

## Assassination Debate

David Belin, in "The Case Against Conspiracy" (July 15), asserts that the House Select Committee on Assassinations was wrong about a second gunman shooting at President Kennedy. He suggests that the committee's finding was based "almost solely" on acoustic testing, yet he does not review the *additional* evidence.

In fact, a policeman, a Secret Service agent and a Korean War veteran (over whose head the third shot was fired), among others, said they heard the knoll shot. Others saw smoke. (Modern guns do emit white gases.) Footprints were also found behind the knoll fence, and a policeman accosted, but released, an individual behind the fence, who identified himself as a Secret Service agent, even though no agents acknowledged having been there.

Second, Mr. Belin asks: Why no cartridge case? If only one shot is fired, no case need be ejected. Why only one shot? Oswald's third shot hit the President's head .7 of a second after the second gunman fired. Obviously, the knoll gunman thought he had killed Kennedy. Why fire again?

Why no motorcycle sounds on the tape of the race to Parkland? They are, in fact, present. Why no police sirens heard immediately? The officer remained in the plaza for a time. Mr. Belin then suggests the motorcycle itself was elsewhere, even though the com-

mittee published photos of the officer in the plaza in the right place at the right time.

Third, questioning the committee's rejection of Ruby's supposed motive — to save Mrs. Kennedy from having to return for a trial — Mr. Belin suggests Ruby was not part of a conspiracy. Rabbi Silverman's testimony that Ruby told him he had told a policeman of the motive before he saw his lawyer may be accepted without question. (Special Agent Sorrels so told the Warren Commission.) In fact, Ruby probably lied to his rabbi and to Sorrels about his true motive. But Silverman's or Sorrel's testimony is not determinative of the ultimate issue. The committee only found that Ruby's 1967 note to his second lawyer suggests that the motive was false, not that it was wholly fabricated by the first lawyer.

Fourth, to underwrite the motive story, Mr. Belin points to a 1964 polygraph, given by one of the F.B.I.'s "ablest." He does not note that Ruby was diagnosed as a "psychotic depressive," and that the F.B.I. recommended that the commission *not* rely on the test, a recommendation the Warren Commission followed.

Mr. Belin complains that he was not permitted to testify [before the committee] in public session in the [Warren] Commission's defense. He was given an opportunity to appear in executive session or by deposition; he could have made his deposition public. Other Warren Commission lawyers, including its general counsel, followed this procedure. Mr. Belin was not called as a witness in a public session because a review of his work showed . . . he did not play a key role in the work of the commission.

I have been associated with the work of Congressional committees for almost 20 years. No committee that I have ever worked with was more democratic, knowledgeable, or more in control of its own processes than the Select

Committee. Indeed, the Select Committee was probably more democratic, knowledgeable, and more in control of its processes than was the Warren Commission. Witness the dissents to the work of the committee, but not of the commission.

The committee's investigation was not held entirely in public for obvious reasons. Classified information was involved. Reputations were at stake. The committee had a duty, under House rules, to evaluate its evidence before it was made public. Even though many allegations proved to be irresponsible, they had to be checked out, first confidentially.

Last, Mr. Belin grumbles that the committee made up its mind at the last minute. The committee had the basic acoustical evidence in July. It knew *then* what it portended. It all depended on what the final verdict of the scientists was. That came in November. When should the committee have made up its mind, except at the end when all the evidence was in?

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