

14 June 1969

Miss Maria Luisa Cisneros  
TIME  
New York 10020

Dear Miss Cisneros,

I appreciate the courtesy of your letter of 9 June 1969 and your acknowledgment that TIME was in error in attributing to the Warren Report an explanation that did not in fact appear in it. It is all too easy to fall into unintentional error about evidence so profuse, complex, and ambiguous and certainly I have no quarrel with innocent misstatements so long as they are rectified.

Regrettably I must demur also from your assertion that the speeding-up of the car "was a theory offered to the Commission to explain the head movement." Nothing in the Hearings and Exhibits or the large body of unpublished papers I have obtained from the National Archives (Warren Commission documents, minutes, and internal memoranda) sustains your impression in this respect. No theory was put forward to or by the Commission to explain the backward head thrust for the simple reason that the head movement was never mentioned or discussed by the Commission lawyers, members, or expert witnesses, all or most of whom had viewed the Zapruder film. The head movement was made known for the first time by the critics, when they had their first opportunity to view the Zapruder film at the National Archives in the fall of 1965, about a year after the Warren Report was published.

It is not impossible that the backward head movement might be explained as a neurological reaction, but no neurologist or other medical or scientific expert has come forward with such an explanation even though the question has been under public debate for a number of years. However, forensic pathologist Cyril H. Wecht and pathologist John Nichols have given sworn testimony in a court of law disavowing the compatibility of the head movement with a bullet to the back of the head. The physicist R.A.J. Riddle stated the same conclusion in a published article in December 1966.

The medical panel which examined the autopsy photographs and X-rays in 1968 was convened because the Government hoped to resolve the continuing controversy about the autopsy findings. Although the panel screened the Zapruder film, its report (like the Warren Report) makes no mention of the head movement and no attempt to reconcile it, on neurological or other grounds, with a bullet that struck the back of the head. The panel does, however, produce the astonishing information that the bullet entrance wound in the back of the head is 4 inches higher than the site specified in the autopsy report and the Warren Report. This anomaly in itself leaves the autopsy findings in greater doubt and confusion than ever.

I can understand your distaste for further correspondence with me on this subject but I shall continue to regard it as a responsibility to call attention to any misstatements by TIME on the Dallas assassination, whether or not the editors wish to reply. But I cannot understand, or accept, your complaint that the critics have failed to compile convincing evidence that Oswald was not the assassin. Even if that was true, the notion that the accused is obliged

to prove his innocence was acceptable to the Inquisition and the Elders of Salem but is rejected in the jurisprudence of contemporary civilized society. To make such a demand in this case is all the more unreasonable when concededly the Commission left important questions unanswered, or not satisfactorily explained --to say nothing of its frequent resort to deliberate misrepresentation, amply documented in my book and other critical works.

The American press accepted the Warren Report with utmost complacency and left it entirely to private individuals, possessing virtually no resources beyond ordinary intelligence and a sense of justice, to bring to light the now-acknowledged deficiencies in the Report. When the critics made their findings known, a number of newspapers and magazines and some writers --Harrison Salisbury, Alistair Cooke, and Max Lerner among others--were willing to reconsider their original views and to reexamine the merits of the Warren Report, now placing their serious doubts or negative conclusions on the record.

Other news media have insisted undeviatingly on the correctness of the conclusions of the Warren Report, under any and all circumstances and regardless of the many metamorphoses of the official versions of the evidence or the nature of the official version at any given moment. Their errors of fact always accrue to the benefit of the Warren Report and never to the so-called "lone assassin." One can only draw the inferences that such a journalistic and editorial standard invites.

= Yours sincerely,

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