

Thursday, August 24, 1967

letters

The Editor:

The column "Politics East" by J. W. Masi in your issue of July 6, 1967, has just been called to my attention. In it, I am described erroneously as having been on vacation and unavailable to respond to criticism by Mrs. Sylvia Meagher concerning ballistics tests for the four-part television program, "A CBS News Inquiry: The Warren Report."

Mrs. Meagher's only reasonable charge is that CBS News did not show on television the condition of bullets after they were shot into various gelatin blocks to simulate the wounds of President Kennedy and Governor Connally. Naturally, Mrs. Meagher assumes whatever suits her doubting nature. This time she assumes wrongly.

None of the bullets fired through gelatin blocks to simulate the so-called single bullet theory was deformed as much as the nearly intact bullet found on a Parkland Hospital stretcher -- which is usually referred to as "exhibit 399."

Failure to show these bullets, or at least one of them, during the program was admittedly, in retrospect, an error. It was neither deliberate nor sinister; it was an oversight, the result perhaps of overfamiliarity with our tests. We knew the bullets were not deformed, even slightly. We also knew that the gelatin while it simulated the slowing-down effect of human tissue on a bullet, did not entirely simulate the deforming effect of human tissue. So we were inclined not to show a bullet whose intact condition might give the impression we were trying to prove a bullet could penetrate two men and not be deformed in the slightest.

Our purpose in conducting the tests was to see if the single-bullet theory was possible. Dr. Alfred G. Olivier, chief of wound ballistics at the Army's Edgewood Arsenal, and consultant to CBS News for these tests, decided that the tests showed the theory was possible.

Incidentally, in the CBS Inquiry broadcast, the doctor who said the single-bullet theory seemed "remote" to him was not Dr. William F. Enos, of Northern Virginia Doctors Hospital, but Dr.

Cyril Wecht, forensic pathologist in Pittsburgh, whose expert knowledge of military wound ballistics compares with that of Mrs. Meagher. Dr. Enos, who has had extensive first-hand knowledge in military wound ballistics, felt the single-bullet theory was not only possible but probable.

Walter Lister
Associate Producer
CBS News Special Reports

REPLIES

Walter Lister of CBS claims that the failure to display the test bullets recovered in the CBS ballistics tests were neither deliberate nor sinister but merely an oversight. This assertion should be weighed in the light of the fact that I wrote to Leslie Midgley of CBS on 30 June 1967 requesting detailed information on the CBS marksmanship and ballistics tests and in particular "photographs or detailed descriptions of the recovered test bullets." In a letter of 13 July 1967, CBS refused to provide any of the information I requested; the refusal was deliberate, considered, and explicit.

In a further letter to the President of CBS News, dated 3 July 1967, I challenged the CBS "News Inquiry" findings on the time-span of the shots and the blurred frames; the marksmanship test results; the wound penetration tests; the authenticity of the stretcher bullet; the nature and location of the wounds; and the false, self-contradictory state-

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ments made by police dispatcher Murray Jackson in his CBS interview. This letter remains unanswered. Apparently CBS is unable to refute the facts or arguments adduced in this letter. By "refute" I mean, of course, by means of material evidence and not unsupported rhetoric and blustering pronouncements to be taken on faith.

The fact that Dr. Alfred G. Olivier "decided" for CBS, as earlier he had "decided" for the Warren Commission, that the single-missile theory was possible is utterly irrelevant, since even the partial results of the CBS ballistics tests showed that it was impossible to duplicate the feat ascribed to the stretcher bullet. Moreover, Dr. Olivier's opinions and conclusions in his Commission testimony were predicated on a description of Governor Connally's back wound as 1.2 inches in diameter --- that is, twice the size of three-fifths of an inch in diameter described by Dr. Robert Shaw, who treated the Governor, in his Commission testimony. The size of the wound

is pivotal in judging whether it was made by a pristine bullet, or by a yawing bullet which had first hit something else and produces a larger wound. I challenge Mr. Lister to refute these facts and inferences, explicitly, and not to take refuge in vague insinuations and irrelevant generalizations. It requires no expertise in wound ballistics to identify the logical absurdities, factual inaccuracies, or selectivity of the CBS presentation; in any case, it was CBS that solicited the opinions of

Dr. Cyril H. Wecht as an authority in forensic pathology, which includes wound ballistics. It comes with poor grace that Lister now seeks to impugn Dr. Wecht's qualifications, because his expert opinion was not to his liking. This is on a par with Lister's implication that it was Manhattan East that attributed Dr. Wecht's remarks to Dr. Enos, when it was the CBS transcript that committed the error.

CBS carries its arbitrary withholding of data to incredible and almost comical lengths. For example, Dr. Wecht was refused a tape recording or transcript of the two-hour interview he had given CBS at its request when the "news inquiry" was in preparation. Imagine denying a man a recording of his own interview! Dr. Wecht was so outraged by CBS's audacity in distorting and deforming the evidence that he wanted to publish a full transcript of his interview, from which a few fragments had judiciously been selected and included in the "news inquiry." CBS, for whom Mr. Lister claims such purity and honor, refused to give him the tape.

That these cornered charlatans take refuge in silence and the suppression of material data merely underlines and formalizes the bankruptcy of their position in support of the Warren Report, and their default as scholars, researchers, and honest men. One expects nothing better from these houseboys and trained poodles who have enlisted in the service of an infamous fraud.

Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12 Street

Since Mrs. Meagher has pointed out that my error in attributing a quote by Dr. Wecht to Dr. Enos came from following CBS's own transcript too scrupulously, I will not belabor the point.

As for Mr. Lister and his vacation, I had been told by Mr. Midgley and Mr. Lister's own secretary that Lister was visiting Expo' 67 and on vacation at the time my article was being written.

I regret that I was not able to interview Mr. Lister for my story.

-- J. W. Masi