

MR 8/19/67

Correspondence

How Many Bullets?

Dr. Enos by Dr. Wecht's name. I had insufficient confidence in my memory of the program to correct the CBS transcript on my own authority. Let us be clear, however, that Dr. Enos was not speaking about the particular bullet in question having caused the particular wounds of both men. He was merely saying that a theoretical bullet could go through two theoretical men - a judgment of possibilities I am prepared to accept.

Alexander M. Bickel

Sirs:

The single-bullet theory may strain credulity for some casual students of the Kennedy assassination, but it is the only answer consistent with all the available facts.

This conclusion is based on extensive impartial study of the evidence during seven months of preparatory work for four one-hour television broadcasts on successive nights last month comprising "A CBS News Inquiry: The Warren Report."

It is disappointing that a writer as knowledgeable as Alexander M. Bickel - no matter how "brilliant" or how "evasive and fatuous" he considered the various CBS News efforts - should add to the vast misinformation spread by irresponsible critics of the Warren Report. In his review in *The New Republic* issue dated July 1, 1967, Mr. Bickel makes one major error of fact and offers specious arguments against the single-bullet theory.

Look at the evidence:

Abraham Zapruder's film shows just how President Kennedy and Governor Connally were sitting when they were shot. The autopsy states the angle and direction of the shots through President Kennedy's neck and head. The three expended cartridges found on the Book Depository's sixth floor, plus one nearly intact bullet and two sizeable bullet fragments were all positively identified as having been fired from the rifle found on that sixth floor - to the exclusion of all other rifles.

The nearly intact bullet was found on a Parkland Hospital stretcher, most likely the one Governor Connally had occupied. The bullet fragments were found in the front seat area of the Presidential limousine. Other, much smaller fragments were found in the car later. . . .

Two bullets, meaning two shots, can account for all the wounds and all the damage. The case for a third shot rests primarily on the finding of three empty cartridge cases. This shot, whether it was the first one fired as CBS News suggests or the second one

conclusion, as he stated in the second broadcast, that these tests "very strongly show that this one bullet could have caused all the wounds." . . .

The full basis for that conclusion, which we did not explore on the air, was this:

Dr. Olivier felt that the "very little more velocity" needed for a test bullet to penetrate the block simulating the Governor's thigh could be supplied in at least two ways.

The gelatin blocks were deliberately made slightly larger than the anatomy they were simulating so that any error would make the single-bullet test more difficult rather than easier. We could have shaved the simulation blocks until we got a perfect result, but we did not think that would be scientifically valid.

Also, to insure hitting the first block, simulating the President's neck, with pinpoint accuracy so as to keep the bullet in line with the successive chest, wrist and thigh blocks, the bullet was not fired from 180 feet or so away — as in Dealey Plaza — but from about 20 feet away. The powder in the car-

tridge was reduced so that the impact velocity approximated that at 180 feet, but this short range introduced a slight "muzzle yaw" — the bullet was not as stable after traveling only 20 feet as it would be 180 feet from the muzzle. The difference, Dr. Olivier decided, could be the difference between bouncing off the thigh block and penetrating it. . . .

Mr. Bickel erred, as did the CBS News transcript from which he apparently took his information, in attributing doubts of the single-bullet theory to William F. Enos, a pathologist at Northern Virginia Doctors Hospital. Dr. Enos said this type of military bullet could indeed have gone through two men without deforming. It was Dr. Cyril Wecht, a Pittsburgh pathologist speaking after Dr. Enos, who thought it "highly improbable."

We never deluded ourselves that this CBS News Inquiry would satisfy people who for one reason or another choose not to believe the basic conclusions of the Warren Report. . . .

If Mr. Bickel is looking for a weak

point in the case against Lee Harvey Oswald, let him concentrate on the lack of proof that Oswald himself actually pulled the trigger of his rifle.

Walter Lister

CBS News Special Reports

In reply . . .

I was trying to deal in print with "irresponsible critics" and "vast misinformation" before CBS deigned to consider the problem of the Warren Report airworthy, and I do not take kindly, therefore, to insinuations about "people who for one reason or another choose not to believe," or to *ex cathedra* pronouncements about criticisms unsupported "by any rational evidence."

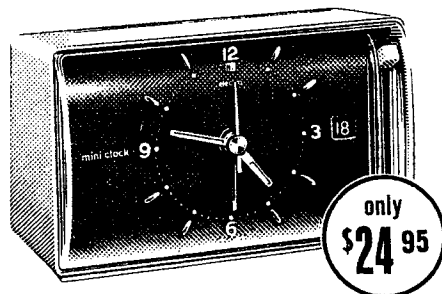
That a third shot missed the Presidential limousine may be true, but that it "almost certainly" did so is sheer assumption. All the evidence Mr. Lister recites tends to show that the single-bullet theory is possible. I have never denied that it is. I have never credited notions that the neck wound was inflicted from the front, and early pointed out that fibers in the President's shirt collar proved that his throat injury was an exit wound. And I have never challenged the physical findings of the autopsy report.

But Dr. Humes himself — the chief autopsy surgeon — said that the nearly intact bullet could not have caused all of Governor Connally's wounds. The Commission's other expert, Dr. Finck, a well-known forensic pathologist, was of the same opinion. The question is one of distortion and of loss of fragments. This is testimony forming a rational basis for grave doubt, and no adequately unambiguous refutation of it has been produced from equally qualified sources. I thought it and think it an evasion for CBS to have omitted consideration of this crucial point. The hypothesis of a hit to the President's back by the first shot is no less possible than the single-bullet theory, and may be less difficult, although it is, as I said, not without difficulties, which I wish CBS had explored. The vast resources and the vast audience CBS commands impose certain obligations.

I see that my characterization of Dr. Olivier's tests was accurate. They proved nothing, whatever Dr. Olivier's speculations.

I am sorry I was misled into calling

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as the Warren Commission implied, almost certainly missed the Presidential limousine entirely. . . .

The single-bullet theory suggests that one bullet went through the President's neck, went through Governor Connally's chest ripping along one rib, exited tumbling, hit the Governor's wrist breaking bones and leaving lead particles, then came out base forward and made a puncture wound in the Governor's thigh.

This theory requires a longer reaction time for Governor Connally than for President Kennedy, but it is entirely possible according to a preponderance of experts in wound ballistics.

The critical point here is that any theory of separate bullets must explain what happened to the bullet that wounded the President in the neck. Arguments that the neck wound was inflicted from the opposite direction ignore expert testimony showing which way clothing fibers were bent by the bullet. To twist the path of the bullet upward so it would escape hitting anything else in the car not only challenges the autopsy report (very easy since the autopsy photographs are still withheld from impartial scrutiny), but it also is a far more tortured argument than that sarcastically attributed to proponents of the single-bullet theory.

Mr. Bickel's major error is his suggestion that there were more fragments left in Governor Connally than the stretcher bullet had lost.

One of the autopsy pathologists did say there were more particles "described" in the Governor's wrist than were missing from that nearly intact bullet. But it turned out the pathologist knew very little about the weight of particles in Governor Connally's wrist. Three particles were removed. The largest weighed half a grain. The other two and those left in his wrist were far tinier. There was also a tiny particle in his thigh. The total weight of lead particles in Governor Connally could easily be less than two grains. There were two or three grains missing from that bullet. So this did not disprove the single-bullet theory, nor prove it. . . .

As for the gelatin tests conducted for CBS News by Dr. Alfred G. Olivier, chief of wound ballistics at the Army's Edgewood Arsenal, it was Dr. Olivier's

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