

28 November 1966

The Editor
Frontier
1434 Westwood Blvd.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90024

Dear Sir,

One of my friends in Los Angeles was good enough to send me a copy of Frontier with the Jacob Cohen article on the Warren Report, together with a copy of a massive rebuttal which he is submitting for publication. Therefore, I shall comment only on a few questions not already disposed of in the rebuttal.

Cohen argues that photographs of onlookers standing with their backs to the grassy knoll, about three seconds after Kennedy was first shot, show them looking straight ahead and not back toward an explosion. I would refer him to the photograph taken by James Altgens, Commission Exhibit No. 900, which shows the onlookers in front of the Depository, after both Kennedy and then Connally were shot, none of whom is looking upward or showing any sign of awareness that shots had come from overhead. In his zeal, Cohen seems to have overlooked the photographs which show spectators in front of the grassy knoll who had thrown themselves to the ground and shielded a child or children with their bodies--"apparently the bullets had whizzed directly over their heads," according to a story in the Dallas Morning News of 11/23/63 (page 3).

When he argues for the existence of a small bullet wound in the back of the head, Cohen falsely asserts that Secret Service agent Greer confirmed the existence of "the small hole at the base of Kennedy's skull." Actually, Cohen said very carefully "refer to," not "confirm," but clearly he intends to give the impression that Greer confirmed. He then quotes a passage of Greer's testimony without supplying the citation. I am happy to quote it for him--2H 127; and a reading makes it crystal-clear that Greer was responding to Arlen Specter's question about the "wound at the right side of Mr. Kennedy's back," which was the sole wound under discussion for the remainder of that page of testimony. Moreover, on the very next page (2H 128), Specter asks, "Did you observe any other opening or hole of any sort in the head itself... a hole which would be below the large area of skull which was absent?" And Greer replies, "No, sir; I didn't. No other one...No, sir; I didn't."

It is for Cohen to say whether he is a careless student of the testimony or whether he was seeking to mislead your readers.

As for Kellerman, he placed the bullet wound in question in the hairline, while the schematic drawings executed in March 1964 (Commission Exhibits 386 and 388, Figures 1 and 3 in the article) place it considerably higher. Moreover, Kellerman indicated that the small wound was to the right of the right ear--that is, not in the back of the head but in the sideburn or hairline above the right cheek, if one takes him literally (2H 81). Since his statements, at best, are ambiguous, Cohen might at least have qualified his claim that Kellerman referred to a small hole at the base of the skull.

Cohen also cites the Sibert-O'Neill report as evidence of a small wound in back of the head, by quoting from their report a sentence dealing with x-rays showing the path of disintegrated fragments of a missile. But he cannily avoids acknowledging that nowhere in the Sibert-O'Neill report is there a mention of any small bullet hole in the back of the head.

Singular, is it not, that if such a small wound of entry existed, the two FBI agents rely upon x-rays, not on the wound itself, to infer that the missile entered the back of the skull.

Greer did not see this wound but he explains (2H 128) that he did not examine the head closely. What of agent Clinton Hill, who was called in expressly to view the wounds? He does not testify to the existence of that small wound in the back of the head--he never mentions such a wound, and counsel Specter does not ask about it.

At this point, the Commission's unwavering friends may wish to fall back upon the notorious unreliability of eyewitnesses. Let them. But let them explain also how it is that in a detailed autopsy diagram of the damage to the skull (CE 397, page 46 of Volume XVII) there is no small bullet wound of entrance.

Cohen relates Curtis Crawford's theory of the misplaced wound in the back in the autopsy diagram (your Figure 5). Well, theories have now been outstripped by the facts: according to The New York Times of 11/25/66, Dr. Boswell states that he made a diagram error--a dot that placed the wound incorrectly--and that he would have been more careful had he known that the diagram would become public record. So, while we can still admire the ingenious rationalization which issued from Crawford via Cohen, it is just not true. (And I suspect that many other such exercises in extrication performed with such unflagging optimism by the diehard loyalists eventually will prove to be specious, too.)

Whatever the cause of the misplaced back wound (a misplacement which so miraculously corresponds with the mistaken descriptions of the federal agents and with the position of the clothing holes and with the chalk-mark on the back of the stand-in for the President in the reenactments of 5/24/64--marked, according to the Warren Report, "at the point where the bullet entered"--Cohen asks us to note the writing in the right-hand margin, "14 cm." etc. But he fails to acknowledge that the measurements in the margin are given only for that wound, not for any other insert in the diagram, and in a different handwriting than that of the other marginal notes.

The Commission's friends have a hard row to hoe; perhaps that is why they attempt constantly to shift the onus to the critics, asking them on the basis of confused, contradictory, uncertain, and unknown "evidence" to construct a better hypothesis. I think that they merely pretend to miss the point, not that they miss it. It is a measure of their desperation that they seek to foster an illusion of parity between the Commission and its critics. A letter to the editor of the Saturday Review (11/19/66) states the real situation succinctly:

"One must have a clear idea of the role of the Warren Report critic. The critic is permitted to select facts, because if only one fact contradicts the Report on one of its conclusions,

the whole Report ~~is~~ is cast into doubt. Thus anyone who has found some legitimate complaint about the accuracy of the Report deserves to be heard. Only until every critic is answered on every point can the Warren Report be judged valid."

Another letter in the same issue says, "Mr. Fein would have us believe that, everything considered, the inadequacies of the critics and those of the Commission cancel out in a strange equation where the critics are left with nothing and the Commission comes out with a compellingly reasonable credibility." I would add: And Mr. Cohen, and Mr. Crawford, and Mr. Bickel. Which only goes to show that men with academic honors can be fatuous with the same ease as they can be unjust, untruthful, and unimpressive.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12 Street
New York, N.Y. 10014

cc: Mr. Jacob Cohen
Mr. Curtis Crawford
Mr. Vincent Salandria
Mr. Raymond Marcus
Mr. M. S. Aronson
Mr. Peter Kihss