

April 5, 1975

Tom Snyder
"Tomorrow" Program
Channel 4
NBC-TV
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NYC

Dear Mr Snyder

If you intend to pursue the mystery of the assassination of President Kennedy, may I suggest cultivation of a taste for irony. It can serve as a corrective for an overdose of sincerity. Otherwise one can be overwhelmed by the sincerity, for example of your recent guest, O'Toole, who argued Oswald's innocence because analysis of his recorded voice showed situational stress followed by absence of stress in succeeding moments of his transit from one part of police headquarters to another on November 22, 1963; by the sincerity of Scheeneman who documented Oswald's connection with two intelligence agencies and attributed the assassination to two other intelligence agencies; and by the sincerity of your third guest that first night, a young man who took eight years to phantasmize into frame 413 of the Zapruder film of the assassination, available to the public in the National Archives since the summer of 1965, what was put aside by Commission critics in 1966 or 1967 as indeterminate.

There is, too, former Warren Commissioner, House Minority Leader, Vice President, and now President, Gerald R Ford whom I heard say in a televised press conference night before last he had a hand in the careful wording of the Warren Report which pronounced: "The Commission does not believe that the relations between Oswald and his wife caused him to assassinate the President" (page 423); but which did not estop him from speculating in Portrait of the Assassin (Ford and Stiles, Simon and Schuster, 1965), based in part on classified information, that Marina's rejection of Oswald's proposal in the evening of Nov. 21, they reestablish an independent household, tipped the wavering balance in Oswald's mind and impelled him on his deadly course (p315 et seq).

And there is your friend Arlen Speeter, his place in history, at least thus far, riding on an unprovable hypothesis constructed to rationalize intractable evidence; his integrity of belief attested by O'Toole and himself. If you encounter him again, on the air or off, I suggest you try to utilize the opportunity to clarify a number of points. Perhaps Speeter can explain why he formulated his single-bullet theory of the wounding of Kennedy and Connally in April 1964, more than four months after all the medicoballistic evidence was in possession of the investigative agencies and the Commission. Were other theories formulated, discussed, and rejected between December and April? Why did it take so long? What was the problem? Will the transcripts of the Commission executive sessions still "withheld from research," as the National Archives puts it, give us the answers when we are permitted to study them?

If Specter's April brain child was self-evidently valid why were ballistic tests conducted by the FBI and Secret Service, under Specter's supervision, in May, "to determine as precisely as possible what happened on Nov. 22, 1963" (Report, p97)? And if the tests were "consistent with," as the lawyer's say, Specter's April model why did careful Commissioner Ford and the other careful drafters of the Report accord Specter's single shot at theory only the value of probability (Report, Chapter 1, "Conclusions," p19; also pp105 and 111)? Why did the seven wise men of the Commission hedge their bets? And why did former Assistant Counsel Arlen Specter discuss his improbable-probable hypothesis as gard fact?

Such questions have the possibility of avoiding restriction of discussion and controversy to inextricable entanglement in the technical minutiae of the physical evidence which sooner or later bores all but a few and promotes disinterest in the end. Such questions also have the possibility of gaining insight into the hidden processes of the Commission and the government.

And they have another virtue. Have you noticed that almost all discussion about the assassination of President Kennedy revolves about the question of who - singular or plural - killed him? And that virtually total neglect obscures the far more significant question: why was Kennedy killed?

If you are interested in pursuing that inquiry please let me know.

Very truly yours,

Thomas Stamm

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