

A Critic's View Of the Warren Commission Report

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SA
12-6-75

*Concise and
succinct review,
right?*

By Jerry Policoff

Twelve years after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, the Warren Commission report, which concluded that the killing was the work of one man, Lee Harvey Oswald, is once again hotly debated.

Recent disclosures show that both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency systematically withheld relevant evidence from the commission, and declassified executive session transcripts tell of the untenable circumstances under which the commission operated. Before it had even begun deliberations, one commissioner remarked that "we might as well pack up and go home" in view of the lone-assassin findings being forced upon the commission by the F.B.I., which it relied upon as its principal investigative arm.

Several commission staff members have suggested that the F.B.I., C.I.A. and other agencies be investigated to discover why material was withheld from the commission, but they have maintained that no new investigation of the assassination itself is necessary since none of the fresh disclosures have diminished the commission's essential findings.

This position carries with it the assumption that the original evidence supports the findings set forth in the report—an invalid assumption in view of the facts.

To believe the report, we must also believe that an extraordinary number of improbabilities occurred against the wildest odds. What follows is but a small sample:

- The vast majority of eye and ear witnesses had to have been mistaken about the source of shots from the right front, including several Secret Service agents and the Chief of Police, Jesse Curry, who initially ordered his men to concentrate on that area.

- There must be some nonconspiratorial explanation for the President's head having been rocketed violently backward to the left—a reaction that would seem more consistent with a shot from the right front than from behind.

- All the doctors at Parkland Hospital who examined the President's throat wound before obliterating it with a tracheotomy incision had to have been mistaken when they unanimously described it as an apparent entrance wound.

- Oswald was lucky. A poor shot, he successfully accomplished what none of the commission's expert marksmen were able to accomplish under more favorable controlled circumstances.

- Three employees of the Texas Book Depository, where Oswald worked, must have been mistaken when they said they thought they saw him on the first floor during the 45 minutes preceding the assassination while bystanders on the street were observing a person or persons on the sixth floor.

- A fourth witness was mistaken when he told the F.B.I. on the day of the assassination, Nov. 22, 1963, that he had last seen Oswald on the first floor, but was correct six months later when he told the commission that he had last seen Oswald on the sixth floor after everyone else had gone to lunch.

There also had to have been no connection between a statement by a Dallas police lieutenant that this witness "would probably change his testimony for money," and the apparent alteration in his story.

- Oswald, who said he was on the first floor at the time of the shooting, made a lucky guess in identifying two other employes he said he had observed there and who had in fact been there.

- A policeman who encountered Oswald on the second floor immediately after the shooting did not arrive there as rapidly as he believed since Oswald could not have descended from the sixth floor that quickly.

- The President's shirt and jacket rode up nearly six inches without doubling over in order to produce holes six inches below the collar, since the official autopsy report placed the wound at the base of the neck. Four Secret Service agents, two F.B.I. agents and the President's personal physician were all mistaken when they also located the wound in a position approximating the holes in the clothing. (The higher location was essential to the commission's theory that the throat wound was an exit wound for the bullet that entered the back.)

- Since it has been established that Oswald's rifle was incapable of firing two shots in the minimum time between the wounding of Mr. Kennedy and Gov. John Connally, one bullet must have caused seven different wounds in both men, smashing Governor Connally's fifth rib and right wrist along the way, hitting his left thigh with enough force to leave a fragment permanently embedded in the bone, and then merely falling out of the wound, to be found intact and unscratched by a hospital orderly.

Even test bullets fired through tubes of cotton suffered more damage than this super bullet. The commission's staunchest defenders acknowledge the extreme unlikelihood of the single-bullet theory. They generally argue that it is possible because it happened.

Defenders of the Warren Commission report say that the critics have yet to produce a theory that makes more sense than the one put forward by the commission. On the contrary, the evidence weaves a fabric pointing unavoidably toward conspiracy. The commission, with its preconceived notions simply chose to interpret it otherwise, and suppressed that which it could not so interpret.

Jerry Policoff, a New York advertising salesman, has been a student of the Kennedy assassination since 1966.