

In Defense of a Theory

By Thomas G. Buchanan

TO THE EDITOR:

IN MY capacity as criminal investigator, there has come to my attention a distressing crime of which you are the luckless victim. I refer to the long article about me ("Thomas Buchanan, Detective") in your issue of September 28. This article was published—in good faith, I'm sure—under the name of a French writer named Leo Sauvage.

The article, my research has convinced me, was not written by Leo Sauvage, but by his brother, K. O. Leo is, as everybody knows, the U.S. correspondent of *Le Figaro*, and he is one of France's most distinguished journalists. His brother, a retired ex-pugilist, now makes a humble living as a stringer for the U.S. Information Service.

Articles by Leo cost a lot of money, but they are well worth it. He has done a great deal of original investigation of the Kennedy assassination and, since I am totally dependent on such sources and have always said so, I have quoted him in the edition of my book which Put-

nam will bring out this month, evaluating the report the President's Commission has just issued. Articles by Leo's brother K. O., on the other hand, are relatively inexpensive and indeed I think, if you will make the proper inquiries, you will discover that no fee is needed.

We must not accuse K. O. Sauvage of fraud in selling you an article which he has written on a subject with which he is less familiar than his brother. But I do accuse him of unethical procedure when he charges you the fee which you would normally have paid to Leo.

That the author of this article has misappropriated Leo's byline will be instantly apparent to you, if you will compare the article you published with authentic work of this distinguished writer. The respected correspondent of *Le Figaro*, for instance, has a certain subtlety of style. He can be witty and ironic. He does not go swatting gnats with baseball bats like the reporter who prepared your article. On style alone, the substitution is apparent.

In regard to content, one has only to compare the views expressed by the authentic correspondent of *Le Figaro* with the position of his imitator. The impression given by the article you used is that I am no credit to the human race and ought to be exterminated. I am rather sensitive on this point, since I am now 45 years old, and I have never seen the Orioles win the World Series. I was hoping that I might live long enough to see it happen.

But Leo Sauvage himself is one of the outstanding critics of America's official version of the Kennedy assassination, and would be among the first reporters to be liquidated, if a purge were started. In *Le Figaro* of September 28, he wrote as follows:

"No doubt the American authorities, who have been largely concerned with the criticism and sarcasm which their previous statements have provoked in other countries, hope that the large amount of documentation which the Warren Commission has gathered in support

The Tories muffed their chance and Harold Wilson is in the hot seat. Urgent domestic and foreign problems have been piling up over the past year and cannot be delayed any longer. At home Britain's gold reserves are being drained, threatening her price competitiveness on world markets. Artificially stimulating the boom until election time, the Tories applied a series of stop-go deflationary measures that stunted Britain's growth rate and led to chronic unemployment. Their hesitant bid to enter the Common Market was an attempt to meet sideways the problem of economic stagnation, caused by subsidized inefficient industries and over-powerful trade unions.

Free competition with Europe could have forced Britain to make unpopular but essential economic reforms. But now that the European door is shut, at least for the time being, it will have to face this problem head-on. Vehemently opposed to any union with Europe, economic or otherwise, the Socialists face an economic dilemma that will pit them against their own trade unions if they apply wage restraints to curb inflation, or an austerity program, perhaps coupled with devaluation of the pound, that would be the kiss of death with the voters.

EVEN THOUGH he has no taste for the Common Market, Wilson faces a political *dénouement* with Britain's Continental allies over the question of European political union. For the past year the anti-Gaullist forces in the EEC—led by the Dutch, the Italians, and the Erhard-Schroeder group in Germany—stalled on moves leading to political integration until after the British election. Under the inspiring, but logically mystifying banner of "no European union without Britain," they seemed to assume that the British were yearning to scuttle Commons in favor of a joint European parliament in Strasbourg. While this was dubious

even under the Tories—despite their willingness to put Europe over the Commonwealth—it is all but unthinkable under the Socialists.

The violently anti-European sentiments voiced by Hugh Gaitskell at the 1962 Brighton conference of the Labor party have never been repudiated by his successor. The European federalists cannot wait any longer for Britain lest the whole impetus for political union collapse under the assault of revived French and German nationalism. Unless Wilson does an about-face and pushes a kicking and screaming Labor party into a political union with the Continent, Europe will have no choice but to go ahead without Britain. The result could well be the resurgence of Gaullist influence and the gradual diminishment of Britain's importance in the affairs of Europe.

In addition to a showdown in Europe, the new Labor government has inherited a *crise de confiance* with Washington over the Multilateral Force (MLF), the State Department's plan for a fleet of missile-carrying cargo ships. Despite pained protests from both the outgoing Tories and the incoming Laborites, the U.S. has demanded that London join NATO's nuclear navy as a symbol of its trans-Atlantic loyalties. This is a poignant dilemma for Wilson, who has virtually pledged himself to scuttle the British Bomb and to "renegotiate" (whatever that means) the Nassau Pact under which Britain promised to buy Polaris missiles from the U.S. If Labor fulfills its pledge by taking Britain out of the nuclear club, it will thereby make France the dominant military power in Europe, and relinquish the ability to protect the faithful Commonwealth nations of India and Malaya just at the time that China has become a nuclear power.

As far as the MLF is concerned, Laborites, like the Tories before them, have never concealed their opinion that it is a military mon-

strosity which is likely to make Germany an independent nuclear power. Both parties have tried to outbluff Washington in the belief that the U.S. would never sign a bilateral nuclear deal with Germany—and that if Britain stays out, the plan will wither away. Yet President Johnson seems determined to push on with MLF anyway, even at the price of creating a German-American nuclear force. If this happens, Labor will be faced with three equally unpleasant alternatives: joining the potentially dangerous MLF in order to balance Germany, staying out of the MLF but keeping the Bomb, or giving up both the Bomb and the MLF in the desperate hope that moral influence will hold more weight than military power. It is not much of a choice, and it would not be surprising if Labor ended up by swallowing its scruples and keeping the Bomb as the lesser of various unthinkable evils.

Never particularly interested in foreign affairs, Wilson would like to concentrate his energies on urgently needed reforms at home. But the world is not likely to wait while Britain decides whether to play a major role in the new balance of forces that is emerging, or whether it prefers to be a more populous Sweden. Decisions not made tend to make themselves. If Labor succumbs to its chronic temptation to crawl into its shell rather than get involved with those nasty doings on the Continent, it might still build a more equitable society at home while surrendering the influence it could have over the future of Europe at a time when all the old power blocs are breaking up. That would be one way of building Jerusalem, but it is not a course which Britain's friends can be expected to look upon with much enthusiasm. Harold Wilson has shown that his slide rule is firmly rooted in the 20th century; he has still to show that his heart is not in the 19th.

of its conclusions will finally crush the skeptics and reduce them to silence. I am very much afraid this hope is doomed to disappointment. This is not only because some forces hostile to the United States have no intention of halting their sarcastic comments. Unfortunately, it is chiefly because the voluminous documentation of the Commission provides no decisive refutation of the serious objections which have been raised against the official theory. In some respects, one may even say that the Warren Report increases the existing doubts about the investigation in Dallas, either by offering interpretations which are even less believable than the original version, or by making additional statements for which there is no proof, or finally by relying on key factors which rest upon a base which is too fragile to support them."

Leo Sauvage goes on to name these weak points:

1. That many readers will have trouble trying to imagine Oswald, in the last few minutes before Kennedy came into range on Elm Street, patiently assembling his dismantled rifle, wrapped up in a package witnesses insist was too short to have been the murder weapon unless it was disassembled. Sauvage notes that this was in addition to the time he spent building walls of book cartons to hide him.

2. That the Commission has relied too heavily upon the testimony of Marina Oswald that her husband fired at General Walker.

3. The chief objection: "One is rather surprised to read that the Warren Commission attaches any significance at all to the fact that Oswald was identified by witnesses late that night, or the following morning, after television programs had repeatedly carried his picture and all the newspapers had published numerous photographs of him." Sauvage adds that recognition of the man who had just been arrested, after offering resistance, had been further simplified by the

fact that when the police put Oswald in the lineup, he was quite conspicuous because he had a swollen eye and a fresh cut where the police had struck him.

I am in agreement with Sauvage on each point that he mentions, and I have some other reasons for suspecting that the President's Commission has not given us convincing answers to the questions both of us are asking. But before I name them, let me first plead guilty to the charge that my original report in *L'Express* in February did contain some errors and—worse still—I cannot even claim to have produced these errors from my own imagination. 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. None of us is better than our sources, as M. Sauvage himself will best appreciate if he will read the article attributed to him in the *New Leader*, in which he is quoted:

"The only version that can be considered official since November 23 states that the description of Oswald was transmitted to police cars after Roy Truly, head of the Depository, had noticed—and had informed one of the detectives—that the employee seen in the second-floor lunchroom a few minutes after the attack had disappeared. Buchanan mentions this version elsewhere in charging against his windmill, but without stopping and without telling us why he does not pause there. To me, the Truly explanation appears completely plausible, and I thus have no need of Buchanan's Accomplice Number 3."

Unfortunately for our poor friend K. O., Truly's explanation, which seemed plausible to him, did not seem plausible to the Commission and the very week your magazine appeared, the President's Commission came out with a new official version: "Howard L. Brennan was an eyewitness to the shooting. . . Brennan described the man to the

police. This description most probably led to the radio alert sent to police cars at approximately 12:45 P.M. . . . The police never mentioned Oswald's name in their broadcast descriptions before his arrest. . . . His absence was not noticed until at least one-half hour later. . . . It was probably no earlier than 1:22 P.M., the time when the rifle was found."

I should be more sympathetic to K. O. Sauvage and pass discreetly over his misfortune, had he not accused me of one error I consider just a bit insulting. He insinuates that I mistook the town of Irving for a private residence. I did not. That mistake was made by one of my translators. It will not be found in the Italian, German, Dutch, or any of the other simultaneous editions of the series. I need scarcely add that the unfortunate young man who made this blunder is no longer working at *L'Express*; there are some limits, even to the patience of Françoise Giroud.

WE ARE NOW better placed to analyze official findings, since they have been irretrievably committed to official paper and cannot be modified and shifted to meet each new criticism. I suggest the theory of the lone assassin rests upon a series of official speculations appearing in the Warren Report, variously labeled "probable" or "possible" or sometimes just "conceivable." Here are some of the most important, (*italics mine*):

Speculation: "Two bullets *probably* caused all the wounds suffered by President Kennedy and Governor Connally. . . . One shot passed through the President's neck and then *most probably* passed through the Governor's body. . . . The alignment of the points of entry was *only indicative and not conclusive* that one bullet hit both men. . . . The evidence indicated that the President was not hit until at least frame 210 and that he was probably hit by frame 225."

Fact: Refer to Commission Exhibit 893 (frame 210). Observe location of the crosshairs, showing where the President was shot. Note that a shot that passed through Kennedy at the position indicated would have struck the Governor in the lower portion of his back or hip, after first penetrating the car seat on which the Governor was sitting. Now refer to Commission Exhibit 895 (frame 225). Note that the car has turned toward the right, and that a shot fired at the point shown at the intersection of the crosshairs, after passing through the President, not only would have hit the car seat but would then have hit the Governor at the extreme left lower portion of his body or, if he were turning at that time, would have missed the Governor completely. Thus at no time between these two points could a shot have passed through Kennedy and then, while falling at an angle the Commission estimates at more than 17 degrees, "traversed the Governor's chest at a downward angle . . . and exited below the right nipple," as reported in the section dealing with the wounds. The evidence shows that two bullets hit the President, and that a third one hit the Governor of Texas.

Speculation: "Eyewitness testimony . . . supports the conclusion that the first of the shots fired hit the President. . . . If the first shot did not miss, *there must be an explanation* for Governor Connally's recollection that he was not hit by it. There was, *conceivably*, a delayed reaction between the time the bullet struck him and the time he realized that he was hit. . . ."

Fact: The Commission has provided its own answer to this speculation. The remainder of the sentence I have cited totally invalidates the first part: "—a delayed reaction . . . despite the fact that the bullet struck a glancing blow to a rib and penetrated his wrist bone." Flesh wounds can, of course, remain unnoticed for a certain time; a bone wound would produce an instant shock.

The evidence shows that the shot which hit the Governor of Texas took place after Kennedy was hit.

Speculation: "It was *entirely possible*" for one shot to have been fired between Kennedy's two wounds, although "the gunman would have been shooting at very near the minimum allowable time to have fired the three shots within 4.8 to 5.6 seconds."

Fact: "A minimum of 2.3 seconds must elapse between shots," the report has stated. It must be remembered that this minimum is based on the best possible performance of the greatest rifle expert in the world; an ordinary shot like Oswald, barely qualifying with 191 out of 250 the last time he fired in the Marines, would take much longer. One shot in the interval between the President's two wounds would have to have occurred "almost exactly midway in this period. . . . On the other hand, a substantial majority of the witnesses stated that the shots were not evenly spaced." Two shots between the ones producing Kennedy's two wounds would mean the speed with which one man could fire these shots had been exceeded. Testimony of the Governor of Texas indicates that he heard shots before and after he was hit. His wife confirms this. Testimony of the witness injured by the wild shot indicates he also heard shots both before and after he was hit. He cannot have been struck by any fragment of the bullet that hit Connally, since it was found intact. The evidence shows there were four or more shots, two of which were fired between the ones by which the President was wounded.

Speculation: "Based on the known facts of the assassination, the Marine marksmanship experts, Major Anderson and Sergeant Zahm, concurred in the opinion that Oswald had the capability to fire three shots, with two hits, within 4.8 to 5.6 seconds. . . . On the basis of Oswald's training and the accuracy of the weapon as established by the tests, the Commission concluded

that Oswald was capable of accomplishing the second hit even if there was an intervening shot which missed."

Fact: The Report states that six "expert riflemen" attempted to repeat the feat of the assassin. It appears that they fired at a stationary target, not one that was moving; the report, however, is ambiguous on this point. "Three marksmen, *rated as master* by the National Rifle Association, each fired two series of three shots. In the first series the firers required time spans of 4.6, 6.75 and 8.25 seconds respectively. On the second series they required 5.15, 6.45 and 7 seconds." Subsequently, "three FBI firearms experts tested the rifle in order to determine the speed with which it could be fired. The purpose of this experiment was not to test the rifle under conditions which prevailed at the time of the assassination but to determine the maximum speed at which it could be fired. The three FBI experts each fired three shots from the weapon at 15 yards in 6, 7, and 9 seconds." The evidence shows that in 7 cases out of 9, these experts took longer than the maximum time which has been attributed to Oswald; that their average for three shots was 6.75 seconds and they would, accordingly, have needed three more seconds to have fired a fourth shot.

Speculation: "Constable Deputy Sheriff Weitzman, who only saw the rifle and did not handle it, thought the weapon looked like a 7.65 Mauser bolt-action rifle. . . . After review of standard reference works and markings on the rifle, it was identified by the FBI as a 6.5 millimeter model 91/38 Mannlicher-Carcano rifle. . . . [District Attorney Henry Wade] repeated the error that the murder weapon had been a Mauser."

Fact: The Commission notes the murder weapon "is inscribed with various markings, including 'MADE ITALY,' 'CAL. 6.5,' " etc. No consultation of the "standard reference

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 in-

formed 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

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THOMAS BUCHANAN VS. LEO SAUVAGE

AN EXCHANGE

