

FINDINGS ON SHOTS CHALLENGED

Warren Report target again

ATTORNEY VINCENT J. Salandria, in a six-page critique of the Warren Commission Report appearing in the January issue of Liberation magazine, says he is convinced—after analyzing the shots, trajectories and wounds that resulted in the death of President Kennedy in Dallas, Nov. 22, 1963—that “this killing . . . could not have been the work of one man firing a bolt-action rifle from the Book Depository Building.”

Salandria charged that the report “is very incomplete” concerning Kennedy’s wounds, noting that two reputable witnesses contradicted the report even as to the location of the massive head wound sustained by the President. The autopsy report prepared at the Bethesda Naval Hospital said Kennedy suffered “a large, irregular defect of the scalp and skull on the right” (Warren Report, page 540), while 13 pages earlier Dr. Robert McClelland—who treated the President at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas—is recorded as saying (in a photostat of the hospital admission slip) that “death was due to massive head and brain injury from a gunshot wound of the left temple.”

When Mark Lane, the New York lawyer who has organized a committee to conduct an independent inquiry into the assassination, first noticed this contradiction in October, the initial public reaction was that McClelland was simply mistaken. Salandria, however, has resurrected from the Nov. 24, 1963, issue of the Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin the following quotation from an article about Father Oscar Huber, who administered last rites to the President:

“The President was lying on a rubber-tired table when I came in,” Father Huber said. He was standing at his head. Father Huber said the President was covered by a white sheet . . . He said he wet his right thumb with holy oil and anointed a cross over the President’s forehead, noticing as he did, a ‘terrible wound’ over the left eye.”

McCLELLAND’S NOTE appears as Commission Exhibit No. 392, but is not commented upon in the text of the report. Huber is mentioned only as to the fact that he administered the rites. Salandria considers it significant that the deletions in Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy’s testimony in one of the 26 volumes of transcript issuing from the commission are stated in the transcript to concern references to her husband’s wounds.



TEXAS GOV. CONNALLY IN HOSPITAL WITH HIS WIFE
Did the bullet that hit him ‘turn upwards’?

In an analysis of the shots fired at the Presidential motorcade, Salandria contends that “the facts indicate that the shots fired at the assassination site were more than three . . . Only if the first shot struck both the President and [Governor Connally] can the commission rationally contend that no more than three shots were fired.” The author then seeks to demonstrate, relying on eye-witnesses, films of the assassination and testimony from the governor and his wife, that the bullet that struck Connolly was independent of the shots that killed the President.

The report said Connally’s recollection that he was struck by the second bullet was mistaken and that “there was conceivably a delayed reaction between the time the bullet struck him and the time he realized he was hit . . .” Commenting on this, the lawyer declared:

“But the . . . films are more objective than the commission and the governor’s nervous system. If the governor were a sack of gelatin which could ‘realize’ nothing, that sack would have probably lurched forward when pierced through from behind by a rifle bullet which exited at a speed of 1,776 feet per second. High school physics tells us that the law of action and reaction requires every action to have an equal and opposite reaction. The thrust of this bullet through the body of the governor was not recorded by the . . . films. The pictures are excellent evidence

that the first bullet to hit the President did not hit the governor.”

SALANDRIA’S analysis is most acute when discussing the trajectory of the murder bullets. Three shots, according to the report, were fired from the Depository’s sixth-floor window at an angle of 21 to 20 degrees.

“One would expect,” Salandria wrote, “such a shot with a downward trajectory from the sixth floor, hitting the President 5¼ inches below the coat collar and not hitting any bone, would continue its path downward at a roughly 20 degree angle and emerge from the abdominal area. Instead, this remarkable bullet turned upward. It then exited from the President, who was sitting perfectly erect, and tore through the left portion on his tie knot. One would certainly, once accepting this unusual and highly improbable course of this bullet, have to concede that it would fly harmlessly over the governor’s head heading for the sky. But the commission asks us to believe that this strange bullet changed direction in mid-air. No bullet ever has, unless spent. But this bullet was far from spent, for it had an entrance velocity after passing through the President of 1,858 feet per second. In mid-air, the commission turned this bullet downward into the back of the governor, who was sitting erect with his back to the President. Then this extraordinary missile pierced the back of the governor and emerged from his right nipple.”

From this evidence, Salandria suggests, “one separate shot [hit] the governor after the President had been hit by a different bullet. To conclude otherwise would be to grasp at not only the improbable, but what photography, all the eyewitness testimony, logic, the laws of physics and geometry tells us is impossible. Once we conclude that a separate shot hit Governor Connally, we are confronted with an extra bullet, which puts the commission theory of just three bullets from one gun into the limbo of historical myth.”

At this point, the lawyer interjects the name of James T. Tague who, according to the report, was the bystander wounded by a bullet—the wild, “third” bullet from the ‘lone assassin’s’ rifle.

“Tague was between Commerce and Main Streets,” Salandria wrote. “The bullet or bullet fragment hit the South curbing of Main St. From my view of the maps, diagrams, photographs, and after a personal inspection of the situs, at no point would Tague have been in the line of fire from the Depository Building to the Presidential limousine. He was some 1½ blocks from the Depository Building, about a block south of the limousine. But he was directly across from the grassy knoll on the north side of Elm St. The simplest and therefore best explanation of the source of that bullet is the grassy knoll north of Elm St.”

Salandria is one of several commentators who suspect that at least one of the bullets was fired from the knoll or the nearby railroad overpass. Several of the closest eyewitnesses are quoted in the report as stating they believed the shots were fired from that direction.

IN CONCLUSION, Salandria wrote: “The evidence of the report concerning the shots, trajectories and wounds is convincing. It convinced me that this killing of one man and wounding of two could not have been the work of one man firing a bolt-action rifle from the Book Depository Building. The involvement of two or more people in the commission of this crime would point to a conspiracy—unless it turns out that they were, independently of one another firing at the same target.” Salandria is a legal consultant in Philadelphia for the ACLU and peace groups. A complete copy of his article, as well as a foreword by Dave Dellinger, Liberation’s editor, and a comment by Staughton Lynd, is available for 50c from Liberation, 5 Beekman St., New York, N.Y. 10038.

—J. A. S.