

Hoover Blast At Warren Critics

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J. Edgar Hoover said yesterday that "not one shred of evidence" exists to indicate that Lee Harvey Oswald had an accomplice in the assassination of President Kennedy.

The director of the FBI thus upheld the Warren Commission Report's main conclusion, that Oswald acted alone.

Rapping critics of the report, Hoover said that while they have a right to express their views, "they should show more regard for the facts on record."

"They have ignored certain facts," he said, "misinterpreted others, and expressed pure speculation as truth."

The Hoover statement undermined to some extent the case against the Warren Commission's findings as stated by certain writers, including Edward J. Epstein.

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His book "Inquest: the Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth," triggered the new outburst of criticism of the Commission when it was published early last summer.

The statement followed by only two days the statement by Texas Governor John B. Connally Jr. that the Commission's findings should be accepted as final unless compelling new evidence appeared.

Connally, a passenger in the Presidential car in Dallas on November 22, 1963, has always maintained that he and Mr. Kennedy were struck by separate bullets, whereas the Warren Commission held that one of the bullets that wounded the President also passed through Connally.

This difference of opinion has given rise among some critics to the theory that a second assassin was involved and to the demand that a new investigation be conducted.

CLARIFICATION

At his press conference in Austin, Tex., on Wednesday, however, Connally said that he did not disagree with the Commission's findings except on "this one detail" about the shots.

He rapped the critics, particularly Mark Lane, author of "Rush to Judgment," and insisted that, barring new evidence, another investigation was "neither warranted, justified nor desirable."

Certain critics, notably Epstein, have seized on an apparent discrepancy in FBI reports on the autopsy on President Kennedy. They have used these reports to argue that Kennedy and Connally were hit by separate bullets and that there was, therefore, a strong likelihood of a second gunman.

Thus Epstein made much of the fact that in its first assassination report, dated December 9, 1963, the FBI said that the first bullet that entered the President's body did not exit. This is the bullet the Warren Commission believed struck Connally also. A supplementary FBI report dated January 13, 1964, said that this bullet entered Kennedy's back and "penetrated to a distance of less than a finger."

DISAGREEMENT

The FBI reports "precluded the possibility that both men were hit by the same bullet," Epstein maintained, adding, "there was thus a prima facie case of two assassins."

In his statement, Hoover sharply disagreed. Without mentioning Epstein or any other critic, he said that while there is a difference in information reported by the FBI and information contained in the official autopsy report, "there is no conflict." He explained:

"The FBI reports record oral statements made by autopsy physicians while the examination was being conducted and before all the facts were known. The autopsy report records the final findings of the examination."

The autopsy report said that the bullet did exit from the front of the President's neck. Thus it could have passed through Connally, who was seated in a jump seat directly in front of the President.

WITNESSES

Hoover related that two FBI agents were present when the autopsy was conducted at Bethesda Naval Hospital on the night of the assassination.

"They reported," he continued, "that Dr. James J. Humes, chief autopsy surgeon, located what appeared to be a bullet hole in the back below the shoulder and probed it to the end of the opening with a finger. The examining physicians were unable to explain why they could find no bullet or point of exit.

"The physicians eventually were able to trace the path of the bullet through the body. On the morning of November 23, 1963, Dr. Humes contacted doctors who treated the President at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, Tex., the previous day and confirmed his assumption that a tracheotomy had been performed using a bullet hole in the front of the neck as the point of incision."