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THE NEW LEADER

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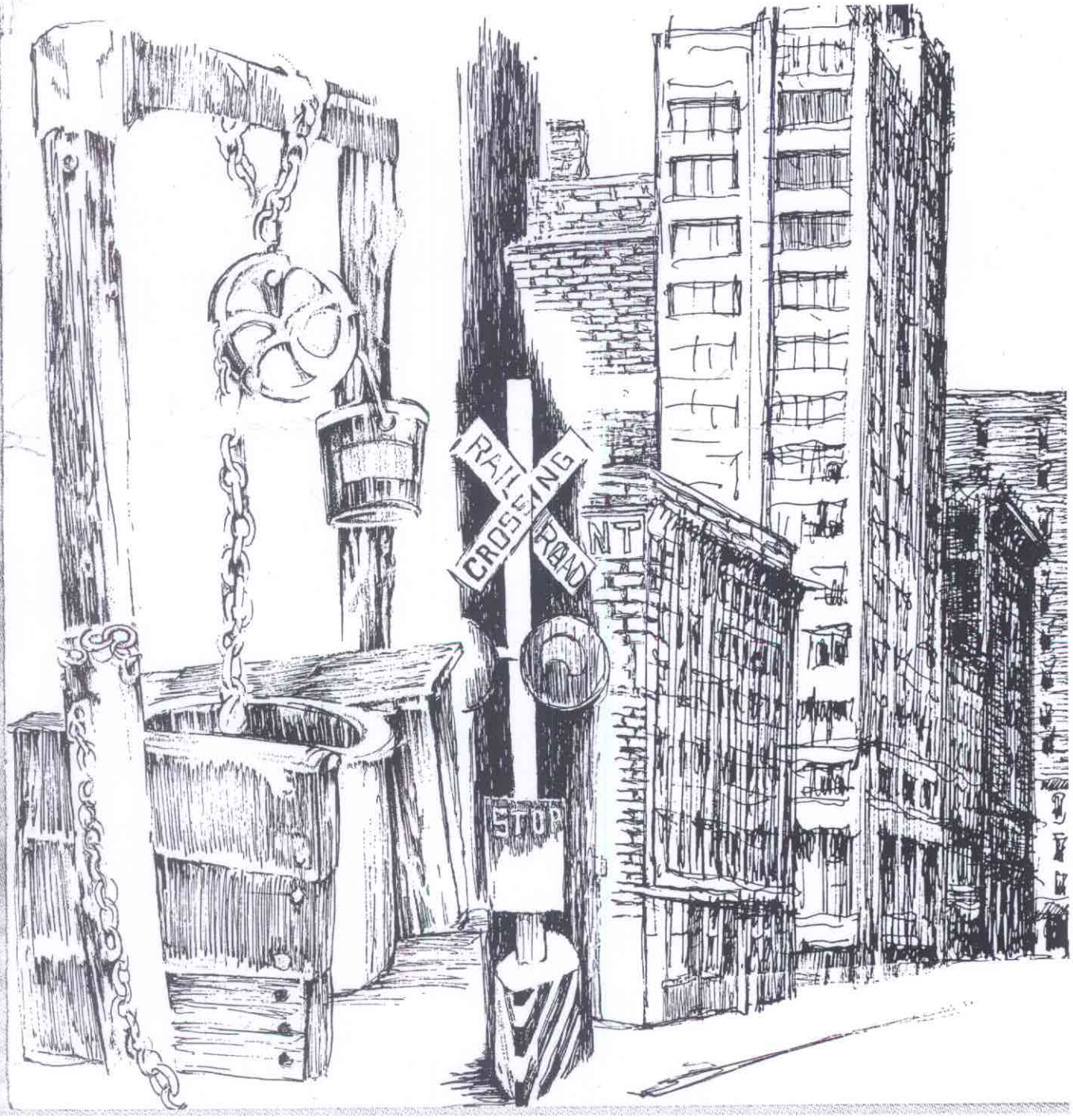
AFTER JOHNSON'S VICTORY: TIME FOR DEBRIEFING
PAUL DANACEAU

THE LAST BOLSHEVIK PARTY CONGRESS
MAX EASTMAN

THOMAS BUCHANAN VS. LEO SAUVAGE
AN EXCHANGE



works" was required to exclude the possibility that it was (a) a Mauser, which is German-made, or (b) a caliber other than 6.5. The error which has been attributed to Weitzman, therefore, could have gone no farther. It would necessarily have been corrected minutes later at the first inspection of the rifle. The report states, "The rifle was identified by Captain Fritz and Lieutenant Day, who were the first to actually handle it." The evidence shows that the statement of District Attorney Wade was made after this first inspection of the rifle by the chief of homicide, a man who certainly can read the writing on a weapon.

The authorities in Dallas have informed us solemnly that Kennedy was murdered by a Mauser. The men who made this first statement did so after an examination of the weapon. I believe them. They informed us later that the President was killed by a Carcano. I believe that, also. I am forced to the conclusion that there were two weapons. I deduce that there were two assassins.

That, M. Sauvage, is mathematics.

I assure you, my dear sir, of my distinguished sentiments.

THOMAS G. BUCHANAN
Detective

As I Was Saying

By Leo Sauvage

I AM GLAD Thomas Buchanan has given me an opportunity to set a few things straight. Since through a sheer accident of timing my criticism of his theory appeared in THE NEW LEADER almost at the moment the Warren Report was being released, some people have mistakenly concluded that I am in accord with the Commission's findings. And this impression was strengthened when the magazine subsequently endorsed Karl E. Meyer's approval of the Report ("The Triumph of Caliban," NL, October 12) in "Between Issues": "No one who has followed the spate of outrageously irresponsible magazine pieces and books concerning President Kennedy's assassination (*e.g.*, Thomas Buchanan's *Who Killed Kennedy?*, demolished in the September 28 NL by Leo Sauvage) can help but join in the widespread praise with which the efforts of Chief Justice Earl Warren and his associates on the Commission have been greeted."

But the unhappy truth is that after having carefully studied the Report I, for one, cannot agree with Meyer that it is "solidly wrought" or "overwhelmingly backed by fact" or "persuasive in its parts" or "coherent as a whole." I also have the depressing feeling that, like religion and baseball, the Warren Report is now an American taboo. Even the rare Americans who dared to criticize it—such as Murray Kempton or George and Patricia Nash in the same NL issue carrying Meyer's piece—do so only after precautionary introductions. I therefore thank THE NEW LEADER for letting me state that in my opinion the Commission has in no way proved that it was Lee Harvey Oswald who actually killed President Kennedy.

Although I do not wish to be rude, I shall not thank Thomas Buchanan for the nice things he says about me at the beginning of his rebuttal. I do not know him personally, and I have no idea how he rates as a human being or baseball fan in private life. I am certain, however, that he is no credit to the writing profession. So it does

not flatter me at all—indeed, it rather disturbs me—to be considered "one of France's most distinguished journalists" by Thomas Buchanan.

I need not repeat here the absurd inventions and grotesque affirmations which are the essence of the so-called "Buchanan Report." It is sufficient to point out that while he admits "some errors," Buchanan does not discuss a single one of the inventions and affirmations I mentioned in my examination of his work. His excuse now is: "I did no original research in Dallas. I have never claimed to. The material I studied was the work of hundreds of reporters, some of whom occasionally were mistaken." That is not true.

To be sure, Buchanan did not claim any original research, and he admitted—shall I say "honestly," or is "cynically" the word for it? —that he first went to Dallas after having published four installments of his "report" on what had happened there. But he did not prevent *L'Express* from declaring that his demonstration was based "on facts, and facts alone." He himself also explained in the initial installment that the subject of his "analysis" was "the official thesis upon which the Dallas police and the FBI have finally agreed," and that where "certain speculations advanced by press investigators" were discussed, they would be clearly identified.

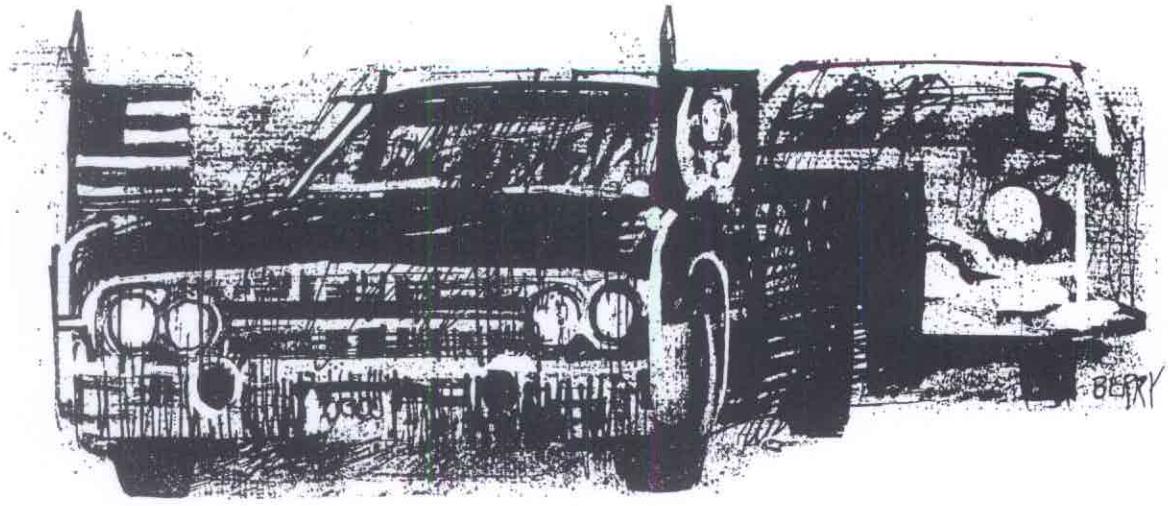
Again, in the book version of his weird lucubrations he insists (and I quote here from the British edition of *Who Killed Kennedy?*): "Insofar as it is possible, the thesis which will be described hereafter as 'official' will be that upon which the police of Dallas and the FBI appear to be in general agreement. *The analysis which follows is not based on mere press speculations, but on these official sources.* Where hypotheses advanced by news reporters are discussed, they are identified as speculative and their source is given . . ." The italics are Buchanan's.

As far as I can see, Buchanan does not cite any news reporters (many were quite often mistaken, but none as regularly, as completely and as unashamedly as he is), nor does Buchanan cite any "official sources" when he states, for instance, that "from a building belonging to the city government and administered by it, a municipal employe shoots at the President of the United States."

Buchanan has an explanation for one "error": He did not mistake the town of Irving for "a private residence," one of his translators did. And because "there are some limits, even to the patience of Françoise Giroud," he hurries to inform us triumphantly that the guilty translator was fired.

Was anyone fired because Buchanan wrote that "the neighborhood had been emptied of police in order that Accomplice Number 5 could operate in peace," or insinuated that Oswald was purposely allowed to get to his room so that he could pick up a revolver and give Patrolman Tippit an excuse for killing him in self-defense? For here is what Buchanan writes in English, where there is no "unfortunate young man" to take the rap as translator: "The first act of this play went according to script. Oswald went to his room and got his gun, as he was meant to. . . ."

BESIDES THE "insulting" Mister Irving, Buchanan's rebuttal refers to only one other matter I raised in the course of what he perhaps accurately describes as "swatting gnats with baseball bats," and that concerns my samples of his mathematics. I wrote that I did not need his Accomplice Number 3 to explain the origin of the first description of a suspect sent out over the police radio. I also stated—and I repeat here—that prior to the publication of the



Warren Report there was only one explanation which could be considered as official in the incoherent Dallas mess: Namely, that the first description was based on information furnished by Roy Truly, the manager of the Texas School Book Depository, who had seen Oswald in the second-floor lunchroom and then, noticing his absence, informed the police. This was not merely what I heard directly from Dallas officials; it was told to me personally by Roy Truly himself.

The Commission has now come up with a completely new version. According to its Report, the description provided by a man named Howard L. Brennan, who is called "an eyewitness" to the shooting, "most probably led to the radio alert sent to police cars." The Commission does not explain why it could not track down the origin of the broadcast more precisely than "most probably." Yet it would seem that all the Commission had to do was locate the broadcaster on duty at Dallas Police headquarters at the time the message was sent out and ask him the source of the description.

We now have three different versions relating to this particular question:

1. The Buchanan version, built on early police statements about a "roll call" and on mistaken information as to the time of the broadcast. This led to the mathematical deduction, concerning the man responsible for the broadcast that "next to Mr. X himself, this is the key conspirator, and there are no extenuating circumstances for him."

2. The Dallas version, considered as official from November 25 or 26, 1963 to September 27, 1964, attributing the description to Roy Truly.

3. The Warren version, rejecting the Truly explanation because his report was given "probably no earlier than 1:22 p.m.," and stating that the radio alert sent at "approximately 12:45 p.m." was based "most probably" on information that had been provided by Howard L. Brennan.

My personal conclusion is that today we are left with no explanation at all for that first police broadcast. As I implied in my chief objection to the Warren Report, graciously quoted by Buchanan, I cannot share the Warren Commission's notions concerning "eyewitnesses" or its conception of the circumstances under which an "identification" may be rightly considered valid.

In the Tippit case, for example, the Report states categorically that "nine eyewitnesses positively identified Lee Harvey Oswald as the man they saw." Then we are told that five of these nine eyewitnesses did their "identifying" in lineups the same day (in some cases late in the evening after Oswald had already appeared on television); that one identified him the next day; and that "three others subsequently identified Oswald from a photograph." Finally, we are given to understand that "subsequently" may mean two months later.

Thus, Mrs. Mary Brock: "When interviewed by FBI agents on January 21, 1964, she identified a picture of Oswald as being the same person she saw on November 22. She confirmed this interview by a sworn affidavit."

As for Howard L. Brennan, the Commission's new star witness, we are told that he made "a positive identification of Oswald as being the person at the window." Here is an "eyewitness" on the sidewalk who pretends to be able, and whom the Warren Commission believes to be able to describe—weight and height included—a man behind a half-closed sixth floor window. The sixth-floor man was furthermore kept at least a foot away from the window by some book cartons, and the rays of the midday sun were striking the window at just the right angle to transform its closed upper part into an opaque mirror. Finally, besides describing the various retractions and contradictions of this extraordinary "eyewitness," the Commission also admits that "prior to the lineup, Brennan had seen Oswald's picture on television."

IN SHORT, Thomas Buchanan is entitled to be sarcastic about what he calls *my* "misfortune," but is really the misfortune of all those who—not being Buchanans or Mark Lanes or Bertrand Russells —were hoping to be convinced by the Warren Report. In the specific case of the first police broadcast, I believed what I was told by Dallas officials and by Roy Truly because the story seemed to me perfectly plausible. The Warren Report now says it is not true, but the substitute explanation it gives is not plausible. I therefore leave the speculation, as far as this point is concerned, jointly to the Warren Commission and Thomas Buchanan. As to the other questions in the case, my own views are presented in a book, *The Oswald Affair,* which will be published next month by Les Editions de Minuit in Paris.

Buchanan has been kind enough —and for this I really wish to thank him—to give NEW LEADER readers large excerpts of my September 28 comment in *Le Figaro.* The translation is substantially correct, with one slight omission. I had written, thinking precisely of Buchanan, that certain adversaries of the United States have no intention of giving up their sarcastic comments *"in any case,"* meaning that these individuals were ready to go on criticizing even if the Warren Report had not been as unconvincing as I think it is. And when I deplored the Warren Commission's refusal to meet "the serious objections," I wanted to emphasize the fact that it concentrated on refuting *non-serious* objections, of the type provided by Thomas Buchanan.