

House Chiefs Back Warren Commission As Criticism Grows

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By PETER KIHSS

While new voices called for another inquiry into the assassination of President Kennedy, Democratic and Republican leaders of the House of Representatives contended yesterday that the basic questions had been answered by the Warren Commission.

In contrast to their view, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., former assistant to the President and winner of a Pulitzer Prize-winning history of his 1,000-day Administration, said there was a "residue of uncertainty" in people's minds that should be reduced. Mr. Schlesinger suggested that Congress initiate a new inquiry.

Yesterday on the third anniversary of the assassination in Dallas, Tex., on Nov. 22, 1963, Mayor Erik Jonsson of that city brought a wreath of bluish-pink roses on green satin to the new bronze historical marker near the assassination site. A boys'

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choir sang at another ceremony in Dallas, songs that it had sung for Mr. Kennedy that morning.

In Arlington National Cemetery, frost glistened on the President's hillside grave when his brother and sister-in-law, Senator and Mrs. Robert F. Kennedy arrived shortly after sunrise, the first of members of the family there to say prayers during the day. At noon a Naval aide brought a wreath from President Johnson.

The nagging worries, which have evoked a flurry of new books and criticisms of the September, 1964, findings by the commission headed by Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the United States, impelled Senator Russell B. Long to observe that further inquiry might be desirable.

Suspicious by Long

News services reported the Louisiana Democrat had answered a reporter's question in New Orleans late Monday by saying he had no doubt that Lee Harvey Oswald — whom the commission pronounced to be the President's lone assassin — had played a role.

But Senator Long, whose father was killed in an assassination while in office as a Senator, said he had "always suspected there was someone else involved" in killing Mr. Kennedy.

He was quoted as saying "whoever fired that second shot was a better shot than Oswald and he was using a better weapon." Mr. Long's office said yesterday he could not be reached for elaboration.

Representative Carl Albert of Oklahoma, the House Democratic majority leader, said he believed "the commission answered the basic questions."

Mr. Albert said he had kept up with its proceedings through the newspapers and had read the book titled "Portrait of the Assassin," which was written by one commissioner, Representative Gerald R. Ford, Republican of Michigan.

"I never did get excited about minor inconsistencies such as an extra bullet," Mr. Albert said.

Noting he was a lawyer, he observed, "I think the evidence here is better than in the Abraham Lincoln case," a Presidential assassination, which, 101 years later, is still disputed in some quarters.

"Of course, by saying I do not see any reason why further administrative or Congressional investigation should be made," Mr. Albert added, "I would not want to be in the position of encroaching on the powers of the properly constituted committees of Congress. I just don't know of any evidence."

Criticisms Criticized

Representative Ford, now the House Republican leader, said the criticisms in books and articles dealing with the Warren report had been "speculative."

"In none of the articles," he said, "have I seen any new evidence whatsoever. At such time as I see any new evidence, I would be glad to examine it or to have responsible authorities or some group other than the Warren Commission consider that."

Senator Richard B. Russell, Democrat of Georgia, who had been a commission member, issued a statement last night from his home in Windsor, Ga.

Senator Russell said he knew of no instance in which recent critics had presented "any hard testimony to answer the questions that are so easy to raise."

He added that he had caused several qualifications to be made in the report "pointing to the impossibility of dogmatic certainty in some of the findings."

Mr. Schlesinger, now a professor at City University here, said he had not read either the Warren report or the various books on the assassination of Mr. Kennedy. He said the case remained "too painful."

"Just on the basis of the public reaction," Professor Schlesinger observed, "it's perfectly clear, it seems to me, that since the Warren Commission, questions have arisen which would sort of leave people dissatisfied."

He continued: "If this is so, it seems to me to warrant a fresh look. I am not a master of any details. I think enough points have been raised both about the conduct

of the inquiry as well as about the substantive problems developed in the inquiry that there is a residue of uncertainty. Whatever can be done to reduce, to narrow, that zone of uncertainty.

One call for a Congressional or other investigation to "re-examine evidence" and consider data that the Warren Commission was alleged to have "failed to evaluate" had come this week from Life magazine. But yesterday its sister publication, Time magazine, took the opposite view. Both enterprises are led by Henry R. Luce.

"Even a new investigation," Time declared, "would be committed to making its own judgments and offering its best reasoned opinions—just as the Warren Commission did—in crucial areas where no firm facts exist. Thus, lacking any new evidence, there seems little valid excuse for so dramatic a development as another full-scale inquiry."

Life magazine's view was based on renewed disagreement by Gov. John B. Connally Jr. of Texas with the commission's theory that both he and President Kennedy had been struck by a single bullet.

The Governor believes he was wounded a half-second to 1.3 seconds after the time the commission believed President Kennedy was first hit—too short an interval for two shots to come from Oswald's rifle, which needed 2.3 seconds between shots.

Eye Witness Satisfied

Arlen Specter, District Attorney of Philadelphia and assistant counsel for the former commission, said yesterday:

"Based on all the facts, including those presented by Connally and many other witnesses, the commission concluded that Governor Connally was incorrect."

In Dallas, Charles F. Brehm, who stood less than 20 feet from the President's limousine but was never called before the commission, said yesterday he was "more than satisfied" with the findings.

A World War II Ranger staff sergeant wounded in Normandy, Mr. Brehm said he had seen the President hit by two bullets and considered a third shot went wild. But he added, "I did not

see the man who shot him," and "I did not see the shots fired."

In another Dallas interview, S. M. Holland, a railroad signal supervisor who had been a commission witness, insisted "there definitely was a shot fired from behind that fence"—a point ahead of President Kennedy's car. Oswald was allegedly behind the President.

"Four or five of us saw it, the smoke," Mr. Holland was quoted as saying by The Associated Press. "One of my employes even saw the muzzle flash. The way the Warren Commission published my testimony, it was kind of watered down some. It made it seem that I wasn't really sure whether I'd heard a shot from the fence."

Mr. Holland said he was certain at least four shots were fired, and perhaps five. He said those from Oswald's alleged position in the Texas School Book Depository Building had been "quite a bit louder than the one from the fence," so he "could tell they were from different rifles."

The commission concluded only three shots were fired.

In Washington, James B. Rhoads, deputy archivist of the National Archives said yesterday that "two-thirds of the investigative and other reports that were furnished to the commission by Federal agencies" had been made available for public scrutiny.

The National Archives and other agencies, Mr. Rhoads said, are "required to review in 1970 the material that remains unopened, and thereafter at 10-year intervals until everything is opened up," although they would not have to wait that long if it seemed possible to release material earlier.

Justice Department guidelines for keeping material locked up, Mr. Rhoads said, cover items that would be detrimental to administering and enforcing laws and regulations "relatively little"; sources of embarrassment to innocent persons; revelations of confidential sources or techniques of investigation; and data relevant to the still pending court prosecution of Jack Ruby for Oswald's murder.