

3 April 1975

Mr. Tom Snyder
"Tomorrow" Program
Channel 4
NBC-TV
New York City

Dear Mr. Snyder:

Re: Arlen Specter interview

To establish my credentials for writing to you on your interview of Arlen Specter, I should mention the fact that I am the author of Accessories After the Fact: The Warren Commission, the Authorities, and the Report (Bobbs-Merrill, 1967) and The Subject Index to the Warren Report and the Hearings and Exhibits (Scarecrow Press, 1966), and the author also of numerous magazine articles about the Oswald case.

The Specter interview last night was disturbing and unfortunate, mainly because you were not sufficiently familiar with the evidentiary issues to challenge Specter's misleading presentation. Take for example the single-bullet lone-assassin theory. Certain tests must be satisfied if that theory is to be viable: (1) The bullet wound in the President's back must be higher than the bullet wound at the Adam's apple. (2) The President and the Governor would have had to be struck simultaneously by the same bullet. (3) The metallic fragments deposited in the two men had to weigh less than the grains of metal missing from the stretcher bullet. (4) The condition of the stretcher bullet had to be compatible with a bullet impacting and fracturing hard bone. (5) The stretcher bullet and all other bullet fragments and residues must have identicality and a common origin as to composition and source.

The location of the wound in the President's back has been the subject of steadfast controversy. There is a large body of evidence

in the Warren Commission's own hearings and exhibits which locates that back wound well below the wound at the Adam's apple. At a Warren Commission closed meeting held on 27 January 1964, about a month after the Commission had received the autopsy report, J. Lee Rankin, the General Counsel, stated:

There is a great range of material in regard to the wounds, and the autopsy and this point of exit or entrance of the bullet in the front of the neck...We have an explanation there in the autopsy that probably a fragment came out the front of the neck ...we have the picture of where the bullet entered the back, that the bullet entered below the shoulder blade...(Excerpt from transcript of meeting of 27 January 1964, National Archives, Washington, D.C.) (Emphasis added.)

This statement by Rankin incontestably corroborates other, extensive evidence that the wound in the back was too low to accommodate the single-bullet theory. That alone disqualifies the theory. Moreover, one must infer from this and other statements in the transcript of the meeting that the autopsy report under discussion on 27 January 1964 is radically different from the undated autopsy report later published as an appendix of the Warren Report.

If we turn now to the simultaneity of the impact of the bullet on the President and the Governor, we find that the Governor has insisted unshakeably that he was hit by a separate bullet after the shot that produced the President's non-fatal wound. We also have objective and irrefutable evidence in the Zapruder film that the Governor was indeed hit at least some 15 frames after the President was hit. In short, the two men were not hit closely enough together to admit that the same bullet hit them both, and they were not hit far enough apart for two bullets to have been fired in succession by the same man using the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle. Again, the hard evidence disqualifies the single-bullet, lone-assassin theory.

Mr. Specter argued during the interview that more metal was missing from the stretcher bullet than had been deposited in the Governor's wrist. He failed to mention, however, that metallic fragments were deposited in the President's neck, the Governor's chest, and the Governor's thigh. If these fragments are weighed together with the wrist fragments, it is immediately apparent that insufficient substance was missing from the stretcher bullet to satisfy the requirements of the single-bullet theory.

The condition of the stretcher bullet was virtually pristine, and it was free of blood and human tissue. All test bullets fired in an effort to simulate the hypothetical course of the stretcher bullet through two men, in one of whom it smashed hard thick bone, produced flagrantly deformed and mutilated bullets. The stretcher bullet could not have done what Specter and the Warren Commission claim it did and still emerge in near-pristine condition. The single-bullet theory has thus flunked again.

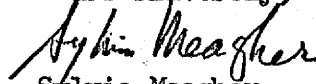
Finally, we come to the test of the identity of composition and origin of the stretcher bullet, the bullet fragments found in the lime-sine, and bullet residue on the windshield and the apparel of the President. The gross test of such identity is spectrographic examination. The Warren Commission did not publish the results of the spectrographic tests conducted by the FBI. The FBI has adamantly refused to furnish the spectrographic test results. It has recently been learned for the first time, from documents declassified at the National Archives, that the bullets and residue were subjected to the finer test of neutron activation analysis, which is capable of measuring billionths of parts of substances. The Warren Commission concealed from its Report and its exhibits the very fact that neutron activation analysis was performed, much less the results produced. The withholding of both the spectrographic test results and the results of the neutron activation analysis justify the strong inference that the results of these tests are wholly incompatible with the single-bullet lone-assassin theory.

Specter also made statements during the interview about the fatal head wound, which statements also went unchallenged. For example, he located the entrance wound at the base of the head. Yet, examination of the autopsy photographs and X-Rays by eminent forensic pathologists (Dr. Cyril Wecht, Dr. Russell Fisher and colleagues) established beyond any doubt that the head wound was four inches higher than described by Specter, by the autopsy surgeons, and by the Warren Report. Specter attempted, moreover, to explain how a bullet entering the back of the President's head threw him backward instead of forward, in defiance of elementary laws of motion. He does not have the medical or forensic competence to explain that backward motion and his suggestion that "the bullet hit the central nervous system" demonstrates his incompetence and the impoverishment of his efforts to dispel one of the strongest pieces of evidence that the single-bullet lone-assassin theory is a flimsy fable which cannot survive any of the objective tests to which it is put.

Furthermore, Specter should have been asked to explain why the Warren Commission never mentioned the very fact that the President was thrust sharply backward and to the left, by the evidence of the Zapruder and other films (e.g., Nix film and Muchmore film). By its silence, it spared itself the necessity of offering preposterous and incompetent explanations such as Specter's.

In fairness to your audience, I hope that you will find it possible to read this letter during a future "Tomorrow" program, so that your audience will have the benefit of facts and arguments which regrettably were absent from the Specter interview and thus allowed him to get away with murder—or should I say, with assassination?—speaking figuratively, of course.

Yours sincerely,



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