

INTERPRETIVE REPORT

Rumors Abroad Will Be Hard to Kill

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Massive and convincing as it is, the Warren Commission's report is hardly likely to quell completely the suspicions and rumors that have gained such currency in foreign countries since President Kennedy's assassination.

It may even, by reviving (and refuting) all the charges and speculations that have been made, give rise to a spate of new ones.

Those with a special stake in undermining the credibility of the findings, cannot be expected to let the matter drop now. And it is likely that, as before, they will find plenty of willing listeners.

A reading of the report makes it clear that these many and varied allegations were very much on the minds of the commission members. The objective of their report is not only to establish the facts beyond any reasonable doubt, but also to examine and explode every one of the contrary hypotheses of conspiracy.

Many Versions

There are many of these. Working from contradictions in newspaper accounts of the crime and conflicting "evidence" from alleged witnesses, the various foreign theories cover a wide range of possible conspiracies by extremists of the right or left, depending on the politics of their authors.

Undoubtedly the most laboriously constructed and widely circulated of these constructions was written by Thomas G. Buchanan, an American living in Paris. Buchanan, a former Commu-

nist, wrote a series of articles for the Paris weekly "Express." Subsequently published in book form, his charges have been widely circulated in Europe and have attained a measure of respectability.

The gist of the Buchanan theory is that Lee Harvey Oswald, though an accomplice, was not the real assassin of President Kennedy. He was, on the contrary, part of a far-ranging conspiracy involving Texas "oil interests." It also involved, in his version, a good part of the Dallas police force and the Federal officialdom.

Deductive "Proof"

Among other things, Buchanan set out to "prove" by deduction that there was not one assassin but two, one of whom was located on the railroad bridge in front of the presidential motorcade. He contends that Oswald merely acted as a lookout for the second assassin located in the book depository—wearing a police uniform. He argues that Oswald himself was an intended victim of the conspirators and that he killed Officer J. D. Tippit in an act of legitimate self-defense.

Of course, the entire structure of the Buchanan theory has been thoroughly demolished by the Warren report. It depends on a number of key facts, all of which have been quite adequately disproved.

According to Buchanan for instance, the railroad bridge ahead of the motorcade was left unguarded (it wasn't); there was no actual witness of the shooting that could have furnished an accurate description of Oswald (there was); a

bullet hole was observed in the windshield of the President's car (there was no hole). And so on.

This and other less elaborate and mischievous constructions of the crime can hardly survive the massive refutation that the Warren report provides. Any rational person would have to conclude that they are assumptions that have now been disproved. The lack of factual information on which the rumors throve so well has now been abundantly corrected.

Built on Suspicion

The unfortunate fact, however, is that the constructions themselves were the product, rather than the cause of foreign suspicion about the assassination and its aftermath.

They catered to a curious instinctive feeling of many Europeans about the crimes. They merely gave a certain substance to a kind of universal "gut reaction" and served to support suspicions that the whole tragic episode could not possibly have happened the way the official version said it did.

It is not easy to explain this reaction and it will not be easy to change it.

No doubt it starts from a natural tendency of foreigners to translate the events of Dallas in terms of their own political climates and experience.

In France, for instance, President de Gaulle has survived several assassination attempts since becoming President. All were politically motivated and involved an elaborate conspiracy.

To a Frenchman it is in-

credible that De Gaulle might fall victim to a deranged assassin acting on his own. And what they could never believe about their own president, they are no more willing to believe about ours.

Hard to Believe

Their credulity is further strained by the subsequent killing of Oswald by Jack Ruby. Europeans who pride themselves perhaps above all on not having been born yesterday, take this second crime simply as an outrage to their intelligence. Belief in a deep-laid plot is infinitely less painful to them than belief in this kind of capricious fate.

Above all, perhaps, the whole episode does injury to the European's sense of logic. In rejecting it, he is defending his own concept of the natural order of things, quite as much as he is casting aspersions on the integrity and honesty of American officialdom.

Being already impelled by his own instincts, he is only too willing to listen to anyone with the imagination to spin a theory that satisfies him. If one theory is shot down, there is no lack of theorists ready to take over the job.

The basic line is now well established that since the assassination was a hideously shameful thing. And that even well-motivated Americans are compelled in the name of the national interest to conceal the truth from the rest of the world.

On this theory the Warren report itself, along with all the evidence contained in it, also becomes suspect, which leads to the prediction that all the ghosts have not been laid to rest.