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A BAD ANALOGY

Friend Hoch,

Have you seen the Zapruder film of the assassination of President Kennedy? It takes less than thirty seconds to run but is unique. It is the only documentary of a political murder we have. Brady did not ~~record~~ ^{photograph} Lincoln's assassination, nor his successors those of Garfield and McKinley. The murder of Huey Long was not recorded on film, nor was the killing of Martin Luther King. The Los Angeles Police Department, reported Robert Kaiser, "spent several thousand dollars on a twenty-minute documentary on the assassination (of RFK), which proved nothing since none of the news film they could assemble showed the shooting itself" (RFK Must Die, p.260).

The Zapruder film shows the shooting, at least the impact of the fatal part of it. Life magazine owns the original film and, exercising its property rights in the possession of so vital a piece of evidence, refuses to release it for public exhibition. But a copy of the film has been available to the public in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., since the late summer of 1965 and was exhibited repeatedly in New Orleans during the trial of Clay Shaw for conspiracy to murder President Kennedy. It is my understanding a bootleg copy of the film has been run on the West Coast.

Viewing the film ^{is} relevance for the controversy arising from your paper, An Experimental Study of the Motion Produced By the Fatal Shot in the Assassination of President Kennedy, in which physics Nobelist Luis W. Alvarez was involved.



By "film" is meant the 16mm color motion picture taken in Dealey Plaza in Dallas by Abraham Zapruder on November 22, 1963, not the still frames derived from the film. The difference between film and frames is crucial. The frames have importance but are essentially frozen moments of a continuum and are conducive, therefore, to innocent misinterpretation. They also lend themselves to intentional distortion, for example, by manipulation of sequence or partial omission. Continuity of motion in the film precludes such deliberate falsification and reduces the likelihood of misinterpretation; the film is superior to the frames in integrity and meaning. Indeed, the frames should not be discussed apart from reference to the film; the latter, on the other hand, stands on its own running footage, so to speak.

The filmⁿ is as distinct from the frames derived from it, is virtually the only incontrovertible piece of "hard" evidence in the assassination. All the other "hard" evidence - rifle, bullets, prints, cars, clothing, autopsy - as well as eye- and earwitness testimony, is shrouded in ambiguity, is made doubtful by contradictory evidence, and in some instances is invalidated by perjury. Only the film is definitive, irrefutable.

The film^{is} selfevident force. It shows Kennedy, who^e struck factually, hurled violently backward, rebounding from the rear seat of the limousine in which he was riding, and spinning off to his left into his wife's arms. When the film was¹

shown during Shaw's trial, "The murder scene, filmed by Abraham Zapruder, Dallas dress manufacturer," wrote Martih Waldron in the N.Y. Times of Feb. 14, 1969, "drew an audible response from the crowded courtroom as the President's head seemed to explode when struck by a bullet. In the film, the President appeared to be knocked backward against the rear seat where he was seated with his wife." And Penn Jones, Jr. who had visited the National Archives but had not seen the film, wrote in the Midlothian Mirror of Feb, 20, 1969, "I have seen the ^f film and I can well understand why it has not been shown to the American people...After seeing the film I sat stunned."

The accumulated experience of mankind speaks in the instant conclusion that leaps with speed greater than light from eye to mind, when seeing the film; Kennedy was hit from a point in front and to the right of his limousine - the greasy knoll is indicated. Corroboratory evidence supports the testimony of the film. Euclidean logic is not needed to conclude: Kennedy was caught in an enfilade; the autopsy was falsified; the government's case against Oswald was a frame-up. The intuition of millions the world over is confirmed by the Zapruder film: the murder of the head of the ~~the~~ most powerful state in history was the work of a conspiracy.

Only men with strong motivation for doing so would fail to acknowledge the clear testimony of the Zapruder film, seek to minimize or impugn it, or attempt to suppress it. The published transcript of the Warren Commission hearings of June 4, 1964, indicates no reaction on the part of McCloy, Dulles, and Ford - their colleagues being absent - when

witness Lyndal L. Shaneyfelt¹, FBI expert in the optical,~~me-~~
mechanical, chemical, police, and forensic aspects of pho-
tography, exhibited copies of the films taken by Muchmore,
Nix, and Zapruder on Nov. 22, 1963. If the transcript is
true, no questions were put to Shaneyfelt about the testimony
of the film; the Commissioners made no comment. The barren
transcript is negative proof of the import of the film. ~~that~~

~~For~~ had it supported the official thesis of the origin of the
fatal shot, questions directed to that point undoubtedly
would have been put to Shaneyfelt. The Commissioners, unable
to accept the clear evidence of the film, yet unable to
controvert it, were silent about its crucial importance. So
too was their Report which, with dishonest intent, discusses
film and frames as indistinguishable from each other.

Some critics of the Commission also have done less than
justice to the film. In no published article or book
which I have read, except Sylvia Meagher's Accessories After
the Fact - isn't that a good title? - have I found ^erecognition
of the vital significance of the film. Six references to it
in Park Lane's ¹Rush to Judgment are made in connection with
ballistic and related problems. But the book does not
distinguish film from frames and fails altogether to project
the film as decisive evidence of frame-up and conspiracy.

Fil^m and ^rframes are confused in Epstein's Inquest and in his
Counterplot. Worse, he opines on page 153 of Inquest: "The
Zapruder film shows that the assassination could have been
committed by one man alone only under one condition, that

Kennedy and Connally were hit by the same bullet. The film, of course, demonstrates exactly the opposite.

When Epstein wrote that sentence he was playing Dwight Macdonald's profitable game of attacking the Warren Commission on secondary grounds while supporting its findings in whole or in part. That was in 1965. Four years later Epstein's establishmentarian bias, which had flowered as his career advanced, led him to suggest in an article in the ~~NY Times~~ N.Y. Times Magazine Section of April 20, 1969, the backward thrust of Kennedy's body after the fatal shot, was a deduction of "cause from effect" which could be explained by "acceleration of the President's car for a split second or a neurological reaction."

What neurological reaction would account for the gyrations of Kennedy's body? Epstein did not bother to say; probably he had no idea. But if the backward thrust is explicable by sudden acceleration of the limousine, how account for the leftward motion of the moribund President? Epstein knew, when he wrote ^{the} that article, Governor Connally, Mrs. Connally, Secret Service Agents Greer and Kellerman who were in the front seats of the Presidential limousine on the fatal day, and S.S. Agent Hill who climbed aboard the back and saved Mrs. Kennedy from falling from the car, all testified without hesitation, doubt, or reservation, the limousine accelerated after Kennedy was struck fatally.

[I notice that in quoting me in your paper you include the thought which occurred to me in 1965 on seeing the Zapruder film: "It is within the realm of speculative possibility that the violent backward thrust of the President was caused by the sudden acceleration of the limousine..." But you omitted the immediately following sentences which were intended in advance to controvert what I foresaw would be urged by supporters of the Commission against the forceful evidence of the film: "Against that thesis is the fact that Mrs. Kennedy is obviously not thrust back but maintains her position while the President gyrates back, forward, and into her arms. Against that thesis, ~~is~~ also, is the testimony of Governor and Mrs. Connally, as noted ~~in~~ in the Warren Commission Report: 'Mrs. Connally heard a second shot fired and pulled her husband down into her lap... The Governor was lying with his head on his wife's lap when he heard a shot hit the President. At that point, both Governor and Mrs. Connally observed brain tissue splattered over the interior of the car. According to Governor and Mrs. Connally, it was after this shot that Kellerman issued his emergency ~~is~~ instructions and the car accelerated' (Report, p.50). No other testimony relating to this point is adduced in the Report and the Commission apparently accepted the testimony of the Governor and his wife as accurate and factual."

What motivated your omission of the foregoing sentences? Why did you mutilate my thought? Was it unintentional or

consciously purposeful? Either way, did it flow from recognition of its incompatibility with the trend of your thinking?

What were you thinking? What Kennedy, shot fatally, gyrated backward, forward, and to his left in reaction to a bullet striking the back of his head? How did you come by such an idea? Certainly it was not a result of seeing the Zapruder film. It was suggested to you, you wrote in your paper, by Alvarez, a known supporter of the Warren Commission who three years before had placed his scientific expertise at the disposal of CBS to interpret the Zapruder frames in support of the Warren Commission frame-up of Oswald.

And you undertook to validate Alvarez' theory. Why? What motivated you? Did you, perhaps, see yourself working in the great tradition of science to ^{test} ~~test~~ theory? Or were you seeking recognition and who knows what else by building a bridge from opposition to support of the Warren Commission? Was there another motivation?

Whatever the reason, you had bullets shot into "several water-and-gelatin filled containers," only to find the results "inconclusive." And "toy rubber balls filled with gelatin..." alas, "tended to go away from the gun" when struck by bullets.

Why didn't you stop there? What impelled you to continue? Who or what was the demiurge? Was it Alvarez? Or, like the Warren Commission, were you bent on obtaining a predetermined result?

Whose inspiration was it, finally, to use melons? And honeydews rather than Persians, Cranshaws, cantaloupes, water-melons, or numerous other species? And taped honeydews at that! Incidentally, to be conscientiously and meticulously scientific, as your distinguished colleague surely knows, you should have stipulated the dimensions and kind of tape used, its adhesive and tensile strengths, and all other pertinent physical data; and of course the area of coverage by tape of each melon into which bullets were fired. We ought to be as scrupulously exact in these ^{particulars} ~~particulars~~ as was the late lamented Warren Commission. Else we are unworthy of our responsibility as investigators of murder and seekers of truth.

But why should we cavil about details when great issues are at stake? Let us agree you achieved the "rocket" effect you wanted in causing melons to "recoil toward the gun." Facts are facts! But how can we agree that you "present evidence that the backward recoil of President ~~g~~ Kennedy's head and body is consistent with the effect of a single shot coming from the rear?

Were you able to get the melons to move toward the gun, then away from it violently, and spin off to their left? Did you try? Your paper does not say. Will you arrange for further tests to duplicate all the motions of Kennedy's body when struck fatally? Will you stick to melons or will you try other fruits and vegetables? What does Alvarez think of the idea?

Excuse me! I get carried away by these secondary considerations. Suppose we ~~agree~~ were to agree for the sake of discussion the behavior of your melons is consistent ~~it~~ with the autopsy and Commission findings. What would be established? A possibility, you think, as Alvarez does, Kennedy was hit fatally by a bullet fired from the rear. But a possibility is not evidence, either scientific or legal. And a melon, even a taped melon, is not analagous, physically or mentally to a man's head, certainly not to a Nobelist's, and not even to a politician's or a Commission critic's. You would have been better advised, I believe, to point the difference in behavior between melons under fire and the specific motions of Kennedy's torso, than to seek identity between them.

Moreover, there is the evidence of the Zapruder film. If you want to emulate Gallileo who looked through his telescope and opposed the sacrosanct dogma of Aristotle, go to the ~~xxx~~ Archives, see the Zapruder film and frames, ~~study the evidence, true and false, from the point of view of the evidence of the film,~~ and proclaim: Kennedy was the victim of a bullet fired from the right ^h ballistically, ~~and politically~~; the government of the United States stigmatized Oswald without trial as a murderer in order to falsify ^h the nature of the assassination and conceal its source. *But the task of truth seekers is to demonstrate Kennedy was hit from the right - politically.*