

SEN. RICHARD RUSSELL AND THE GREAT AMERICAN MURDER MYSTERY

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It has now been forty years since Friday, Nov. 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated and what is now known as the Great American Murder Mystery was born: Who was involved in the planning and execution of JFK's slaying, and why was it committed?

The purpose of this article is to discuss the efforts Sen. Richard Russell undertook to help solve the greatest and most notorious crime committed in the United States in the 20th century, and to show that Russell's grave concerns about the adequacy of the assassination's official investigation by the Warren Commission, the FBI, and the CIA, and about the accuracy of the Warren Report itself, have been fully vindicated. Himself a member of the Warren Commission, Russell's actions as a member soon led to his being labeled the Commission's "great dissenter;" and, because he was the first member to publicly criticize the Commission's work, he is also known as the Commission's "first dissenter."

With the exception of Jimmy Carter, Richard B. Russell, Jr. (1897-1971) was the most distinguished Georgia politician of the 20th century. Born in Winder, he graduated from the University of Georgia School of Law in 1918 at the age of 20. Elected to the Georgia House of Representatives at the age of 23, he served there for ten years (the last four years as Speaker). At the age of 34 he was elected Governor of Georgia, and less than two years later was elected to the U.S. Senate, serving there brilliantly in a leadership capacity for 38 years. A conservative Democrat, Russell's support for segregation unfortunately led him to commit the greatest blunder of his illustrious career of public service—masterminding the filibuster against the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Russell never wanted to serve on the Warren Commission and was tricked into becoming a member. On Nov. 29, 1963, one week after the assassination, the new president, Lyndon B. Johnson, an old friend, called Russell on the telephone and tried to persuade him to serve as a member of the commission (soon to be known as the Warren Commission because its chairman was to be Chief Justice Earl Warren) that LBJ was about to create to handle the assassination investigation. Russell firmly declined. Five hours later that same day, however, LBJ called back and told Russell that he had been appointed to the commission and that this had already been publicly announced. "Learning that he ha[d] been outfoxed," historian Michael R. Beschloss writes, "Russell react[ed] with astonishment, indignation, then the weary resignation of one who has been dealing with LBJ for years." It was thus by artifice and deceit that Russell was, as he put it in a letter written later, "conscripted on the Commission."

Russell attended nearly all the Commission's executive sessions. Because of his many other duties and obligations, Russell attended only 6% of the Commission hearings at which testimony was taken. He did, however, with the help of an assistant, personally review the transcripts of the testimony, as well as other documents submitted to the Commission.

While serving on the Warren Commission, Russell repeatedly voiced suspicions that the FBI had

rushed to the judgment that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin and consequently was not thoroughly investigating the assassination and appropriately following up leads. (The Commission did not have an independent staff of investigators; it relied on the FBI, the CIA, and other federal agencies to carry out investigative activities and to supply needed information.) Russell's belief that the FBI was not performing adequately has been confirmed again and again since the Warren Report was released in 1964.

In 1976 the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities investigated and issued a report on "the performance of intelligence agencies in conducting their investigation of the assassination and their relationships to the Warren Commission." The report revealed that the Senate Committee "had developed evidence which impeaches the process by which the intelligence agencies arrived at their own conclusions about the assassination, and by which they provided information to the Warren Commission." The report concluded that "both the CIA and the FBI failed in, or avoided carrying out, certain of their responsibilities in this matter.... The evidence indicates that the investigation of the assassination was deficient and that facts which might have substantially affected the course of the investigation were not provided the Warren Commission..." The Senate Committee also found, in regard to the FBI specifically, that "during the Warren Commission investigation top FBI officials were continually concerned with protecting the Bureau's reputation and avoiding any criticism for not fulfilling investigative responsibilities.... The Bureau issued its report on the basis of a narrow investigation focused on Oswald, without conducting a broad investigation of the assassination which would have revealed any conspiracy, foreign or domestic."

Three years later, in 1979, the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations, after fully investigating the matter, issued a final report concluding that the FBI (1) "performed with varying degrees of competency," (2) "failed to investigate adequately the possibility of a conspiracy to assassinate the President," and (3) "was deficient in its sharing of information both prior to and subsequent to the assassination."

While on the Commission, Russell repeatedly expressed doubts that the CIA could be trusted to provide the Commission with the full, unexpurgated truth. These doubts have been fully vindicated. The CIA did not, for example, inform the Commission of recent CIA-Mafia murder plots against Fidel Castro. As noted above, in 1976 the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that the CIA failed in, or avoided carrying out, certain of its responsibilities in investigating the assassination. And the 1979 report of the House Assassinations Committee concluded that the CIA "was deficient in its collection and sharing of information both prior to and subsequent to the assassination." According to the 1979 report, "the CIA did not always respond to the Commission's broad request for all relevant material," and the responses the CIA did make were often tardy.

Several books by responsible, knowledgeable scholars have detailed crucial information about Oswald which the CIA possessed before the assassination but refused to give to the Commission, including facts about CIA monitoring of Oswald's activities and his links to CIA agents. Two of the best of these books are Philip H. Melanson, *Spy Saga: Lee Harvey Oswald and U.S. Intelligence* (1990), and John Newman, *Oswald and the CIA* (1995). Reading these books leaves little doubt that Oswald had close connections with the CIA before Nov. 22, 1963 and that

afterward the CIA, instead being forthright about its dealings with Oswald and its awareness of his activities, engaged in a coverup that impeded the investigation of the murder of an American president. "What legal term should we use to describe the action of a government agency when it lies to a presidentially appointed investigation?" Newman scathingly asks.

In a 1964 telephone conversation with LBJ shortly after the Warren Commission's last meeting, Russell expressed his unhappiness with what he called "[t]hat danged Warren Commission business." In 1966 and again in 1970 Russell told the new media of his abiding dissatisfaction with the work of the Warren Commission. Once again, Russell stands vindicated by history.

Edward Jay Epstein's *Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth* (1966), the best single treatise on the internal operations of the Commission, concluded that the Warren Commission, "sincerely convinced that the national interest would best be served by the termination of rumors, and predisposed by its make-up and by the pressure of time not to search more deeply, failed to answer some of the essential questions about the tragedy," and that the Warren Report "fails to contend with serious contradictions presented by the evidence." The 1979 House Assassinations Committee in its final report concluded that (1) "the Warren Commission performed with varying degrees of competency," (2) "the Warren Commission failed to investigate adequately the possibility of a conspiracy to assassinate the President," (3) the Warren Commission "presented its conclusions in its report in a fashion that was too definitive," and (4) the Warren Report "was not, in some respects, an accurate presentation of the evidence available to the Commission ... particularly on the issue of a possible conspiracy in the assassination."

Further vindicating Russell, the House Assassinations Committee final report attributed the Warren Commission's failure to adequately investigate the possibility of conspiracy to, in part, "the failure of the Commission to receive all the relevant information that was in the possession of other agencies and departments of the Government [i.e., the FBI and the CIA]." Russell's suspicions about the job the Warren Commission did were, therefore, well founded; in many respects the Commission's investigation was, as Henry Hurt charges in *Reasonable Doubt: An Investigation into the Assassination of John F. Kennedy* (1985), a "blue ribbon whitewash."

Echoing sentiments he had previously expressed about the assassination, in a 1970 television interview Russell said, "I have never believed that Oswald planned that altogether by himself... [I] have doubts that he planned it all by himself. I think someone else worked with him." Russell's view that a conspiracy was, or may very well have been, behind the JFK assassination has also been proven to be correct. Only a few diehard defenders of the Warren Report still seriously contend that Oswald, acting alone, was the sole assassin. Today most reputable students of the assassination believe that there was a conspiracy (although they disagree on whether Oswald was one of the conspirators and on whether he fired any of the shots). The final report of the House Assassinations Committee in 1979 concluded that "there was a high probability that two gunmen were firing at the President" and that "President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy." (The final report concluded that at least four—and possibly as many as six—shots had been fired, including three from the vicinity of the School Book Depository Building behind the presidential limousine, and one from the grassy knoll to the right of the limousine; the Warren Report had concluded that only three shots were

fired and that they all were fired by one person from the School Book Depository.) And if there were two conspirators firing at the motorcade, doesn't it stand to reason that probably there were additional conspirators?

Russell's strong suspicions regarding an actual or possible conspiracy may have been due in part to knowledge he had acquired as chair of a Senate subcommittee on CIA oversight. As Russell biographer Gilbert C. Fite has written, Russell might have "possessed secret information others did not have, [and] he may have had reason to suspect some kind of conspiracy. Whatever he knew, if anything, he carried to the grave."

Russell adamantly opposed the Warren Commission's single bullet theory—the theory that a nonfatal bullet fired from behind struck JFK in the back, exited the front of his body, and struck Texas Gov. John B. Connally, causing all Connally's wounds. Russell expressed his vehement disagreement with the single bullet theory in a proposed dissenting statement dictated on Sept. 16, 1964; he argued against the theory at the final meeting of the Commission on Sept. 18, 1964 (although the doctored transcript of this meeting contains no reference to Russell's arguments), and then criticized the single bullet theory again that very day in a telephone conversation with LBJ; and he emphatically rejected the theory in interviews with the press in 1966 and 1970. The two principal reasons Russell rejected the single bullet theory: (1) Connally's Warren Commission testimony, in which Connally absolutely, positively, and unequivocally asserted that before he was hit he heard a previous shot that struck JFK ("It's a certainty. I'll never change my mind"), and (2) Russell's own examination of the Zapruder film. (Two other of the seven members of Commission shared Russell's doubts about the single bullet theory; thus, nearly half the Commission questioned the theory.)

The reason the Warren Commission embraced the single bullet theory is explained in Epstein's *Inquest*. The famous Zapruder film of the assassination shows Connally reacting to his wounds about one-half second after JFK reacted to a (nonfatal) wound. Using the Zapruder film it was also established that less than two seconds elapsed between the earliest time that JFK could have been shot and the latest time that Connally could have been shot. "However," Epstein notes, "it was also established that the minimum time in which the [alleged] assassination weapon [a bolt-action carbine supposedly belonging to Oswald] could be fired twice was 2.3 seconds... Thus ... it was physically impossible for the assassination rifle to have been fired twice during the period when the President and Governor Connally were first wounded. Either both men were hit by the same bullet, or there were two assassins." Determined under all circumstances to find there was no conspiracy, the Commission was compelled to adopt the single bullet theory.

During the last thirty years nearly all JFK assassination scholars who have studied the evidence, with the exception of a few gullible defenders of the Warren Report, have rejected the single bullet theory as little more than a ploy used by the Warren Commission to prop up its lone assassin theory. The main reasons: (1) Connally's testimony (which was confirmed by his wife, who had been seated next to him in the presidential limousine); and (2) the contents of the Zapruder film. Furthermore, as Robert J. Groden and Harrison Edward Livingstone point out in *High Treason—The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: What Really Happened* (1989): "Not a single witness to the shooting ever suggested that both men were hit at the same time, and in fact all the witnesses in Dealey Plaza who had anything to say about it indicated that the

victims were hit by separate bullets." Once again, Russell stands vindicated.

Oddly, despite his rejection of the single bullet theory, Russell never seems to have questioned that Oswald fired all the shots that struck JFK and Connally. He seems not have grasped the fact that without the theory there had to be more than one assassin. In his Sept. 18, 1964 telephone conversation with LBJ, Russell said that his rejection of the single bullet theory "don't [sic] make much difference" and was "just a little thing." Actually, of course, as Michael R. Beschloss has written, the repudiation of the theory would make "a world of difference. For Kennedy and Connally to have been struck by separate bullets ... suggested that there may have been two gunmen firing at them in Dallas, and hence a conspiracy."

In overview, Sen. Richard Russell played an important role on the Warren Commission, and the concerns he frequently voiced about the adequacy of the investigation carried out by the FBI and the CIA, as well as by the Warren Commission itself, have proved to be quite justified. Despite his inability to devote much time to the Warren Commission, Russell labored to improve the quality of its investigation, to point out the bureaucratic pitfalls besetting the Commission, and to preserve its integrity. If the entire Commission had shared Russell's admirable determination to get to the truth of the matter notwithstanding the strange and inexplicable investigative lapses of the FBI and the CIA, the Warren Commission's performance would certainly have been vastly improved, and the Warren Report would have been a different, more persuasive document. But Russell was only one man, and there is only so much one man can do in the circumstances in which Russell found himself. He did not solve America's crime of the century, and he could not have been expected to do so. But it is to Sen. Richard Russell's lasting credit that he, more than other member of the Warren Commission, tried to slash through the constrictive coils that were suffocating the Warren Commission's endeavors to perform its solemn duty of uncovering the whole truth about America's greatest murder mystery. Today the Warren Report is, in important respects, a justly discredited document, and one reason for this is that Sen. Richard Russell was the great as well as the first dissenter on the Warren Commission.

Appendix A to this article is a timeline of events relating to Richard B. Russell's service on the Warren Commission, and Appendix B is a bibliography of writings dealing with Russell's criticisms of the Warren Report.

APPENDIX A

SEN. RUSSELL AND THE JFK ASSASSINATION: A TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Nov. 22, 1963 In broad daylight, while seated in an open limousine being driven in a motorcade to a luncheon, President John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dealey Plaza in downtown Dallas, Texas. The burst of hidden sniper fire that kills JFK also results in the severe but nonfatal wounding of Texas Governor John B. Connally, who is seated in the limousine in front of JFK. At the time of the assassination, Sen. Richard Russell is in an anteroom behind the U.S. Senate chamber, reading the wire feeds from the AP and UP news services.

Nov. 24, 1963 Accused JFK assassin Lee Harvey Oswald is shot dead in a Dallas police station

while in police custody and in the presence of numerous police officers by Jack Ruby, a local nightclub owner and organized crime figure.

Nov. 29, 1963 Over Russell's objection, President Lyndon B. Johnson appoints Russell a member of the Warren Commission, which is to investigate and report on JFK assassination.

Dec. 5, 1963 The Warren Commission meets in executive session. At this, the first meeting of the Commission, Russell complains about the FBI's leaking of information about the assassination to the press: "I see occasionally in the press articles that purport to have come from the FBI as to bits of evidence and things of that kind. How much of their findings does the FBI propose to release to the press before we present the findings of this Commission?" (Russell appears to have believed that the FBI was leaking facts in order to make it impossible for the Commission to not accept those facts.) During or after the meeting Russell writes a longhand memo saying: "Something strange is happening.... FBI ... and others [are] planning to show Oswald only one considered.... This to me is [an] untenable position."

Dec. 16, 1963 At an executive session of the Warren Commission, Russell complains that the FBI report on the assassination, just submitted to the Commission, had previously been leaked to the press. "I have read it through," Russell comments, "and practically everything in there has come out in the press at one time or another, a bit here and a bit there." When discussing information required to be provided by the CIA, Russell says the other Commissioners have "more faith" in the CIA than he does. Russell expresses doubt about whether the CIA would in fact provide requested information and suggests that any information it did provide would be "doctored."

Jan. 27, 1964 The Warren Commission meets in executive session to discuss various matters, including a credible allegation that Oswald had been a paid informer for the FBI. The transcript of this meeting is first published by Warren Report critic Harold Weisberg in 1974. At this meeting Russell, in the words of assassination researcher Bernard Fensterwald, "dr[aws] an admission from Allen Dulles [a member of the Warren Commission and former CIA director] that the CIA and/or FBI would never publicly admit that Oswald had worked for them, if that had indeed been true." Russell also expresses support for the view that the FBI report's conclusion that Oswald, acting alone, was the sole assassin, had been reached with suspicious haste and on the basis of an incomplete investigation. "They have tried the case and reached a verdict on every aspect," Russell says.

Feb. 24, 1964 Russell prepares but never sends a letter resigning from the Warren Commission. In the letter, addressed to President Johnson, Russell complains that the Commission has been scheduling, holding, and canceling meetings without notifying him.

Sept. 6, 1964 At Russell's insistence, Russell and two other members of the Commission take testimony in Dallas, Texas from Marina Oswald, the widow of the accused assassin. Marina Oswald had previously testified before the Commission on June 11 at a session at which Russell was absent. Russell has insisted on having her testify again because he believes she has withheld vital information concerning Lee Harvey Oswald's mysterious contacts with Russian agents, Cuba, and Cuban Americans.

Sept. 7, 1964 Russell and two other Warren Commission members visit Dealey Plaza and examine the assassination site. While visiting the sixth floor room in the School Book Depository from which the assassin's shots were allegedly fired, Russell takes an unloaded rifle, leans out the window allegedly used by Oswald, and aims at the spot where JFK's limousine had been at the time of the assassination. "Oswald must have been an expert shot," he says. A photograph of Russell leaning out the window, rifle in hand, soon appears in newspapers.

Sept. 16, 1964 Russell dictates a dissenting statement disagreeing with the Warren Report single bullet theory that JFK and Connally were hit by the same bullet: "I do not share the finding of the Commission as to the probability that both President Kennedy and Governor Connally were struck by the same bullet.... I join in my colleagues in the belief that three shots were fired, but, to me, the testimony of Governor Connally that he heard the first shot fired and strike the President and turned before he was wounded makes more logical a finding that the first and third shots struck the President and the second shot wounded Governor Connally." The dissenting statement also disagrees with the Report's conclusion of no conspiracy. In Russell's judgment, "a number of suspicious circumstances," as well as the insufficiency of the evidence gathered against Oswald, "preclude[d] the conclusive determination that Oswald and Oswald alone, without the knowledge, encouragement or assistance of any other person, planned and perpetrated the assassination." Apparently with Russell's consent, this dissenting statement is never incorporated into the Warren Report.

Sept. 18, 1964 The Warren Commission meets in executive session. At this, the final meeting of the Commission, the proposed final draft of the Warren Report is presented and discussed, and Russell raises his objections to the single bullet theory and to the no conspiracy theory. None of this, however, appears on the transcript of the meeting. Unlike all the other transcripts of Warren Commission proceedings, the transcript of this meeting is not a verbatim transcript; instead, except for the first page, it consists of a series of conclusory paragraphs which tell us little more than that "discussion was had" regarding the proposed Warren Report, and that certain motions were made and approved by Commission members. (This transcript is, as Harold Weisberg has proved beyond doubt, a fake. Even the pagination, which purports to make the transcript a continuation of previous, authentic (and verbatim) transcripts, is phony. It is not known who falsified the transcript, or when it was prepared. The fabricating of the transcript appears to have been done to assure that there would be no actual minutes of the criticisms leveled at the proposed Report by Russell and others at the meeting.) After the meeting, Russell has a long distance telephone conversation with LBJ. The tape recording of this call is not released to the public until Apr. 15, 1994. During the conversation Russell reiterates what he had said at today's Commission meeting and had set forth in his dissenting statement two days before: he could not accept the single bullet theory. "They're trying to prove that the same bullet that hit Kennedy first was the one that hit Connally, went through him and through his hand, his bone, and into his leg," Russell tells LBJ. "Well, I don't believe it!" he then tells LBJ (who quickly responds: "Well, I don't either!") Apparently not fully appreciating the significance of rejecting the single bullet theory, Russell says that his rejection of the theory "don't [sic] make much difference" and is "just a little thing."

Sept. 24, 1964 Russell and the other members of the Warren Commission go to the White House and personally deliver the Warren Report to LBJ.

Sept. 27, 1964 The Warren Report is officially released to the public. The Report's principal conclusions include: (1) All the shots which struck JFK and Connally were fired in less than eight seconds from the sixth floor of the School Book Depository by Lee Harvey Oswald using a military surplus bolt-action 6.5 mm carbine manufactured in Italy in 1940; (2) Oswald fired three shots; (3) "there is very persuasive evidence" that one of the bullets fired from behind the limousine transected JFK's body (inflicting a nonlethal injury) and then struck Connally, causing all his wounds; (4) Oswald acted alone and there was no conspiracy, foreign or domestic, behind the assassination; and (5) there was no credible evidence that shots were fired from any location except the sixth floor of the Depository.

Sept. 29, 1964 In an article in The Atlanta Constitution, Russell announces that (despite the claim of no conspiracy made in the Warren Report released only two days earlier) it is unknown whether Oswald acted "with the encouragement or knowledge of anyone else." Russell thus becomes the first Warren Commission member to publicly express a view on the assassination contrary to the Warren Report.

Nov. 20, 1966 In an article in The Atlanta Constitution which describes him as "the great dissenter within the Commission," Russell becomes the first Warren Commission member to publicly criticize the Warren Report. He acknowledges "harbor[ing] a lingering dissatisfaction with [the Warren Commission's] work." He reveals that at the time the Report was issued he disagreed with its single bullet theory. He firmly states that he could not agree with the Warren Report's conclusion that Oswald acted alone. He adds that while he could accept the conclusion that Oswald fired the shots that killed JFK, he could not rule out the possibility that Oswald was part of a conspiracy. In the article Russell also says that he had wanted the Warren Report to say nothing about whether there was a conspiracy behind the assassination.

June 5, 1968 Russell has a chance encounter with Harold Weisberg in the U.S. Capitol. Weisberg informs Russell that the transcript of the Sept. 18, 1964 meeting of the Warren Commission is a bogus document. As the two walk through a corridor, Russell tells Weisberg that "we have not been told the truth about Oswald." Other things Russell said on this occasion are recounted in a federal court affidavit sworn to by Weisberg in 1974: "Privately Senator Russell told me that he was convinced that there were two areas in which Warren Commission members had been deceived by the Federal agencies responsible for investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. These two areas were: (1) Oswald's background; and (2) the ballistics evidence."

June 14, 1968 One of his aides who has checked into the matter sends Russell a memo stating that the apparent falsification of the Sept. 18, 1964 transcript "would appear to be a very serious matter."

Jan. 30, 1970 In his final letter to Harold Weisberg, Russell writes: "I am interested that you are continuing your work, and there are a number of matters in the investigation which would be of interest to me if I had the time to devote to them."

Feb. 11, 1970 Atlanta station WSB-TV televises reporter Hal Suit's interview of Russell. During a small portion of this 3-hour documentary broadcast, "Richard Russell: Georgia Giant," Russell

discusses the Warren Commission and its Report. "I was not satisfied with several aspects of [the Warren] [R]eport," he says. Concerning Oswald and the possibility of a conspiracy in the JFK assassination, Russell says: "I have never believed that Oswald planned that altogether by himself.... [I] have doubts that he planned it all by himself. I think someone else worked with him.... [T]here were so many circumstances there that led me to believe that you couldn't just completely eliminate the possibility that he did have some co-conspirators.... I'm not completely satisfied in my own mind that he did plan and commit this act altogether on his own, without consultation with anyone else. And that's what a majority of the Commission wanted to find." During the interview Russell also professes not to have "the slightest doubt" that Oswald had fired the fatal shots.

Jan. 21, 1971 Russell dies of lung cancer at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C.

APPENDIX B

WRITINGS ON SEN. RUSSELL AND THE WARREN COMMISSION

Edward Jay Epstein, *Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth* (1966). This scholarly book examines the inner workings of the Warren Commission and concludes that "the Commission, sincerely convinced that the national interest required dispelling rumors and conspiracy theories, failed to adequately investigate the essential questions about the JFK assassination." The book explores Russell's role on the Commission with emphasis on his opposition to the single bullet theory.

Harold Weisberg, *Whitewash IV: Top Secret JFK Assassination Transcript* (1974). The author of this book (now deceased) was one of the leading authorities on the JFK assassination, and after extensive investigation and research wrote nine books on the topic. This remarkable book is the first publication to set forth the text of the previously classified transcript of the Jan. 27, 1964 executive session of the Warren Commission. The book also conclusively proves that the transcript of the final meeting of the Warren Commission (on Sept. 18, 1964) is a fabrication. The preparation of the false transcript was likely done by J. Lee Rankin, the Commission's General Counsel, the author suggests.

Bernard Fensterwald, Jr., *Coincidence or Conspiracy?* (1977). This book, edited by an attorney who has extensively investigated the JFK assassination, includes a section setting forth numerous facts showing that, in the words of the editor, "Senator Russell was deeply disturbed by the performance of the Warren Commission, and even more deeply disturbed by the denial of certain information to it by both the CIA and the FBI." This book also examines the fabricated transcript of the Sept. 18, 1964 Warren Commission meeting and proposes that J. Lee Rankin "may have been responsible" for the falsifying of the transcript.

Henry Hurt, *Reasonable Doubt: An Investigation into the Assassination of John F. Kennedy* (1985). This book quotes statements about the JFK assassination investigation made by Russell made at Warren Commission executive sessions and in press interviews. This book points out that in his 1970 television interview Russell "confirmed the long-standing suspicion that a

majority of the [C]ommission members wanted to show that Oswald acted alone."

Robert J. Groden and Harrison Edward Livingstone, *High Treason—The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: What Really Happened* (1989). This book briefly discusses Russell's refusal to accept the single bullet theory and his rejection of the no conspiracy theory.

Gary Diamond, *Richard Russell's Opinions Concerning the Kennedy Assassination: An Examination of the Richard B. Russell Memorial Library* (May 5, 1989). This unpublished research paper by a UGA law student summarizes Russell's work on the Warren Commission and is based on an thorough examination of Russell Collection documents in the UGA's Richard B. Russell Library, many of which are quoted or copied in the paper.

Donald E. Wilkes, Jr., "Russell Disagreed With JFK Death Report," *The Athens Observer*, p. 1 (Nov. 9, 1989). This article discusses Russell Collection documents showing that Russell had grave doubts about key aspects of the Warren Report and that Russell prepared but never sent a letter resigning from the Warren Commission.

Gilbert C. Fite, *Richard B. Russell, Jr.: Senator From Georgia* (1991). Fite, a history professor, devotes eight pages of this 550-page biography to Russell's membership on the Warren Commission.

"LBJ Doubted One Bullet Hit Both JFK, Connally," *The Atlanta Constitution*, p. A2 (Apr. 16, 1994). This article discusses the taped telephone conversation between Russell and LBJ on Sept. 18, 1964, in which both men expressed doubt about the single bullet theory.

Donald E. Wilkes, Jr., "JFK Killer Not Alone, UGA Professor Says," *The Athens Observer*, p. 1A (Dec. 18, 1994). This article also discusses the taped telephone conversation between Russell and LBJ on Sept. 18, 1964, in which both men expressed doubt about the single bullet theory.

Harold Weisberg, *Never Again! The Government Conspiracy in the JFK Assassination* (1995). Chapter 21 of this book, "The Commission Deceived Its Own Members," focuses on Russell's dissatisfaction with the Warren Commission's investigation and with key findings of the Warren Report. It points out that "Russell is the only member of the Commission who agreed with and praised the work critical of his own Commission."

Michael R. Beschloss, *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964* (1997). This book, edited and with commentary by a distinguished historian, contains the transcripts of three taped-recorded telephone conversations between Russell and LBJ regarding the JFK assassination. Two of the conversations were on Nov. 29, 1963, the day LBJ appointed Russell appointed to the Warren Commission, and the third was on Sept. 18, 1964, shortly after Russell had attended the final meeting of the Commission.

"Files Show Russell Wanted to Resign Warren Commission," *The Athens Banner-Herald*, p. 5A (Nov. 4, 1997). This article examines documents in the Russell Collection relating to the Warren Report.

Dani E. Biancolli, *The First Dissenter: Richard B. Russell and the Warren Commission* (2002). This unpublished M.A. thesis is the best single work on Russell's tenure on the Warren Commission and his criticisms of the Warren Report. The author has undertaken a comprehensive examination of documents in the Russell Collection relating to Russell's membership on the Warren Commission. The author discloses that the absence of a verbatim transcript of the Commission's final meeting, on Sept. 18, 1964, is attributable to a deliberate deception of Russell and other Commission members. "During the September 18th meeting Russell recalled the presence of a woman in the room and assumed that she was the official stenographer sent by [the court reporter firm retained to record all Commissions executive sessions]. However, she was not. A survey of [the firm's] records show that the last session the firm billed for was ... [on] September 15th. Thus, it is possible to assume that the presence of a 'stenographer' was meant to deceive Russell and the other dissenters into assuming that the meeting was being conducted as usual. However, the presence of a doctored transcript [of the meeting] proves that someone ...assured that there would be no record of dissension in the ranks." The person most likely responsible for perpetrating the fraud, the author believes, was J. Lee Rankin, the Warren Commission's General Counsel.