

November 23, 1966

Please return to
Meagher

Dear Penn,

This week's Life Zapruder-Connally piece (Nov. 25) is an important half-loaf of truth. By presenting photos which prove that the ~~xi~~ double-hit theory is untenable, they invalidate the entire Report -- although limiting themselves only to the ridiculously conservative conclusion that "reasonable and disturbing" doubt remains that more than one assassin was~~x~~ involved.

It is now clear that growing segments of the establishment feel a new "investigation" is needed. From the way many of these people restrict the intended role of such an investigation ("did Oswald have an accomplice?") it seems they still are less interested in finding the truth than in discovering a more tenable lie to which they can cling.

They hope, that since it is now becoming obvious even to them that the double-hit theory cannot be sustained, that some new investigation ("Son of Warren Report"?) may find some substitute that will somehow leave the Oswald-the-lone-assassin ~~xxxxxxxx~~ hogwash unspilled. They won't succeed, but they will certainly try.

What the above means, I believe, is that ~~the~~ considering the enormous circulation and impact of Life and its abandonment of the Commission's key hypothesis, a point by point refutation of what Cohen says in support of it may seem akin to dead-horse beating. Nevertheless, with his article in TheNation, July 11, '66, and his more recent one in Frontier, Nov. '66, Cohen has clearly emerged as the most ~~so~~ sophisticated of Commission apologists. Therefore, some detailed examination of his views may be in order.

--or, at least, his stooge's--

To begin with, as does Commission counsel Norman Redlich, ~~xi~~ Cohen agrees that "the double hit is indispensable to the Commission's single~~x~~ assassin theory", and that if the shooting didn't happen just the way the Commission~~s~~ says, it ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ " . . . mean more than one assassin".

I also agree with Cohen when he says that when the critics challenge the Commission's version as to the number, timing, and direction of the shots, they are saying, in effect, that the autopsy records were falsified.

By coupling these two propositions, Cohen attempts to raise the barrier of unthinkable thoughts, and by so doing seeks to scare off all those who cannot face the idea of official falsification. So be it. If the autopsy report in evidence was true, the bullet escaping from JFK's throat at high speed would ~~xxxxxx~~, as the Commission says, almost certainly have struck Connally; or at least the back of the jump-seat. (The Commission itself cites this as proof that its ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ double hit theory must be true. Obviously if you start with the proposition that a high speed descending bullet exited JFK's throat, it had to go somewhere; therefore, its theory is "confirmed". -- an outstanding example of the Commission starting from an unproven or demonstrably false premise, and then proceeding "logically" to reach its unproven or demonstrably false conclusion.)

not connected with the assassin's pen
not in connection with the assassin's pen

In this case, since the Zapruder film proves Connally was struck by a separate bullet, and since Frazier says there was no bullet damage in the seat (or to any ~~other~~ other part of the interior of the passenger compartment), it is clear that the bullet did not exit from JFK's throat. Therefore, the autopsy report is a false document. The facts indicate this, and -- despite Cohen's "challenge" -- the critics are under no obligation to demonstrate how the falsification was accomplished.

Cohen resolves the ~~B~~ famous FBI Report/Warren Report discrepancy re the autopsy in the now familiar fashion; saying that the December 9 FBI report was based on erroneous early speculation of the autopsy surgeons overheard by agents Sibert and O'Neill. For some reason, he neglects to mention the FBI supplemental report of January 13, 1964, which has the FBI still saying -- seven weeks after the assassination--that the bullet which struck JFK's back did not exit the front, and adds the further detail that it penetrated less than a finger's length into his back.

Without wishing in any way to appear to be vouching for the accuracy of these FBI reports, it's obvious that Cohen, and other Commission apologists as well, ~~have a choice of two horns on which to impale public faith in the Warren Commission's conclusions:~~ here have a choice of two horns on which to impale public ~~fact~~ faith in the Warren Commission's conclusions:

Either the FBI is correct in saying the bullet did not exit JFK's throat, which would immediately consign the entire Report to the trash can; or ~~else~~, the FBI was so incompetent that seven weeks after the autopsy it was still furnishing the Commission with a decisively erroneous version of the President's wounds. If the latter is indeed the case, as Cohen professes to believe, then it logically follows that confidence in the Warren Report ~~should be reduced to zero~~ should be reduced to zero; for it was based overwhelmingly on evidence developed, evaluated, and vouched for by the same FBI.

But there is nothing in the recorded statements of Commission apologists--any more than in those of the Commission itself-- to warrant the assumption ~~that~~ they are willing to go where logic leads; and so it probably makes little difference to Cohen that four months after the autopsy report (the accurate one, we are assured) supposedly proved ~~that~~ the ~~bullet~~ bullet had exited from JFK's throat, Commission member Dulles was totally unaware of that alleged fact:(v.2, p.368)

Mr. Dulles: Did the President's body remain on the stretcher while he was in the hospital? . . . Otherwise it seems to me the bullet would have to have been ejected from the body before he was taken or put in the bed in the hospital.

^a
Pick horns, Mr. Cohen. Meanwhile, the rest of us need not be frightened by Cohen's admonition that by not accepting the Commission's version we are accusing the autopsy surgeons ~~of falsification~~ ~~and those from whom they received relevant orders--of falsification.~~ We mustn't forget the fraudulent

marksmanship tests, in which three of the top riflemen in the country were chosen to "duplicate" the alleged feat of Oswald, who, the evidence indicates was not a good shot; and in which the experts were allowed unlimited time for their first shot, unlike the split-second ~~time~~ Oswald would have had, according to the Commission's version; and which were conducted under ideal rifle range conditions without the noise and distraction of a motorcade; and which allowed the experts to fire from a thirty-foot tower, instead of the almost sixty-foot height of the sixth floor of the TSBD; and in which they fired at three stationary upper-torso silhouette targets, instead of moving targets; and in which not one of the eighteen shots fired by the three experts struck the head or neck area of the targets (v.17,;.261-262).

Is it really so difficult to imagine that those capable of ordering such "tests" ~~in~~ the national interest, no doubt-- are incapable of ordering falsified autopsy reports, likewise in the national interest? Professor of History Cohen really can't be that naive. Counsel Redlich's quote in Epstein's book, "To say they were hit by separate bullets is synonymous with saying there were two assassins" can be amended by adding ". . . and is also synonymous with saying the autopsy reports were falsified".

Cohen goes to considerable lengths to demonstrate that the movement of JFK's head ". . . abruptly to the left . . ." is as consistent with the head shot originating from the TSBD as from the Knoll; and since he accepts the final autopsy report as gospel, which allowed only for a single head-entry, and that, from the rear, he eliminates the knoll as a shot source. Cohen says his analysis of the Zapruder frames satisfies him that JFK was already turning toward his left at frame 309, and therefore a shot from the rear at 313 could easily snap it to the left -- according to instructions given him by Physics Professor Lang of Brandeis.

As with the Commission, so with Cohen; false premise plus logic equals false conclusion. If Cohen sees JFK's head turning toward the left in 309-313, he has unique powers of observation, for he has seen something no one else has owned up to seeing. I am looking at enlargements of these very frames as I write, and there is absolutely no indication of any such turning motion.

While detecting an undetectable turn in 309-313, Cohen (and perhaps ~~the~~ Prof. Lang also?) evidently avoided detecting a very obvious motion that occurs at the same time: that JFK's head was driven not only to the left, as Cohen notes, but also sharply backward, bouncing off the seat back less than one-half second after the bullet's impact. Perhaps Cohen's tunnel-vision in defense of the Warren Report prevented him from seeing this dramatic backward motion. However, if he did note it (and for some unimaginable reason forgot to mention it) it would be interesting to hear whether he was instructed by Prof. Lang on this apparent negation of physical laws; and if so, even more interesting to know what in Prof. Lang's training supports the thesis that an object when struck from the rear immediately moves to the rear. I was taught the opposite in junior high school, which only confirmed what I had already observed in my limited acquaintance with pool, croquet, and marbles.

Conceding the obvious, Cohen acknowledges that the undistorted appearance of "surprisingly shapely" 399 is a problem. He says, noting that bullet 399 did a ". . . considerable amount of damage . . ." that ". . . some . . . persons ~~(with opinions)~~ whose opinions were sought by the Commission were dubious, even incredulous, that the bullet could have executed the double hit, and remained so unscarred. Other opinion supported the Commission's theory." ~~As with~~ "As with many other pivotal points in the Commission's case, the experts disagreed, and there is an expert for each of many theories."

Here Cohen conveys the impression that expert opinion was equally divided on the question; yet he cites no such supporting witnesses, nor can he. The most charitable thing one can say about this particular statement of Cohen's is that he doesn't know what he's talking about. The fact is not a single witness questioned by the Commission supported its contention that 399 had scored the double hit, or even that it ~~could have~~ caused all of the Governor's wounds; unless one chooses to consider as support ~~for~~ Dr. Gregory's reply when questioned about the wrist wound:

Mr. Specter: What opinion . . . do you have . . . whether (399) could have produced the (wrist) wound . . . and remained as intact as it is . . . ?

Dr. Gregory: The only deformity . . . is at the base . . . where it joined the cartridge . . . the only way this ~~it~~ missile could have produced this wound is to have entered the wrist backward . . . but that is the ~~the~~ only possible explanation I could offer to correlate this missile with this particular wound.

As to the tests conducted for the Commission by army wound-ballistics expert Dr. Alfred G. Olivier, Cohen informs us they were not designed to determine if 399 could have survived the double hit, but only to see if it could have passed through a human neck, and still retain sufficient speed to ~~may~~ cause all of Connally's wounds. But Olivier himself tells the Commission he was ~~was~~ ". . . in charge of a series of tests performed to determine certain wound ballistics on circumstances analagous to the underlying facts of wounds inflicted on President Kennedy and Governor Connally on November 22, 1963."

However, even assuming Cohen is correct as to the purpose, such a test would be totally irrelevant--as Cohen knows--to the crucial question; could a bullet have ~~inflicted~~ the required multiple wounds and emerge as pristine as 399?

Despite Dr. Olivier's announced purpose, his own description of his tests showed no attempt whatever to duplicate the alleged conditions of 399, for no attempt was made to fire single bullets simultaneously through the various simulation materials (gelatin and horsemeat for JFK's neck, a goat for Connally's body, a cadaver forearm for the Governor's wrist).

Cohen tries to justify the Commission's failure to even attempt a reasonable recreation of the Commission's key hypothesis by telling us how ~~was~~ extremely remote the possibility would be of

duplicating " . . . each carom, tumble and body position exactly as they were, or are alleged to have been". Here Cohen proves, if nothing else, his ability to demolish his own straw man; for no one has suggested that in order to have any validity, such tests would have to do any such thing. What would be required, as Cohen surely understands, is that the alleged original conditions ~~x~~ be duplicated insofar as possible. Cohen is sorry the Commission's scientists didn't even try, and he characterizes its efforts to account for 399's remarkably clean shape as "disappointing". Only demonologists would dare suggest an obvious alternative motive -- deception.

Cohen's article in Frontier carries the by now world-famous photo of bullet 399. For some reason, it does not carry a photo of Ex. 856, and makes no specific mention of it; although it is the only test bullet presented in evidence which had been fired through a cadaver wrist. A glance at these two photos immediately reveals the gross understatement of Cohen's acknowledgement, ". . . the fact is that none of the test bullets produced . . . were as unutilated as Ex. 399".

It appears that Dr. Olivier's tests, while furnishing no comfort whatever to double-hit enthusiasts, are not completely valueless; for the photo of wrist-test bullet 856 is mute evidence that 399 cannot be the missile that smashed Connally's wrist. Since other evidence indicates it could not have caused his remaining wounds (see this author's "The Bastard Bullet"), and yet be found on his stretcher as a natural course of events; it is extremely probable--Cohen notwithstanding--that 399 was indeed planted.

But to Cohen, the "little surprise" of 399's immaculate condition leads him right back to the certainty that it is not only legitimate, but that it performed exactly as the Commission says. Since the critics say otherwise, he demands they explain what happened to the actual assassination bullets. I don't know, Mr. Cohen. I don't have ~~x~~ them. Neither can I supply the names of other assassins, as Mr. Dulles requests in Look, July 12, 1966. But the events of recent weeks gives one hope that the burden of discovering and exposing those who plotted and carried out the murder of President Kennedy will not much longer be left to a tiny handful of dedicated citizens scattered around the country. Increasingly large numbers of citizens are learning what heretofore has been known by relatively few; ~~that regardless~~ that the Warren ~~Report~~ Commission's conclusions simply will not bear close inspection.

Regardless of the character and intentions of the individuals responsible for it, and despite the intellectual slight-of-hand engaged in by Commission apologists like Mr. Cohen, the Warren Report will live in infamy as the most massively fraudulent official document ever foisted on the public in a free society.

Penn -- as you can see, what started as a letter ended almost as an article. I intend to submit it to TMO and Liberation, but I hope, in the meantime, it will be of use to you in your meeting with Cohen. I ~~wx~~ will send my "Bastard Bullet" article to you in a couple of days. A very happy Thanksgiving to you, L.A., and your family.

Sincerely,

PANK