

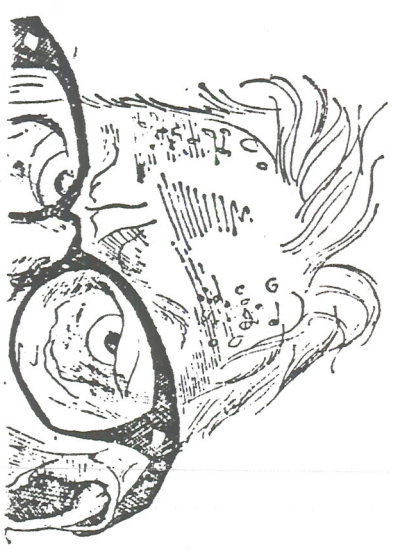
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CDC

_____ A Special Feature _____

THE SECOND OSWALD: A New Theory of Kennedy's Assassination



Vol 1

The Second Oswald: The Case for a Conspiracy Theory

Inquest
by Edward Jay Epstein.
Viking, 224 pp., \$5.00

Whitewash

by Harold Weisberg.

Harold Weisberg (Hyattstown, Md.),
208 pp., \$4.95 (paper)

Richard H. Popkin

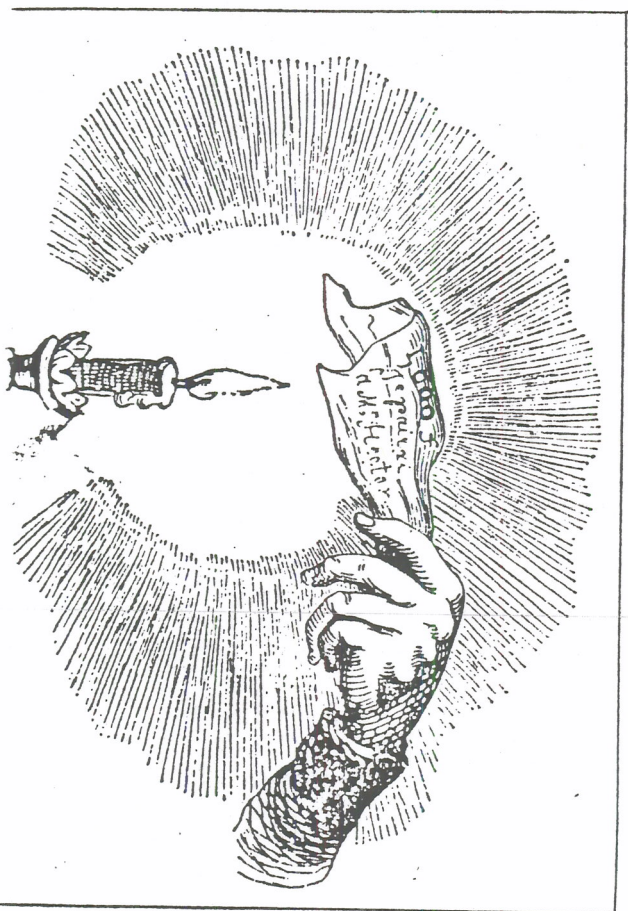
In one of Victor Serge's last works, *The Case of Comrade Tulayev*, written over fifteen years ago, the Russian equivalent of the Oswald story is set forth. An alienated young man, unhappy with the many aspects of his life in the Soviet Union—the food, his room, his job, etc.—acquires a gun, and manages to shoot Commissar Tulayev one night when he is getting out of a car. An extensive investigation sets in, followed by an extensive purge. Millions of people are arrested and made to confess to being part of a vast conspiracy against the government. The actual assassin is, of course, never suspected, since no one can imagine him as a conspirator. He continues to lead his alienated unhappy life, while the government uncovers the great plot.

In contrast, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, a solution emerged within hours: one lonely alienated man had done the deed all by himself. The investigation by the Dallas Police and the FBI then proceeded to buttress this view, and to accumulate all sorts of details about the lone assassin, some false (like the murder map), some trivial (like his early school records), some

of the early critical questions suggesting a conspiratorial explanation (raised by Buchanan, Joesten, Sauvage, Bertrand Russell, Trevor-Roper, etc.) were shown to be based on misinformation or misunderstandings, the result mainly of what the Dallas Police had said, or what had appeared in newspaper accounts and interviews. Other questions, based on the *Report* itself and what it failed to resolve (raised by Leo Sauvage, Sandria, Sylvan Fox, etc.), were swept aside by faith—faith, first of all, that these matters *must* have been settled by the mass of data in the twenty-six supplementary volumes of testimony, depositions, and documents. The twenty-six volumes seemed to be so imposing, and were, in fact, so impenetrable, that they resolved all doubts. Finally, as Dwight

entirely unsuccessful effort to make the thesis psychologically plausible by constructing an Oswald in turmoil looking for his moment of glory. Representative Ford also goes so far as to blame the conspiracy theories on one lone woman, Mrs. Marguerite Oswald, and to act as if there were no reason whatever, save for the alienated confused mind of Mrs. Oswald, Senior, ever to doubt that one lone assassin thesis.

HOWEVER, THE "OFFICIAL" THEORY was in many ways implausible. It involved a fantastic amount of luck. If the FBI and Warren Commission reconstructions were correct, Oswald had to get the rifle into the building without attracting attention. Only two people saw him with a long package, and none saw him with



tory reports by witnesses (e.g., the mistaken identification of Oswald by the bus driver), and questionable reconstructions by the Commission (e.g., testing the accuracy of the rifle with stationary targets). The *Report* (against the better judgment of at least two of the Commission's staff, Liebeler Ball) had to rely on some of the staunchest witnesses, like Brennan and Mrs. Markham. It also had to impeach some of its best, like Wesley Frazier.

The critics were still dismissed. This was not, I suspect, simply because it was more difficult to believe that the Commission, its staff, and the FBI could be in error than it was to accept a counter-explanation, as Dwight Macdonald contended in *Esquire*. It was also because the critics had no counter-theory that was better than science fiction, no explanation less implausible than that of the *Report*.

TWO BOOKS JUST PUBLISHED move the discussion to a new level. Harold Weisberg's noisy, tendentious *Whitewash* (which, for some good and probably many bad editorial reasons, no publisher would touch) is nevertheless the first critical study based on a close analysis of the twenty-six volumes themselves. Edward Jay Epstein's *Inquest*, a remarkably effective book, presents startling new data about the internal workings of the Commission. In addition, two recent articles by Vincent Sandria in *The Minority of One* and those by Fred Cook in *The Nation* raise important questions. This material suggests not that the "official theory" is implausible, or