

HISTORY WILL NOT ABSOLVE US

The following are excerpted sections from this new book, edited and written in part by Dr. E. Martin Schotz

A SUMMARY OF *The Nation's* EDITORIAL POLICY FROM THE ASSASSINATION TO THE WARREN REPORT

by E. Martin Schotz

In its first public comment on the assassination of President Kennedy, the remarks of the editors of *The Nation* clearly reveal that they were aware of President Kennedy's important turn toward peace, as they quoted extensively from a speech the President delivered at the University of Maine on October 19, 1963. The following is the quotation from that editorial:

While the road to peace is long and hard, and full of traps and pitfalls, there is no reason not to take each step that we can safely take. It is in our national self-interest to ban nuclear testing in the atmosphere so that all of our citizens can breathe more easily. It is in our national self-interest to sell surplus wheat in storage to feed Russians and Eastern Europeans who are willing to divert large portions of their limited foreign-exchange reserves away from the implements of war.

It is in our national self-interest to keep weapons of mass destruction out of outer space, to maintain an emergency communications link with Moscow, and to substitute joint and peaceful exploration of the Antarctic and outer space for cold-war exploitation.

No one of these small advances, nor all of them taken together, can be interpreted as meaning that the Soviets are abandoning their basic aims and ambitions. Nor should any future, less friendly Soviet action—whether it is a stoppage on the autobahn, or a veto in the U.N., or a spy in our midst, or new trouble elsewhere—cause us to regret the steps we have taken. Even if these steps themselves should be undone by the violations or renunciation of the test-ban treaty, for example, or by a decision to decline American wheat, there would still be no reason to regret the fact that this nation has made every responsible effort to improve relations.

For without our making such an effort, we could not maintain the leadership and respect of the free world. Without our making such an effort,

we could not convince our adversaries that war was not in their interests. And without our making such an effort, we could never, in case of war, satisfy our hearts and minds that we had done all that could be done to avoid the holocaust of endless death and destruction.

And then *The Nation* ends, "That he had brought us this far—and the polls would seem to show that he had struck a responsive chord—was the President's finest achievement."

This editorial was followed by one on the Warren Commission in the December 28, 1963 edition of *The Nation*. Based on what *The Nation* said at that point, its readers would have had every reason to believe that the magazine intended to take an independent critical stand in regard to the question of a conspiracy in the assassination. A quote from its editorial is as follows:

The Nation, too, has been curious about the obvious discrepancies, inconsistencies, gaps, and unexplained aspects of the three murders [Kennedy, Tippit, and Oswald], but has resisted the temptation to enter [the process of speculation]...until an "official" version of the facts is available.

...the public should maintain an alert, skeptical, wholly critical attitude, nor should public concern abate merely because the Warren Commission has set to work...

The public is entitled to nothing less [than all the known facts]...For our part, we intend to make an independent assessment of whatever "official" report is eventually issued.

In the January 27, 1964 issue there appeared a most important article, "Oswald and the FBI," by Harold Feldman, and an accompanying editorial, "The Tasks of the Warren Commission." Here careful attention to detail is necessary because something strange began to happen.

The editorial accompanying the article stated:

In this issue, Harold Feldman...suggests...that Oswald may have been an informant for the FBI...Because the FBI has cautioned certain witnesses not to cooperate, it has been impossible...for the press...to verify the facts...Mr. Feldman raises a question that calls for a finding by the Warren Commission. The article is published not to make a charge but to raise a question that, in fairness to the FBI and

the public, requires a specific finding.

Given this editorial and the title which *The Nation* penned to Feldman's article, one would think that Feldman had simply raised a question of whether Oswald was somehow connected with the FBI. But if one carefully reads Feldman's article, it is clear that the author was going much further. Rather than restricting himself to a possible connection between Oswald and the FBI, Feldman had actually assembled a great deal of material that was appearing in the press and which linked Oswald to the U.S. intelligence community in general and with the clear implication that the CIA might well be connected here. The following are some quotations from Feldman's article which indicate the breadth of the questions being raised beyond FBI involvement:

If there is anything constant in Oswald's life, it is his need of money...

...he was a pauper...But if there is another thing about Lee Oswald as certain as his indigence, it is that he was often capable of expenditures that would have craped the purse of a suburban status seeker.

After years of subsisting on a marine's pay from which he occasionally sent money to his mother, he undertakes a trip to Russia with a capital of \$1600....He borrows \$435.71 from the United States Embassy in Moscow but, *mirabile dictu*, he repays the loan between October, 1962 and January, 1963, during which time he was unemployed for several weeks and worked for a time as an unskilled developer of photostatic prints.

A Miss Pauline Bates, public stenographer, whom Oswald paid for typing his notes for a book about Russia three days after his return, has said that "he hinted he had gone to the Soviet [Union] as a U.S. secret agent." He allegedly told her then that "when the State Department granted my visa, they stipulated they could not stand behind me in any way," an admonition suggestive of instruction, to an undercover man.

...[he] goes to Mexico City for a week to get visas for a trip to Cuba and Russia that would have cost at least \$1000....After the murder of the President, the police find in his room, in addition to a wad of money, "several expensive cameras and rolls of film."

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For the Russian period, we have the unsupported assertion of *Pravda* that Oswald was an American spy who made numerous contacts with the American Embassy. This might indicate a CIA affiliation.

Returning to *The Nation's* editorial referring to this article one searches in vain for any acknowledgment whatsoever that a question is being raised by Feldman about Oswald's potential connection to the CIA. Rather one finds the following:

The Nation has been inundated with letters, manuscripts, and communications calling attention to this or that discrepancy or pointing to glaring omissions in the factual record. In the interval since November 22, certain key questions have been asked. Doubts have been raised, for example, about the rifle, the ammunition, the timing of the shots, the marksmanship involved, the role of the Dallas police, possible negligence in the precautions taken to guard the President, etc. The expression of these doubts should help the Warren Commission in its work.

The studious avoidance of any mention of Oswald's possible involvement with the CIA obviated the need for *The Nation* to address a very serious problem in regard to the make up of the Warren Commission, the problem that Allen Dulles, the former head of the CIA, whom Kennedy had fired from that position, was sitting right in the center of that investigative commission. It also obviated the need for *The Nation* to explain to its readers how the Commission was going to be able to investigate this angle of the case. Indeed, rather than dealing with this absolutely critical point, *The Nation* went off in a completely different direction and focused on how much stronger the integrity of the Warren Commission had become in recent weeks with the addition of various individuals such as J. Lee Rankin as counsel and Norman Redlich of New York University, and other establishment figures that *The Nation* characterized as "men of the highest integrity." Thus *The Nation* expressed that there was

ample assurance that the Commission will ably discharge the extraordinary responsibilities which it has assumed.

Lest anyone think that *The Nation* was completely unmindful of concerns circulating about the CIA, it is interesting to note that in a completely unrelated editorial immediately following that on the Warren Commission and on the same page, *The Nation* editorialized on a recent press conference which the CIA held trying to brighten its image. In the course of this editorial *The Nation's* editors noted in passing:

"The American public was gradually coming to the conclusion that the CIA was a self-perpetuating, ever-growing, tax-eating organization of spies, schemers and bunglers, with a few murderers thrown in."

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From reading this, a trusting reader might not unreasonably have gotten the impression that one need not worry too much about an organization made up of a bunch of bungling schemers who have a few murderers hanging around.

In line with the way *The Nation* editorially deflected the thrust of Feldman's article is its subsequent coverage of the Warren Report.

On September 14, 1964, *The Nation* published a rather abstruse discussion by Maurice Rosenberg, Professor of Law at Columbia University, on the problem that the Warren Commission was asserting that it was merely a fact-finding body which was not interested in finding anyone guilty and at the same time fulfilling its charge of investigating who killed President Kennedy. The Commission had refused Mark Lane's offer to serve as a kind of legal representative for Oswald on the commission, claiming this was not a judicial proceeding. Shortly thereafter the Commission decided to reverse itself and appointed another lawyer, Walter E. Craig, President of the American Bar Association and designee for the American federal district bench, as an "independent lawyer" to protect Oswald's interests.

On October 12, 1964, with the Warren Report now released, *The Nation* assured its readers that its previously promised critical evaluation of the "official" account was soon to appear in an article written by Herbert Packer, Professor of Law at Stanford University. And as if to imply that with Professor's Packer's forthcoming article all the questions about conspiracy would be laid to rest, *The Nation* at this point editorialized:

Of the several major public issues raised by the Warren Commission...those relating to the role of the police and the media—Chapter V—

should command top priority.

There then follows an editorial discussion in which *The Nation* laboriously discusses the role of the police and the media in the events surrounding Ruby's murder of Oswald. Again the attentive and trusting reader could well have inferred from all this that Mr. Packer's soon-to-appear article, *The Nation's* promised careful scrutiny of the Warren Report, would not find the issue of Oswald's guilt or the issue of possible conspiracy to be major public issues any longer.

And sure enough, on November 2, 1964 *The Nation* renders its opinion:

At the time the Warren Commission was appointed, *The Nation* took the position that it would stoutly resist the temptation to enter the ranks of the rapidly expanding army of amateur "private eyes" and miscellaneous freelance James Bonds who were even then busy as beavers mass-producing conspiracies among unnamed "oil millionaires" and offering each day a new theory of President Kennedy's assassination. We said then (December 28, 1963) that we would not add to the confusion and uncertainty—unless of course we were able to present some new and verifiable facts—nor would we draw any conclusions until an official version of the facts was available. At the same time we urged that public concern should not abate merely because the Warren Commission had been appointed, and advised that its work be kept under close scrutiny. We also said that we would make an independent assessment of the commission's report when it was issued (see article, Herbert L. Packer, p. 295).

We have had no occasion to regret these decisions. On January 27, we ran an article by Harold Feldman raising certain questions about the FBI's interest in Oswald [my emphasis]. In the same issue we devoted a second editorial to the Warren Commission, expressing our confidence in the staff and the commission and insisting, as we had done previously, that the Chief Justice's integrity in the matter was not to be questioned. At the same time we pointed out that the questions raised about the role of the FBI were addressed to the commission and called for specific findings. The commission did not accept at face value assurances that Oswald had never been an informer for the FBI or any kind of agent for the CIA; it checked the personnel records of both agencies to verify these assurances. This is precisely the kind of specific finding that was needed and the only kind that would be acceptable to a deeply concerned world public [my emphasis].

...In our view, then, the commission did its work well; the report is an admirable document, and the Chief Justice, his associates and the staff merit the praise they have received. The report should terminate the wilder speculations and more irresponsible rumor-mongering, but

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it will not do so. We have had occasion to experience, with more sadness than surprise, the depth and pervasiveness of the will to believe (notably among Left-of-Center groups) that the President's assassination was the result of a sinister conspiracy—the names of the conspirators to be filled in as need, fancy and bias dictate. Of course there are weaknesses and uncertainties in the report, and it may well be that facts still to be uncovered will throw fresh light on this or that aspect of the Dallas tragedy. But on the essential points, we share Mr. Packer's conclusions.

Turning to Mr. Packer's article on page 296, "A Measure of the Achievement," one finds that Mr. Packer wastes no time in getting to the point:

The Warren Commission has admirably fulfilled its central objectives by producing an account of the circumstances under which President Kennedy was assassinated that is adequate to satisfy all reasonable doubts about the immediate essential facts....If there are minor flaws...they are thrown into shadow by the conscientious and at times brilliant job that the commission has done. Only those who for whatever reasons of personal or political myopia cannot bring themselves to face reality will continue to think that the tragedy was proximately the work of more than one man...

It is not long, however, before even the most trusting reader is entitled to experience a sense of disquiet. For it turns out that Mr. Packer's critical review of the Warren Report's findings had been accomplished without Mr. Packer having available to him the evidence on which the commission based its conclusions.

Instead of carefully studying to what degree the commission's own evidence was consistent with its conclusions, Packer based his definitive statement exclusively on the Report, which the commission claimed to be a summary of its evidence.

To cite one example of the quality of Professor's Packer's critical review of the work of the commission one could take the first of five points which Packer refers to as the "minimal" case against Oswald. Here Professor Packer asserted that the commission proved:

(1) *All of the wounds sustained by President Kennedy and by Governor Connally were inflicted by bullets fired from the rear and above.* This is demonstrated by the medical report on Governor Connally and the autopsy report on President Kennedy, as corroborated by (a) examination of the bullet holes in the President's clothing, which showed that the first shot that hit him entered his back and exited through the lower part of his neck; (b) the damage to the inside of the wind shield caused by a spent bullet fragment; (c) the absence of any damage that could have been caused by a bullet or bullets fired from the front.

Professor Packer's review of the critical physical evidence proceeds in a similar vein. This, then, is a measure of the quality of *The Nation's* critical review.

That the Warren Report had virtually nothing to do with the commission's own evidence was obvious as soon as Salandria's articles appeared in *Liberation*. But then Mr. Salandria was not a member of the political establishment whose integrity the establishment would vouch for. He was merely an interested, independent critical citizen with a capacity to reason unencumbered by the phenomenon of "Crimestop."

Nor has *The Nation's* editorial position ever wavered in the past thirty years. Presumably the editors of the distinguished left/liberal magazine understand what is at stake if one rejects its insistence that as citizens we not question the integrity of the Chief Justice of the United States. ♣

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pretend to be surprised at his remarks, associating anyone who dares question the Warren Commission Report with the impeachment of Earl Warren movement.

The same disclaimer can not be made for Mr. Wirin, who is known to us in New York and is known throughout the nation. And I had never thought that the day would come when I would share a platform with Mr. Wirin and hear him read a statement from Herbert Philbrick and say, "If Mr. Philbrick said that and Mr. Lane said that, what does that make Mr. Lane?"

...Now I know that it is only because of the extreme pressure of this establishment which Mr. Wirin so well emphasized in quoting Carey McWilliams, or I.F. Stone, that this unusual statement was made by Mr. Wirin. I know that he would not make it ordinarily and I know that it does not reflect his thinking generally. I have too much respect for Mr. Wirin, for the organization with which he is associated, to believe that it represents his thinking. And I know that the day will come in America, as it came in France, 12 years after the conviction of Dreyfus. The whole liberal establishment said, guilty, guilty, guilty, for 12 years. Dreyfus was not guilty when the Minister of Justice said it. Dreyfus was not guilty when the liberals in the Parliament of France said it any more than he was guilty 12 years later when the French government had the courage and the honor to reverse its position.

And Oswald is not guilty now—any more guilty than he will be when the U.S. government has the courage and the honor to state that it was wrong.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

In the fall of 1967, I received a call in Los Angeles from a local TV talk show host, Stan Bohrman. I had met with him several times and he had become convinced that there had been a conspiracy. He told me that Arthur Schlesinger, the noted historian and Kennedy intimate, was to be a guest on his show that afternoon, and Bohrman wanted me to meet with him. He suggested that I bring my photo materials and that he would introduce us following the program. When I arrived I was ushered into a waiting area, and there I spread out some of the Zapruder and Moorman photos [photos which reveal a gunman on the grassy knoll] on the table. Bohrman came in to say that Schlesinger was having makeup removed and would be in shortly. He was, and Bohrman introduced us, telling Schlesinger of my purpose. Schlesinger glanced at the photos and immediately paled, turned away and said, "I can't look and I won't look." That was the end of our meeting.

Five Professors

By early 1969, I felt I had completed my own research in the specific areas in which I had chosen to concentrate. I had from the beginning attempted to bring the results of my work, as well as that of others I respected, to the attention of influential individuals in media and government with the hope of getting them actively involved. At that time I was in Boston on an extended business trip, and found myself with spare time over a period of weeks between negotiations. I had believed for some time that what the movement for a reopening of the Kennedy assassination lacked was serious participation by prominent figures of the New Left (although my own overall political orientation by that time was moving gradually away from the left). I knew that a number of such individuals were teaching at Boston area universities, and I decided to try to reach them.

I contacted Noam Chomsky of MIT, Howard Zinn of Boston University, Gar Alperovitz of Harvard, and a second Harvard pro-