

## A NEW TYPE OF ARGUMENT AGAINST THE SINGLE-BULLET THEORY

by

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At the recent Second Research Conference of The Third Decade, some of the participants urged us to "get out of Dealey Plaza," i.e., to stop focusing so much on the minutiae of physical evidence relating to the assassination, and to devote more of our efforts to pinpointing the nature of the conspiracy and helping to bring the conspirators to justice. I contend that further study of the physical evidence is worthwhile and will show this by offering an enhanced version of a classic multiple-assassins argument which will accomplish two important objectives:

1. demonstrate that the Warren Commission's own reconstruction photographs imply the falsity of the single-bullet theory and
2. illustrate a potentially promising approach for assassination research involving a greater use of the logical connections between apparently unrelated issues.

As we all know, the single-bullet theory is an indispensable foundation of the Warren Commission's single-shooter thesis. Since the Zapruder film shows that much less than 2.3 seconds (the minimum time for two shots to be fired using the alleged assassination weapon) elapsed between the time President Kennedy began reacting to his throat wound and the point at which Governor Connally began reacting to his wounds, either the two men were hit by the same bullet or they were hit by two different bullets and hence two different shooters.

Critics of the official version have advanced various criticisms of the single-bullet theory, including what may be called the "timing discrepancy refutation." In brief, the Zapruder film shows not only that President Kennedy and Governor Connally were hit within less than 2.3 seconds of one another, but also that the two men were hit between 1/2 second and 1 and 1/2 seconds apart from one another. Thus, they were hit by separate bullets and hence by separate shooters.

What is not generally admitted by critics is that defenders of the single-bullet theory have a fairly strong rebuttal to this argument as formulated above. They could argue that this alleged refutation is hardly conclusive because one could posit that both men were hit at or just prior to Zapruder frame 225 (based on Kennedy's reaction at Zapruder 225 to being shot in the throat). Since Connally is seen reacting to his wounds at approximately Zapruder 236 to 237, this would require a delayed reaction by Connally of only slightly more than 1/2 second, surely a distinct possibility.

Despite the confidence with which we often trot out the

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"timing discrepancy refutation," I am not comfortable with asserting that a delayed reaction of approximately 1/2 second is so implausible that the single-bullet theory must therefore be false. Much has been made of the timing issue—too much if the foregoing alleged refutation is the strongest timing argument which can be made against the single-bullet theory.

Ironically, the Warren Commission itself has unwittingly provided us with the key evidence which enables us to transform the "timing discrepancy refutation" from a tenuous, contestable argument into a conclusive refutation of the single-bullet theory and hence of the Warren Commission's entire single-shooter thesis.

Based on the Warren Commission's own reconstruction of the relative positions of Kennedy and Connally at Zapruder frame 225 (see reconstruction photograph, Commission Exhibit 895), it is clear that such a hypothetical Zapruder 225 wounding of both men, which is so convenient for defenders of the single-bullet theory hoping to successfully address the timing issue, is precluded by the fact that Kennedy is much too far to the left of Connally for a shot from the alleged sniper's nest to go through Kennedy's throat and then (having hit only soft tissue in Kennedy) continue on in an essentially straight line to strike Connally near the right armpit. [1] In fact, as Commission Exhibit 895 clearly shows, any shot fired through Kennedy's throat from the alleged sniper's nest at or around Zapruder 225 would have hit Connally near the left armpit. [2]

The only other reconstruction photograph of a Zapruder frame that is close to Zapruder 225 is contained in Commission Exhibit 894, a reconstruction photograph of Zapruder frame 222. Unfortunately for the Warren Commission, this exhibit shows essentially the same thing. Any shot fired through President Kennedy's throat at Zapruder 222 would have hit Governor Connally in the left half of his back, as far left as the left side of the Governor's head. [3] Of course, this is not even close to the actual location of the wound near the Governor's right armpit.

The upshot of this is that in order to obtain the appropriate lateral trajectory (through President Kennedy's throat and striking Governor Connally near the right armpit), the double impact must be pushed back to considerably before Zapruder 222, probably to as early as Zapruder 207-210, as Commission Exhibits 892 and 893 (reconstruction photographs of Zapruder 207 and Zapruder 210 respectively) clearly indicate. [4] This implies that in order for the single-bullet theory to be true, Governor Connally must have been hit at or around Zapruder 207-210 and thus must have had a delayed reaction of approximately 26 to 30 Zapruder frames (approximately 1 and 1/2 seconds).

This is clearly an implausibly long delayed reaction, especially in light of the fact that part of Connally's reaction to being shot was an involuntary reaction that should have taken no more than one-half second. At Zapruder frame 238, Connally is visibly reacting to his wounds—his shoulder is thrust downward, his hair becomes disheveled and, most importantly, his cheeks puff out (a result of being shot through

the chest, which caused "a compression of the chest wall and an involuntary opening of the epiglottis followed by escaping air forcing open his mouth". [5] Dr. Gregory, the surgeon who had operated on Connally's wrist, estimated that "the interval between impact of the shot and this involuntary physical reaction would have been no more than one-quarter to one-half second." [6]

Thus, the lateral trajectory issue forces us to push the alleged double hit to approximately Zapruder 210, clearly much too early for Governor Connally's cheek puff at Zapruder 238 to have been caused by the same shot. In sum, by combining the lateral trajectory issue with the timing issue, we are forced to conclude that either the single-bullet theory is wrong because it posits a late double hit (approximately Zapruder 225) and hence a lateral bullet trajectory which is incompatible with the wounds suffered by the two men or the single-bullet theory is wrong because it posits an early double hit (approximately Zapruder 210) and hence a delayed reaction on the part of Governor Connally which is incompatible with the known facts of human physiology, as detailed above by Dr. Gregory. In other words, the single-bullet theory can successfully address either the timing issue or the lateral trajectory issue, but not both. Therefore, it can not account for all of the known facts and thus must be false. [7]

Thus, by pinpointing the logical connection between the lateral trajectory issue and the timing issue, we have shown that the "timing discrepancy refutation" can be strengthened considerably. I suggest that we employ a similar methodology wherever possible.

I will conclude with a brief discussion of another application of such logical analysis. Proponents of the single-bullet theory sometimes try to rebut attacks on the single-bullet theory by saying that, given the trajectory of the bullet through the President's neck and given the fact that the bullet hit no bones in the President's neck and hence wasn't substantially deflected, the bullet, if it didn't hit Governor Connally would had to have hit either the Presidential limousine or someone else in the car. Since there is no evidence of an intact, relatively high-velocity bullet hitting either the limousine or its other occupants (other than the Governor), the conclusion that this bullet hit the Governor after hitting the President is strongly indicated. [8] We can call this the "vanishing bullet challenge."

At first glance, this sounds like a fairly good argument. However, when you view this issue in light of the vertical bullet trajectory issue, this argument falls apart. As many students of the assassination know, the overwhelming weight of the evidence clearly shows that the President was non-fatally struck in his back and not in his lower neck as claimed by the Warren Commission. This body of evidence includes: [9]

1. the matching bullet holes in the back of the President's suit and shirt almost 6 inches below the top of the collars of these two garments;

2. the testimony of Secret Service Agents Hill, Greer and Kellerman, all of whom saw the wounds on the President's body after his death and were unanimous in their placement of the non-fatal entrance wound as being in the President's back significantly below the collar line;

3. the contemporaneous report of Secret Service Agent Bennett, who saw the President get shot in the back significantly below the collar line;

4. the autopsy body chart, prepared by Dr. Boswell during the autopsy, which shows a wound on the back of the President significantly below the collar line;

5. the verification of this body chart by Dr. Burkley, the President's personal physician, who was present at the autopsy [10]; and

6. the death certificate, which locates the President's wound at the level of the third thoracic vertebra. [11]

It is important to note that all of this evidence places the back wound in essentially the same place, to the right of the spinal column and significantly below the neck in the President's back. What are the odds of 2 pieces of physical evidence and 6 eye-witnesses (5 of whom had ample opportunity to make reliable observations) being wrong and yet saying exactly the same thing? However, this is not all. The autopsy photographs also confirm that the President was wounded in the back, not in the neck. [12]

The obvious upshot of all this is that since the President was shot in the back and not in the neck, the trajectory which the single-bullet theory must posit (an approximately 17 degree downward flightpath from the sixth floor of the Depository through President Kennedy's neck and throat and down through Governor Connally's back) [13] is entirely destroyed. Simply put, since the President was wounded in the upper back and the bullet came out his throat, the essentially flat trajectory involved is incompatible with the bullet's being fired from the sixth floor of the Depository and is incompatible with the bullet's going on to strike Governor Connally on a pronounced downward flightpath and penetrating his torso at a downward angle of approximately 25 degrees, as required by the nature of the Governor's wounds. [14] Thus, we see once again that the single-bullet theory is incompatible with the overwhelming weight of the physical evidence.

The less obvious point is that the essentially flat flightpath of a bullet which hit Kennedy in the upper back and came out his throat allows us to answer what we have called the "vanishing bullet challenge," which has been proposed by some defenders of the single-bullet theory: "If the bullet which caused all of the President's non-fatal wounds did not go on to strike Governor Connally, then where did it go?" The answer is clear. It flew over the limousine and its other occupants and was lost somewhere in Dealey Plaza. Note that this answer is plausible only after we have dispensed with the fiction of a descending trajectory of approximately 17 degrees by showing clearly that this shot must have had an essentially flat trajectory. After all, if the President, who was seated at the

extreme right rear of the passenger compartment of the limousine, was hit by a bullet which had been going downward at an angle of 17 degrees and moving slightly to the left, you would expect that this bullet would have hit either the car or one of its other occupants. Once again the importance of the logical connection between issues reveals itself.

In sum, I suggest that we as critics of the single-bullet theory endeavor to discover and articulate the latent logical connections between issues in order to ensure that we don't "get out of Dealey Plaza" until we have armed ourselves with the strongest arguments at our disposal.

#### Notes

1. See Commission Exhibit 895 for the reconstruction photograph relating to Zapruder frame 225. It appears on p. 103 of the Warren Commission Report (New York: St. Martin's Press), as well as in the Warren Commission Hearings and Exhibits, Volume 18, p. 90.

2. Warren Commission Report, p. 103.

3. Warren Commission Hearings and Exhibits, Volume 18, p. 89.

4. Warren Commission Hearings and Exhibits, Volume 18, pp. 88-89. Commission Exhibit 893 also appears on page 102 of the Warren Commission Report.

5. Bonar Menninger, Mortal Error (New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 1992), p. 48.

6. Menninger, Mortal Error, p. 48.

7. The version of the single-bullet theory propounded by the House Select Committee on Assassinations is similarly untenable. By concluding that the double hit occurred at approximately Zapruder 190, the House Committee put itself in the absurd position of saying that Governor Connally's "cheek puff" (a physiological reaction which should have occurred within 1/4 to 1/2 second of his being shot) took place approximately 48 Zapruder frames after he was shot, an implausible time-lag of nearly 3 seconds! The Committee's principal evidence for an early hit (earlier than the mid-230's in terms of Zapruder frames) on Governor Connally seems to be its claim that at approximately Zapruder 222-224 the Governor is frowning, his shoulders and upper trunk are stiffening and his facial expression and orientation of his head are changing (HSCA, Vol. VI, p. 17). As some researchers have pointed out, including Raymond Marcus on page 3 of his The HSCA, the Zapruder Film and the Single-Bullet Theory and Dr. Jerry Rose in a recent phone conversation with me, these changes in Governor Connally's demeanor could just as easily have been caused by his having been startled by the sound of a gunshot which did not hit him.

8. This argument appears on p. 105 of the Warren Commission Report and on pp. 378-379 of David Belin's November 22, 1963: You Are the Jury (New York: Quadrangle, 1973).

9. Items 1 through 4 in the following list are taken from pp. 76-79 of David Lifton's Best Evidence (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1988) and pp. 184-185 of Harold Weisberg's White-

wash (published by the author in 1965).

10. Henry Hurt, Reasonable Doubt (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1985), pp. 48-49.

11. Lifton, Best Evidence, p. 375.

12. Lifton, Best Evidence, autopsy photo 5 (contained in photo section between p. 682 and p. 683).

13. Warren Commission Report, p. 106.

14. Warren Commission Report, p. 107.

## EYEWITNESSES TO THE KENNEDY AND TIPPIT MURDERS\*

by  
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### Introduction

According to the Warren Commission Report: "At least 12 persons saw the man with the revolver in the vicinity of the Tippit crime scene at or immediately after the shooting. By the evening of November 22, five of them had identified Lee Harvey Oswald in police lineups as the man they saw. A sixth did so the next day. Three others subsequently identified Oswald from photographs. Two witnesses testified that Oswald resembled the man they had seen. One witness felt he was too distant from the gunman to make a positive identification." [1]

The above paragraph, lifted directly from the Warren Report, appears very convincing. Nine positive identifications from 12 eyewitnesses to the murder of Dallas Police Officer J.D. Tippit. Only one of the 12 is reported as completely failing to recognize Oswald.

In addition to those twelve so-called eyewitnesses at or close to the Tippit murder scene, there were three more who either saw or had direct contact with Oswald in connection with the assassination of the President three quarters of an hour previously. These three also viewed Oswald in identity parades and according to the Warren Report, all three picked him out.

"At about 6:30pm on the day of the assassination, McWatters viewed four men in a police lineup. He picked Oswald from the lineup as the man who had boarded the bus" [2] "and they asked me which one and I told them. It was him all right, the same man." (Whaley) [3]

"When specifically asked before the Commission whether or not he could positively identify the man he saw in the sixth-floor window as the same man he saw in the police station,

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