

RATHER: One of the men Mr. Epstein interviewed for his "Inquest" is Arlen Specter, now District Attorney of Philadelphia, but in 1964, one of the principal investigators for the Warren Commission, charged with establishing the basic facts of the assassination. Mr. Specter thinks the Commission did its job well and came up with the right answers.

SPECTER: I would say after having prosecuted a great many cases that seldom would you ever find a case which was as persuasive that Oswald was the assassin and, in fact, the lone assassin, and we convict people in the criminal courts every day right here in City Hall, Philadelphia. And the times the death penalties are imposed or life imprisonment - so that - so that the case does fit together.

RATHER: In separate interviews we asked critic Epstein and investigator Specter to discuss some of the central issues that must determine how well or how badly the Warren Commission did its work.

EPSTEIN: Part of the job of the Warren Commission was restoring confidence in the American government. And for this he had to pick seven very respectable men, men who would lend their name and lend probity to the report. And so that the problem was, in any seven men he picked of this sort, they would have very little time for the investigation.

They would also have two purposes. One purpose would be to find the truth, all the facts. The other purpose would be to allay rumors, to dispel conspiracy theories and material of that sort.

SPECTER: My view is that there is absolutely no foundation for that type of a charge. When the President selected the Commissioners, he chose men of unblemished reputation and very high standing. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States would have no reason whatsoever to be expedient or to search for political truths. Nor would Allen W. Dulles, the former head of the C.I.A., nor would John McCloy, with his distinguished service in government, nor would the Congressional or Senatorial representatives.

Now, the same thing was true of the staff members. When it came time to select the individuals to serve as assistant counsel and general counsel, men were chosen from various parts of the United States who had no connection with government.

EPSTEIN: For example, there were rumors concerning the F.B.I. or various intelligence agencies. I noticed that there were a number of memorandums where the--where--from Warren to the Secretary of the Treasury, who was in charge of the Secret Service, assuring that their findings wouldn't impair the efficiency or the morale of the Secret Service. And the same

thing again with the F.B.I., a question of whether there was ever any possible connection between Oswald--and by connection I don't mean anything sinister, I simply meant that he was furnishing information and there were some rumors to this effect--and they, rather than investigating these rumors, they preferred to give it to the F.B.I. to investigate the rumors themselves. As J. Lee Rankin, their General Counsel, said, they would rather that agency clear its own skirts. Well, what this meant, of course, is that if the F.B.I. would have discretion if it did find a connection between Oswald and itself, the discretion of either reporting it or not reporting it.

SPECTER: In the main, the F.B.I. conducted the basic line of investigation. But the Commission used its independent judgment wherever, say, the F.B.I. or the Secret Service was involved itself so that they would not investigate themselves on the subjects where they were directly involved, and I think the Commission showed its independence in that regard by criticizing the Federal Bureau of Investigation and by criticizing the Secret Service where the facts warranted such criticism.

On every subject where the Federal Bureau of Investigation had contact with the area of investigation with which I was intimately connected, I was fully satisfied with their thoroughness and with their competency and with their integrity.

CRONKITE: Despite Mr. Specter's defense, it is the opinion of CBS NEWS that the role of the F.B.I. as well as the Secret Service, both in the assassination and its aftermath, has been less than glorious. And, to some extent, the performance of these agencies weakens the credibility of the Warren Report. As to what the F.B.I. and the Secret Service did wrong before the assassination, we need look no further than the Report itself.

It notes the Secret Service agents assigned to protect the President had been drinking beer and liquor into the early hours of the morning, that no search was made of buildings along the route, and that, quote: "The procedures of the Secret Service, designed to identify and protect against persons considered serious threats to the President, were not adequate prior to the assassination," end of quote. That is, the Secret Service should have known about Lee Harvey Oswald.

But the Report goes on to point out that if the Secret Service did not know about him, the F.B.I. did, and did not see fit to mention his existence to the Secret Service. The report issues a mildly phrased yet devastating rebuke to the F.B.I., charging that it took an unduly restrictive view of its responsibilities. Knowing what the F.B.I. knew about Oswald, the Report says, an alert agency should have listed him as a potential menace to the President. Yet, after the assassination, the Commission itself relied heavily on these two agencies as its investigative arms.

September 8, 1967

Mr. Arlen Specter
District Attorney
666 City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

Dear Mr. Specter:

In your letter of July 11 you said, "I have full confidence in the accuracy of all the statements which I made concerning the work" of the Warren Commission.

Restricting myself to what you said on CBS, I sent you photocopies of your statements that are palpably false.

In your letter of September 5, you reiterate your claim for "accuracy".

This is the way the record stands. It is your affair, your decision.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg



DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

666 CITY HALL

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19107

ARLEN SPECTER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

September 5, 1967

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Coq d'Or Press
Hyattstown, Maryland 20734

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I have your letter of August 29.

In my view, my letter to you of July 11,
1967 requires no amplification.

Sincerely,

ARLEN SPECTER

AS:wmm



AS
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
666 CITY HALL
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19107

REGISTER NOW
NO VOTE
IN NOVEMBER



Mr. Harold Weisberg
Coq d'Or Press
Hyattstown, Maryland 20734

Instead, we asked Arlen Specter, Assistant Counsel to the Commission, and now District Attorney of Philadelphia, and the author of the single bullet theory.

SPECTER: The possibility of one bullet having inflicted the wounds on both the President's neck and the Governor's body came in a very gradual way. For example, the first insight was given when Dr. Humes testified, based on his autopsy findings. And at that time it was made clear for the first time that the bullet that went through the President's neck hit no bone, hit no solid muscle. And, according to Dr. Humes, came out with great velocity.

Now, it was at that juncture that we wondered for the first time what happened to the bullet. Where did the bullet go? The probability is that it went into Governor Connally, because it struck nothing else in the car. That is the single most convincing piece of evidence, that the one bullet hit both men, because looking down the trajectory, as I did through Oswald's own rifle, and others did too, the trajectory was such that it was almost certain that the bullet which came out of the President's neck with great velocity would have had to have hit either the car or someone in the car.

RAIHER: It stated in the Warren Commission Report that belief in the single bullet theory is, quote, "not essential" - end of quotation - to support in the conclusion of the Warren Commission Report.

Now, can you describe for us any other theory, besides the single bullet theory, that would support the conclusions in the Report?

SPECTER: The Commission concluded that it was probable that one bullet inflicted the wound on the President's neck, and all of the wounds on Governor Connally. But you could have three separate bullets striking under the sequence as we know them. For example, the President could have been struck at frame 186 of the Zapruder film, which is a number given to the Zapruder film. Then Governor Connally could have been struck some 42 frames later, which would be a little over two and a quarter seconds at about frame 228 or 229; and then the third shot could have hit President Kennedy's head at frame 313, which was pretty clearly established. So that it is not indispensable to have the single bullet conclusion in order to come to the basic finding that Oswald was the sole assassin.

CRONKITE: The Commission's dilemma lay in the fact that it had to choose between two unpalatable alternatives in order to make its case stand up. Having decided that three shots were fired, and having three sets of wounds to explain, the Commission could only find either that all three shots hit their marks, or that one of the three bullets hit two men.

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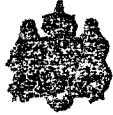
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DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
366 CITY HALL
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19107

ARLEN SPECTER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

September 5, 1967

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Coq d'Or Press
Hyattstown, Maryland 20734

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I have your letter of August 29.

In my view, my letter to you of July 11,
1967 requires no amplification.

Sincerely,

ARLEN SPECTER

AS:WTH

AS
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
366 CITY HALL
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19107

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Coq d'Or Press
Hyattstown, Maryland 20734

August 29, 1967

Mr. Arlen Specter
Room 666, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

Dear Mr. Specter:

It is inevitable that I will be writing about the CBS shows in which you participated. I cannot, therefore, allow your letter of July 11 to go without response.

In it you seem to limit your claim of not having lied to these CBS shows in saying, "Contrary to your view, I have full confidence in the accuracy of all the statements which I have made concerning the work of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy."

So there may be no doubt in your mind what you did say and what I shall be writing about, I enclose herewith photocopies of page 14 of the second CBS show and pages 5 and 6 of the fourth. I ask you to affirm that each and every one of these statements is accurate, is complete enough, and that at the time you made them and CBS aired them you so believed.

Because of the use to which CBS put your statement on "three separate bullets striking" both men, without reference to the "missed" shot, a use that must have been apparent at the time you made it, I further ask you to affirm that this is a complete response and that you seriously regard your allegation that a separate bullet could have struck Governor Connally while two different bullets struck the President and thus "it is not indispensable to have the single bullet conclusion in order to come to the basic finding that Oswald was the sole assassin" as a fair, honest and complete enough statement, in accord with all of the facts as you know them and as the Commission's Report, printed evidence and files record them.

In the event your letter of July 11 was not intended to limit your claim of not having lied to the CBS shows, I will be happy to send you copies of earlier statements attributed to you, such as by UPI and U.S. News and World Report, for the purpose of providing you with the opportunity of affirming or denying them.

I note that on page 14 you say that "the Commission concluded" that one bullet inflicted all seven non-fatal injuries. If you would care to record the fact that you did not lead the Commission to this conclusion and that you did not draft for their approval and signatures such parts of the Report, I will be happy to print it in my next book.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

686 CITY HALL

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19107

July 11, 1967

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Coq d'Or Press
Hyattstown, Maryland 20734

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

While I do not know whether any exchange of correspondence is at all useful in view of our diametrically opposed positions, I do wish to acknowledge your letter of June 27.

Contrary to your view, I have full confidence in the accuracy of all of the statements which I have made concerning the work of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy.

Sincerely,

ARLEN SPECTER

AS:wmw



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