

Earl Warren press conference

Lima, Peru

3/3/67

Excerpts from a Voice of America tape provided
by the U.S. Information Agency

Almost all questions asked in Spanish;
translation (barely audible) whispered to Warren
by the translator

David Lifton
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(transcribed by ML)

...would like to know what your opinion is of Mr. Garrison's statements to the effect that there was a plot to kill President Kennedy and that Fidel Castro had a hand in this.

I have nothing to say about this statement of Mr. Garrison's because I do not know Mr. Garrison. I heard no statement of this kind from him before I left, at least none that developed any facts and as a result, I can say nothing about it. All I can say is this, that if there are any new facts to develop concerning the death of President Kennedy, they should be developed, and if anyone has violated the law, of course, the law should take its course. But concerning Mr. Garrison, and what he has to say about the situation, I am totally uninformed and I can't express any opinion.

EW: There is no need for any apology, it is perfectly a proper question to ask, the only thing is that there are several questions involved in the one. I might say to you that so far as the Klu Klux Klan is concerned, it is no more popular in the United States than it is here in Peru or any of the other Latin American countries. I think 99% at least, maybe 99 and a fraction per cent of the people of the United States despise the Klu Klux Klan because it does not represent American principles, but I can say to you, as a member of that Commission, that we investigated this matter for ten months to the best of our ability and we had some of the ablest lawyers in America working with us, we had all the investigating agencies of the Federal Government, we had the state governments ~~of the~~ that were involved and the local authorities and we found no evidence that any conspiracy that played a part in the assassination of President Kennedy. We found there were no racial overtones at all. In fact, President Kennedy was a man beloved by all the races and particularly by the minority groups, so if that is what you had in mind, I would say to you that we found no evidence of any conspiracy and it was our conclusion that Oswald acted alone. I think I can say to you also that the feeling that you expressed or implied in your question is shared by many people in many parts of the world, and there is a reason for it, because in many countries there have been many assassinations of chiefs of state

that have been the result of conspiracies. Some conspiracies within the government and some conspiracies without the government, but certainly conspiracies. But we have had a number of assassinations and attempted assassinations in our country and they have not been the result of conspiracies. For instance, there was an effort to assassinate President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A man shot at President Roosevelt, missed him but killed the mayor of Chicago who was sitting along side of him. He was a poor demented man. President McKinley in 1901 was shot by a demented man, there was no conspiracy there either. President Garfield in 1880--someone was shot and killed--also by a demented man. There was no conspiracy there. So the results and the fact is that in our country, that although we have had several assassinations in the last hundred and 75 years, the assassinations have not, as a rule, been caused by any conspiracy ~~that resulted~~ and it is our conclusion, as I told you that there was no conspiracy that resulted in the death of President Kennedy.

EW: So far as the deaths of the people you mentioned are concerned, I think they are just unfortuitous circumstances. I know of nothing that has connected with any of these people with the assassination of President Kennedy or with any knowledge that they might have concerning the assassination. You know there are strange things that happen in life and if we put them all together, we can raise doubts of all kinds, but I assure you that as far as I know, there have been no facts that connect those people with the assassination with any way, shape, or form.

EW: So far as a rifle of Oswald was concerned, there is nothing unusual about that. The time element was proved out in a number of ways by men who had had less experience in shooting the rifle than Oswald had. Oswald was in our Marine Corps. He served two or three years there and he was a marksman according to the Marine rating and the Marines are not loose in their rating. They require a man to earn what he gets, so he was a normal shot in the Marine Corps. He was shooting from a close distance and he had a rest upon which he could put his rifle and the car that the President was in was going directly away from him, not swerving or going around corners or anything, it was going directly against him and he had a telescope on his rifle that could bring the President right within the crosshairs of his telescope and there was nothing remarkable about that shooting. Any soldier or any sportsman who was used to hunting could have shot as well as that and possibly better.

EW: I think you must have misunderstood me, if you though that I said this matter should be reinvestigated. I did not say that. I said that if other facts developed they should be faced and if anyone did commit a crime the law should take its course, but I didn't suggest that there was anything wrong with the report. I have exactly the same confidence in it that I had when I signed it. I don't believe that there are any new facts, but if someone else does ascertain new facts, then, of course, they should be concerned and studied honestly and faced honestly. There is never any danger of facing the truth and the truth should be followed at all times, so I don't want to leave the impression that I think that the matter should be reinvestigated because I don't have any facts that would lead me to that conclusion.

EW: Your statement is more of a speech than a question, but if I understand you correctly, you say that the Commission concluded that Oswald could only have fired three shots. That wasn't what the commission concluded. The Commission concluded that he did only fire three shots. Your statement that Governor Connelly has said that it was a shot other than those three fired by Oswald is, I think, incorrect. I think that the only thing that Gov. Connelly said was that the shot, the first shot that only slightly injured the president was not the one of the shots that hit him. He did not say that there were more than three shots. We took the testimony of Gov. Connelly. He never said it then and as far as I know, he never has said it since. His only question was which one of the three shots that were fired by Oswald was the one that hit him, whether it was the first, second, or the third, but we do know that Oswald fired three shots because there on the floor right where he did his shooting from were three cartridges that came from that gun. So there isn't any real conflict between what Gov. Connelly said and what the report has said, except that he thinks that the shot that hit President Kennedy the first time was not the shot that hit him and it may have been one of the other two.

EW: In my country we are dedicated to the freedom of the press and we believe that there are no restrictions upon honest reporting of events and if a newspaper reporter reports any public event and reports it honestly according to what he saw or if he expresses his opinion of it, he is not liable under our law. It is only where he writes falsely or whether he has--or where he has a reckless disregard of the truth and prints something that will injure someone that he is liable under the law.

I understand how you would ask that question because that representation about the pictures of the autopsy being lost has been made a number of times, but I give you my assurance, my work here that those pictures were never lost, they were never destroyed, they are now protected by our government and are in the Archives in our government and they are available there for any agency of government that finds a necessity for them, and I don't mind telling you why they were not in the Report and that is because they were such a gruesome sight, such a sordid sight that we felt that it would not be good to put those pictures in the printed report for everyone to see from now on and it would mean nothing to anybody, except experts and those pictures are now secure in the hands of a government where any responsible agency may see them.

...wanted to know who killed President Kennedy and there was no one who wanted to know more about who killed President Kennedy than the Commission that the President appointed. He appointed men in all walks of life, men of every political persuasion and gave us all the assistance that the Commission could possibly have to ascertain the truth. We worked for ten solid months, ten consecutive months to find out what the facts were and we filed the evidence that we took in order to determine what those facts were. There were 26 volumes of them. They filled the space as long as this table and then we wrote a report, one big volume that expressed our views and our opinions and we based that report and that opinion upon those 26 volumes of testimony. But we could do no more. Now what people might think, what they might suspect, we had no control over that, but we must deal with facts, and as I said to you before, if there are any new facts that develop, of course, they should be pursued, but up to the present time, I have not read or heard of one single fact that would change the report we made in any way, shape, or form.

May I turn the questioning around for just one moment.
May I ask you how many of you have read the entire
Report of the Commission? All right, I see four people
out of perhaps 50 who have read it. Let me ask you
one other question. How many of you have read the 26
volumes of evidence upon which this report was based?
No one has read it. May I suggest to you, ladies and
gentlemen, that before you form any final opinions on
this subject that you make it your business to read those
26 volumes of the evidence upon which the report is
based and then compare the report with what you have
read and then make your own conclusion about the accuracy
of the report and I think, ladies and gentlemen, that
is about as far as I can go on this line of questioning.

*Shades of
Reverend Jones?*

I have nothing to say about the statement of Mr. Garrison or upon what prompts him to say that because I have no knowledge of any information that he may have. As far as I know, he has declined to give any information concerning the facts that he has and how anyone could form an opinion on that, I fail to understand.

You may consider it an unusual request to make, but I have in the very few press conferences I've had, I think I've only had two very brief ones, and I think we've never touched on that subject and I have no occasion to ask them there if they have read the reports. The only reason that I ask you is because the report seemed to have been challenged here and I wanted to know whether it was just from rumor or from headlines in newspapers or whether the people who challenged it had actually read the report. It seems to me that it is a very logical and a very fair question to ask those who are questioning the report.