

28 November 1966

The Editor
Frontier
1134 Westwood Blvd.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90024

Dear Sir,

In his article on the Warren Report and its critics in your November issue, Jacob Cohen invokes the testimony of Secret Service agent William Greer among his "proofs" of the existence of a small bullet entry wound in the back of the President's head. He quotes a passage of Greer's testimony without supplying a citation. Let me supply it for him: 2H 127. A reading of that page makes it quite clear that it was the back wound that was under discussion and only the back wound; the words "or back of the head" seem to be nothing more than a stenographer's mistake. But on the very next page of the same volume (2H 128) we find this passage of testimony:

Specter Did you observe any other opening or hole of any sort in the head itself?

Greer No, sir; I didn't. No other one.

Specter Specifically did you observe a hole which would be below the large area of skull which was absent?

Greer No, sir; I didn't.

Is there any doubt that Greer did not corroborate the existence of that small entrance wound in the back of the head? It remains only for Cohen to explain whether he is a careless student of the testimony or whether, in quoting the passage of Greer's testimony that he quoted, he was seeking deliberately to mislead your readers.

Cohen also invokes the testimony of Kellerman; he neglects to say that Kellerman described the wound as situated in the hairline (the schematic drawings, Commission Exhibits 386 and 388 in your Figures 1 and 3, place it considerably higher) to the right of the ear (2H 81). Taking that literally, that would place the small wound in the sideburn or above the right cheek. Since the testimony is, at best, ambiguous, Cohen might at least have qualified his claim that Kellerman referred to a small hole at the base of the skull.

Is the Sibert-O'Neill report to be considered as evidence of a small wound in back of the head, as Cohen suggests? He quotes a sentence from their report dealing with x-rays purporting to show the path of disintegrated fragments of a missile, but he maintains careful silence on the really salient point—that nowhere in the Sibert-O'Neill report is there any mention of a small bullet wound in the back of the head.

Singular, is it not, that if such a small wound of entry existed, the two FBI agents rely on x-rays, but make no reference to the actual wound, to infer that the missile entered the back of the skull.

Greer did not see this wound but he explains that he did not examine the head closely. What of agent Clinton Hill, who was called in expressly to view the wounds? Hill (like Sibert and O'Neill) does not mention the existence of a small wound in the back of the head, nor does counsel Specter ask about it.

At this point, the apologists for the Warren Report invariably fall back on the notorious unreliability of eyewitnesses. I hope that Jacob Cohen will not try to fall back on such a facile and evasive alibi. But if he does, then let him explain how it is that in the detailed autopsy diagram of the damage to the skull (CE 397 on page 46 of Volume XVII) there is no small bullet wound.

Turning to the other autopsy diagram (your Figure 5), Cohen puts forward Curtis Crawford's theory of how the wound that should have been diagrammed by a dot in or near the neck was inserted considerably lower. Indeed, the theory may have seemed to have a degree of plausibility. But theories have now been outstripped by events: according to the New York Times (11/25/66), Dr. Boswell now states that he made a diagram error—a dot that placed the wound incorrectly. (He would have been more careful had he known that the diagram would become public record, he says.) So, while we can still admire the ingenuous rationalization offered us by the resourceful Crawford via Cohen, it just isn't valid. And I suspect that many other such exercises in extrication performed with unflagging hopefulness by the dishard faithful eventually will prove to be specious, too.

Whatever the cause, we have a misplaced back wound on the autopsy diagram—misplaced in a way that corresponds so miraculously with the "mistaken" descriptions given by the federal agents, with the position of the clothing holes, and with the chalk-mark on the back of the stand-in for the President in the reenactment of 5/24/64—marked, according to the Warren Report (WR 97), "at the point where the bullet entered." Cohen, like Boswell, asks us to be guided not by the position of the dot but by the measurements written in the margin ("14 cm." etc.). But he fails to acknowledge that the measurements in the margin are given only for that wound and not for any other marking on the diagram (and in a different handwriting from that of the other marginal notes).

Arguing against a shot from the grassy knoll, Cohen points out that photographs of onlookers standing with their backs to the knoll, about three seconds after Kennedy was first shot, show them looking straight ahead, not back toward an explosion. Hasn't he seen photographs of onlookers in that position who threw themselves to the ground, to shield a child or children with their bodies—"apparently the bullets had whizzed directly over their heads," said a story in the Dallas Morning News of 11/23/63 (p. 3).

The Commission's friends have a hard row to hoe; perhaps that is why they try constantly to shift the onus to the critics, demanding that they construct a better hypothesis than the Commission did, on the foundation of confused, contradictory, uncertain, and unknown "evidence." It is a measure of their desperation and inability to rescue the Commission that they seek to foster an illusion of parity between the Commission and its critics. The real situation is stated succinctly in a letter to the editor of the Saturday Review of 11/19/66:

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 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.

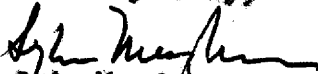
Another letter in the same issue says,

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 compelling reasonable credibility.

Mr. Fein, and I would add Mr. Cohen, Mr. Crawford, and Mr. Bickel, among others. Their sophistries may be more sophisticated than those of the Commission, which has not condescended to speak out in its own defense by refuting with facts the charges of the critics, but they will not do. The spokesmen for the Warren Report have not succeeded in rehabilitating that tainted document; and those who were not taken in by the original indignities to the facts certainly will not be seduced by the misrepresentation of evidence, the facile improvisations, and the pseudo-logic of the Cohens. Nor by the smears and innuendo, wisecracks and demagoguery, to which some of the Commission's friends resort in an effort to divert attention from the bankruptcy of their arguments.

I have limited myself to commenting only on a few of Jacob Cohen's claims, since one of my colleagues has already written a massive and devastating rebuttal, disposing of his other points.

Yours very truly,


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