

## One Man's Conspiracy Theory

# The Warren Commission's

# Rival

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### Washington

The Warren Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy is now face to face with its biggest problem: What to do about its chief rival, an American named Thomas Buchanan.

On the face of it, it is absurd to call Buchanan, an admitted ex-Communist now living in Paris, a "rival" to a group of seven distinguished Americans headed by the Chief Justice of the United States.

But, in fact, Buchanan is just that. He is the man who has sowed vast quantities of seeds of doubt about the assassination last November 22 in Dallas. It is his contention that the murder was not the act of a single man, Lee Harvey Oswald, but the product of some form of conspiracy with international implications of major importance.

### CONCLUSION

The Warren Commission report, expected to be published in June, almost certainly will reflect a unanimous view that Oswald and he alone was responsible. The commission plans to publish a lengthy summary of the evidence along with its conclusions.

To meet the Buchanan problem, however, even more will be required.

First of all, the entire record of the commission's interrogations, running to thousands of pages, also must be printed and made public.

But, most important is the need for the commission to meet Buchanan head on. Unless this is done the conspiracy theory cannot be laid to rest.

### TESTIMONY

The commission has discussed Buchanan; indeed, it has had some preliminary contact with him. But it has not yet decided whether to take the bold but obvious step of asking him to testify before it in open session. Perhaps that would be the most effective way to get at his accusations and, if they are indeed as faulty as they

appear, but them to rest.

A second but lesser "rival" to the commission is New York attorney Mark Lane, who already has appeared before the group in open session. His theme is similar to Buchanan's but it is Buchanan who has had the larger impact.

### BOOK

On May 8 a British publisher is bringing out an English edition expanding on the articles Buchanan wrote for the French weekly L'Express. Serial rights already have been widely sold. It was these articles which have been reprinted in some of Europe's most respected newspapers as well as some more sensational ones.

Buchanan has appeared on the British Broadcasting Company's top news show and Lane has been lecturing on both sides of the Iron Curtain in Europe. BBC flew home one of its top Washington correspondents to rebut Buchanan on the same program and Herbert Von Borsch, correspondent here for the influential West German paper Die Welt, was given two-thirds of a page to attack the Buchanan thesis.

But only the Warren Commission has the prestige to demolish the Buchanan-Lane

arguments once and for all.

Buchanan is a one-time Washington Star reporter who was fired in 1948 after admitting Communist Party membership. He says now

his membership was of short duration but he conceded last month to an interviewer that his judgments were initially influenced by his Marxist past.

Buchanan has constructed, apparently entirely from newspaper and magazine reports, a Marxist-style conspiracy theory about Oswald and the assassination: It was organized by a right-wing group which erroneously thought Vice President Johnson would alter the Kennedy "appeasement" foreign policy once he became President; Oswald was involved, having turned right wing himself and "probably" having fed the FBI names of those he knew in the Fair Play For Cuba Committee;

Oswald probably had two accomplices, one of whom (perhaps Jack Ruby) shot the President from the overpass in front of his car.

Buchanan says he became interested in the case because he was afraid the assassination "might jeopardize the East-West detente," a fear the Soviet Union initially quite obviously shared. However, the Warren Commission has turned up no evidence of Soviet complicity nor of Oswald's connections with the FBI nor of Ruby's association with Oswald.

Conspiracy theories die hard. No matter what the Warren Commission does, some will still choose to believe a conspiracy was involved. But the bulk of world opinion, both at home and abroad, probably is still open to conviction—provided the commission omits nothing and faces up in detail to every conceivable theory, however fantastic.