mentioned something else which should not pass without comment: that out of 37 tries, 17 were no good because of trouble with the rifle. It appears from this statistic that there is a 45 per cent risk of malfunction when this rifle is fired. One of Oswald's boyhood friends, when interviewed in New Orleans a few days after the assassination, said that he owned ^a ~~the same model~~ Mannlicher-Carcano ^{rifle like the one} ~~as that~~ found in the Depository, but that he had stopped using it because he was afraid that it would explode in his face. ^{Although} ~~since~~ this rifle is said to be available at a wholesale price of three dollars, has been called "a cheap old weapon" by an FBI expert and less flattering names by others, and carries a high risk of malfunction, CBS finds no reason to doubt that it worked with ^{total} ~~total~~ efficiency in the hands of a marksman ^{like} ~~of~~ Oswald ~~as unparalleled~~ ~~record.~~ Of course *not.*

There are more goodies in the CBS portfolio of ~~laboratory test results.~~

~~As was the case with~~ ^{The} Commission's ~~rifle tests,~~ ^{like its rifle tests,} its wound penetration experiments, ~~also~~ ^{Wound penetration} left CBS dissatisfied. ~~These~~ ^{These} tests had been carried out

in an effort to determine whether a bullet from the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle had sufficient energy to pass through a man's neck, another man's chest (smashing a rib), his wrist (fracturing the bone), and then enter his thigh superficially. CBS pointed out, quite rightly, that the Commission had utilized tests which did not line up all the test materials in a row (human cadaver parts, gelatin blocks, and goat carcasses) but made separate trials of the components. CBS therefore returned to the Commission's own expert, Dr. Alfred Olivier, and had him set up blocks of gelatin corresponding with the neck, the chest, the wrist, and the thigh, at appropriate distances each from the other. In the wrist gelatin block a plywood board was inserted ^{to approximate} ~~as an equivalent~~ of the wrist bone; but no ^{plywood} ~~obstacle~~ representing a rib was introduced into the chest gelatin block.

The purpose of this experiment was to validate (or diminish) the single-missile theory--that is, the conclusion in the Warren Report that one bullet had inflicted all the wounds in two men except the fatal head shot. In the CBS tests, Mr. Kronkite reported, not one of the bullets had retained

sufficient energy to strike or enter the thigh gelatin block; some of the bullets had become spent after entering the wrist gelatin block and had remained lodged there, (CBS did not indicate whether these bullets had penetrated the plywood before becoming spent--a not insignificant point),

91 The logical conclusion to be drawn from the failure of all the test bullets to retain enough momentum to strike the thigh is that one bullet could not have inflicted all the wounds required by the single-missile theory.

The CBS conclusion was that one bullet could have done it.

But even if that conclusion ^{had been warranted} ~~was justified instead of invalidated by the~~
~~new tests~~, it is not sufficient ^{by itself} to authenticate the single-missile theory.

The theory demands not only that a bullet could have made all the wounds but that the "stretcher bullet" (Commission Exhibit 399) could and did

do the job. Because the stretcher bullet is practically intact and undeformed, and its ^{whereabouts before it was discovered} ~~origins somewhat obscure in terms of its discovery~~
~~are uncertain,~~

at Parkland Hospital, the contention that this bullet traversed the President's

neck and inflicted all the Governor's fractures and flesh wounds ~~was~~ ^{doubted or}

^{flatly rejected by} most of the Commission's expert witnesses, ^{optical has left} and all of its critics open-mouthed

with sheer amazement ^{and} ~~and~~ incredulity.

~~CBS~~ Having obtained a favorable opinion from one expert and a negative opinion from another, ^{CBS} pronounced its conclusion that the stretcher bullet had done all the damage, just ~~like~~ ^{as} the Commission said. But CBS ~~very~~ carefully ~~restrained itself~~ ^{refrained} from displaying a single one of the test

bullets (~~those which had not lodged in the wrist gelatin block~~) obtained

fired in the CBS as support for its finding that a bullet with such a career could remain so unchanged.
~~from the new wound penetration tests performed for the network by Dr. Olivier.~~

Even the Warren Commission showed us a test bullet from the ~~original Olivier~~

To wound ballistics)
 experiment--one which had simulated only the wrist shot, but emerged with a completely flattened and deformed nose.

If the CBS wound penetration tests had yielded a single bullet resembling ~~the pristine condition of~~ the stretcher bullet, what a triumph and vindication it would have been to display it to ~~the~~ ^{an} estimated 22 million ~~members of its~~ ^{viewers} ~~audience~~! From the fact that CBS neither displayed any of the test bullets, nor mentioned their condition on emerging from the gelatin blocks, one can easily draw the necessary and logical conclusion.

As if gaining confidence from the ease with which all problems were being overcome, CBS next tackled the paradox of the fatal head shot. Although this shot supposedly struck the back of the President's head, the Zapruder film shows graphically that the impact of the shot thrust the President forcefully backward, not forward. Mr. Kronkite allowed as how the shot seemed to

move Kennedy back, and then produced physicist Charles Wyckoff, who opined that the apparent explosion at the front of the head indicated that the bullet had come from behind. While Dr. Wyckoff was not entirely clear in pronouncing himself on the backward thrust of the body in response to a bullet striking the back of the head, he seemed agreeable to repealing Newton's law of the conservation of momentum, which has previously operated without interruption for millenia.

~~Most people do not have enough deference for the Warren Commission, or even for CBS, to oblige them by accepting the suspension of the physical~~
Whatever the merits of Dr. Wyckoff's
~~opinion, one must still ponder the~~
~~laws of the universe. But those who wish to try, out of faith in the~~
following facts:
~~venerable Chief Justice and his honorable colleagues who stand above~~

~~suspicion, should ponder these facts:~~ Nowhere in the Warren Report is there the smallest hint that the Zapruder film shows the President thrust backward by a bullet that should have sent him forward; nowhere in the Hearings and Exhibits is there the smallest hint that the Commission asked an opinion on this phenomenon from its medical and ballistics experts; nowhere, in short, did the Commission expose the facts or resolve the problem. It was the Commission's critics who brought this crucial evidence to light, and even CBS has not been able to dispose of it.

The next CBS feat was an exclusive interview with the autopsy surgeon, Captain J. J. Humes (formerly Commander). As Kronkite said proudly, Dr. Humes was breaking his silence of three and a half years for CBS. Asked to comment on allegations that the wound in the back of the President's neck was really well below his shoulders, Dr. Humes explained. The burden of his statement was that the diagram of the wounds executed during the autopsy examination was merely a sketch, not intended to be accurate or precisely to scale. The schematic drawings, on the other hand, were both accurate and precise—although the schematic drawings were executed more than three months after the autopsy, by a medical artist who had never seen the body, on the basis of directions from Dr. Humes. ^{Humes} ~~he~~ must have relied almost exclusively on his memory of the location and appearance of the wounds, having none of the autopsy photographs at his disposal.

For those who consider this explanation weak or dubious, there is reassurance. Dr. Humes said in his exclusive CBS interview that he had viewed and authenticated the autopsy photographs and x-rays when they were deposited in the Archives (where no one may see them) in November 1966.

The photographs ~~were~~ completely ^{corroborated} ~~consistent~~ with his testimony, his autopsy report, and his schematic drawings, *he said.*

Since Dr. Humes is under suspicion in some quarters of having falsified or adjusted the autopsy findings, not everyone will be content with his self-vindication. But enough of Dr. Humes...

After concluding ~~with his self-satisfaction~~ ^{alone} that Oswald had shot the President ~~and had shot alone~~, CBS turned to the Tippit murder. One of the questions raised ~~by the demagogues~~ ^{persistently} was why Tippit was out of his own district when he was shot to death. To ~~dispell~~ ^{answer} this ~~problem~~ ^{question}, CBS interviewed Murray Jackson, the Dallas police radio dispatcher, ~~and~~ ^{have been} said to ~~be~~ one of the late Tippit's closest friends. (He did not attend the funeral.) Jackson was amused and a little patronizing about the so-called mystery of Tippit's departure from his assigned district. The reason he was in another district, Jackson said, was that he himself had sent him to central Oak Cliff. Because a great many patrolmen had been ordered to the Depository area, there were no patrols in the location where Tippit was killed. Jackson had sent him there in case of a hold-up ~~or robbery~~ ^{some} or other crime was ~~committed~~ ^{attempted} ^{in the absence of} ~~the~~ police.

During the CBS review of the circumstances of the Tippit killing, excerpts from the sound record of the police radio were played at several points. But the record of Jackson's instruction to Tippit to move into central Oak Cliff --an instruction which has been ^{the} subject of considerable scepticism, since it was omitted from the first transcript of the radio log prepared by the Dallas

Police for the Warren Commission's edification--was not played by CBS. The sound recording of the instruction to Tippit is "best evidence," not Jackson's CBS interview. CBS was no more concerned with the rule of best evidence than the Warren Commission, although CBS at least questioned the Dallas police radio dispatcher while the Warren Commission neither questioned him nor obtained his sworn testimony on this or other important points which emerge in the radio logs.

Jackson's assurance that he sent Tippit to Oak Cliff because the men assigned to that section of Dallas has been rushed to the Depository, leaving Oak Cliff without police officers to handle any breach of the law, left CBS beaming with satisfaction. That only betrays the inadequate scholarship and ^{the incompetence} ~~expertise~~ of the CBS investigators. If they had acquired the necessary familiarity with the ^{evidence,} ~~contents of the 26 volumes of Hearings and Exhibits,~~ they would have recognized Jackson's story ^{as} the invention it is. The fact is that central Oak Cliff consists of some ten or more numbered districts (numbers 22-23, 91-96, and 108-109, as shown on the Dallas Police Radio Patrol District Map). Only the policemen stationed in districts 93 and 95 were restationed at the Depository; the officers assigned to the other eight districts remained in position--including those in districts 109 (from which Tippit reported his location at "Lancaster and

8th" at 12:54 p.m.) and 91 (in which Tippit was shot, while the assigned officer, Mentzel, was present and ~~carrying out~~ ^{performing} his duties). It was Tippit's own district, number 78, which was left unmanned when Tippit departed, for reasons still unknown, from his assigned location.

The cited examples of the "CBS News Inquiry: The Warren Report" suffice to demonstrate a lack of competence, candor, and objectivity which rival or even surpass the Warren Commission's outrages. CBS first tried to sanctify the Warren Report in a special broadcast on September 29, 1964, on the eve of its release to the public and some two months before the publication of the 26 volumes of evidence. Almost three years later, CBS had to spend four more hours sprinkling holy water on this discredited and repugnant document, sparing no expense or exertion in this rehabilitation project. CBS was disquieted because the polls showed that seven out of ten Americans did not believe the Warren Report. Now that CBS has unveiled its own investigation and pronounced its conclusions, the ratio should rise to nine out of ten. The public, after all is said and done, sometimes has an acute sense of smell.

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