

Politics East

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Two of the most persistent and thorough critics of the Warren Commission's investigation into President Kennedy's murder said, this week, that CBS News' 4-hour examination of the document has unintentionally weakened, not strengthened, the Commission's findings.

Harold Weisberg, author of *Whitewash* and *Whitewash II*, blasted the network's production as a "video whitewash" run by "professional lickspittles." Sylvia Meagher, who has indexed the full 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits published by the Commission, said the CBS programs were "outrageous and when they weren't outrageous they were laughable."

Some 27 million viewers watched each of the 4 hour-long programs telecast on June 25-28. The network's front-rank news team, led by Walter Cronkite and Dan Rather, agreed with the Warren Report's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President Kennedy from the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository, November 22, 1963. No evidence of conspiracy was revealed.

Mrs. Meagher and Weisberg pointed to ballistics tests and marksmanship exercises performed by the station as the key to the production's "failure."

CBS had arranged for 11 volunteer marksmen to fire at a target moving away from a tower the height of the sixth floor Depository window. In 37 attempts, Cronkite reported, "17 had to be called no time, because of trouble with the rifle." Cronkite added that the 20 other attempts proved that the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, alleged to be the murder weapon, could be fired three times "with reasonable accuracy" in 5.6 seconds or less.

This was one of the points Mrs. Meagher denounced as "laughable." "Notice, the qualifications of the marksmen were not given. Did any of them have the rating Oswald was known to have?" Mrs. Meagher also noted that in 17 of

the 37 attempts or 40% of the time, the rifle failed to fire at all, proving the weapon to be "no damn good."

Weisberg said he couldn't think of a single criticism examined by CBS that he hadn't dealt with in his first book published in February, 1965. "I take it as a sort of tribute that they proved my contention that the first shot was fired at frame 186 of the Zapruder film, not at 210, as the Commission claimed." CBS said it had shown, through photographic analysis, that Abraham Zapruder's 8 mm film of the event blurs at frames 190, 227, and 318. Cronkite said the blurring was caused by rifle fire which startled the amateur moviemaker. The importance of the frame in which the first shot rang out is that more time would be afforded Oswald, thereby making his feat of marksmanship and speed more believable.

Weisberg says in his book, p. 104: "Beginning with frame 190 the film suddenly becomes fuzzy . . ." Weisberg blasted the Commission for failing to ask Zapruder what it was that startled him. The Commission said that at frame 210 the President's head first became a clear shot.

The ballistics tests sought to determine the possibility of a single bullet's inflicting 7 non-fatal wounds on President Kennedy and

Governor John B. Connally, and emerging intact. If this "single bullet theory" fails, the Commission's entire case, according to Cronkite, is reduced to a series of improbabilities, even though the Commission said it was not essential to its findings.

"In none of the ballistics tests run by CBS were any of the bullets shown to have been able to make all of the wounds and emerge with as little damage as the Warren Report contended," Mrs. Meagher said. Firing through cloth, blocks of gelatin, and masonite to represent the President's clothes and neck, and the Governor's back, wrist, and thigh, CBS concluded that a sin-

gle bullet could have wounded both men. Yet, Dr. William F. Enos of Northern Virginia Doctor's Hospital, told CBS newsman Dan Rather that the possibility was remote, though "not 100 per cent impossible. In medicine . . . we never like to say something is absolutely 100 per cent impossible," the doctor said.

Mrs. Meagher, emphasizing the CBS transition from the testing laboratory to the questions asked of Dr. Enos, said she doubted strongly that any of the bullets which pierced the blocks weren't themselves shattered by the several impacts. "If CBS had been able to successfully conduct such an experiment you can bet they would have shown the bullet on television," she said.

The question is legitimate, and should have been answered —

Why wasn't *their* "successful" bullet displayed?

Walter Lister, who conducted the tests, was on vacation and unavailable to respond to the charge of Mrs. Meagher.

Weisberg, speaking of the general dilemma faced by CBS, said the network's method was wrong. "You can't divide up the responsibility and expect to get an accurate and coherent report." He dismissed the station's claims to thoroughness, saying he does more work in a month that CBS could have done in their entire project. (The author still works 18 hours a day, 7 days a week on the assassination.) Weisberg intends to go on radio and television with his criticisms of the CBS programs, which, because of their large audience, some critics believe to be influential. Weisberg, however, does not believe CBS'

work will convince a public which has been overwhelmingly skeptical of the Warren Report.

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(Mrs. Meagher is writing an article for "Minority of One" magazine on the telecasts. Her book, *Accessories After the Fact: The Warren Commission, the Authorities, and the Report*, is scheduled for September publication by Bobbs and Merrill.

Weisberg's book, *Photographic Whitewash-Suppressed Kennedy Assassination Pictures*, will be printed privately by the author next week. Another book, *Oswald in New Orleans: C.I.A. Whitewash*, will come from Parallax in the fall. The author said *Photographic Whitewash* and his earlier works *Whitewash* and *Whitewash II* can be obtained by writing him at Hyattstown, Maryland. Each book is \$5.)