

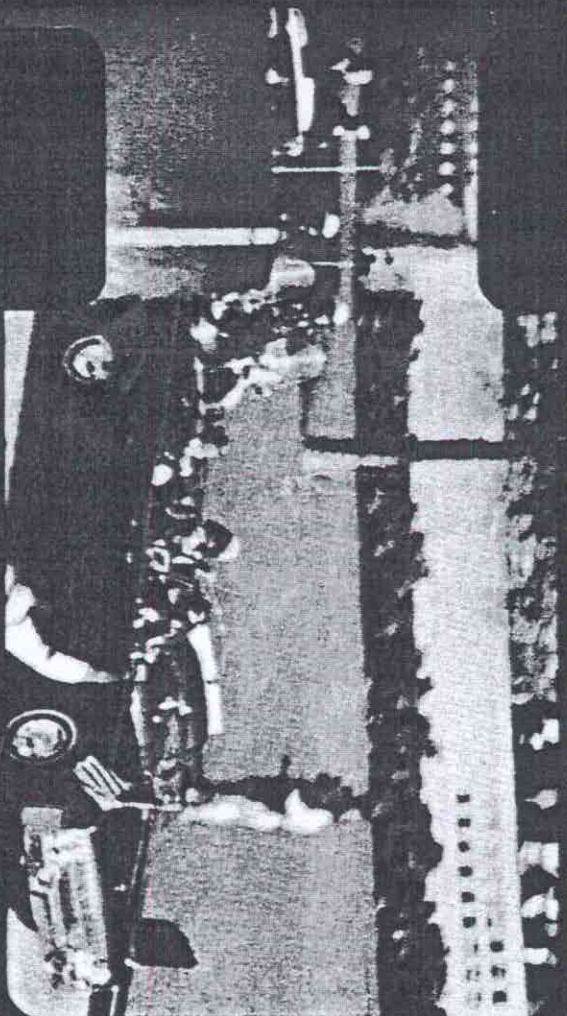
LIFE

*Amid controversy over the Warren Report
Governor Connally examines for LIFE
the Kennedy assassination film
frame by frame*

DID OSWALD ACT ALONE?

**A MATTER
OF**

REASONABLE DOUBT



FRAME 230

From the film:
A key moment in the controversy

NOVEMBER 25 • 1966 • 35c

**AMID HEIGHTENING CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE WARREN REPORT,
GOVERNOR CONNALLY EXAMINES FOR 'LIFE' THE ASSASSINATION FILM**

The Commission said President Kennedy and Connally were hit by the same bullet. Connally still vigorously claims he was hit by a second bullet. That Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone is . . .

A MATTER OF REASONABLE DOUBT

In the kitchen of his ranch house near San Antonio, Governor John Connally of Texas (*right*) pores over crucial evidence in the tragic crime to which he was witness—and victim—three years ago.

He is studying enlargements of the famous movie taken by Abraham Zapruder, a bystander, on that fatal day in Dallas when President Kennedy was assassinated and Connally himself severely wounded. Connally's testimony and the evidence of the Zapruder film are basic to the question now being more and more loudly raised: is there a reasonable doubt that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin?

The significant area of doubt narrows down to one point: Were Connally and the President—as the Warren Commission held—wounded by the same bullet? If so, there was probably only one assassin. Or—as Connally and many others maintain—were the two men hit almost simultaneously by separate bullets? If so, there must have been two assassins.

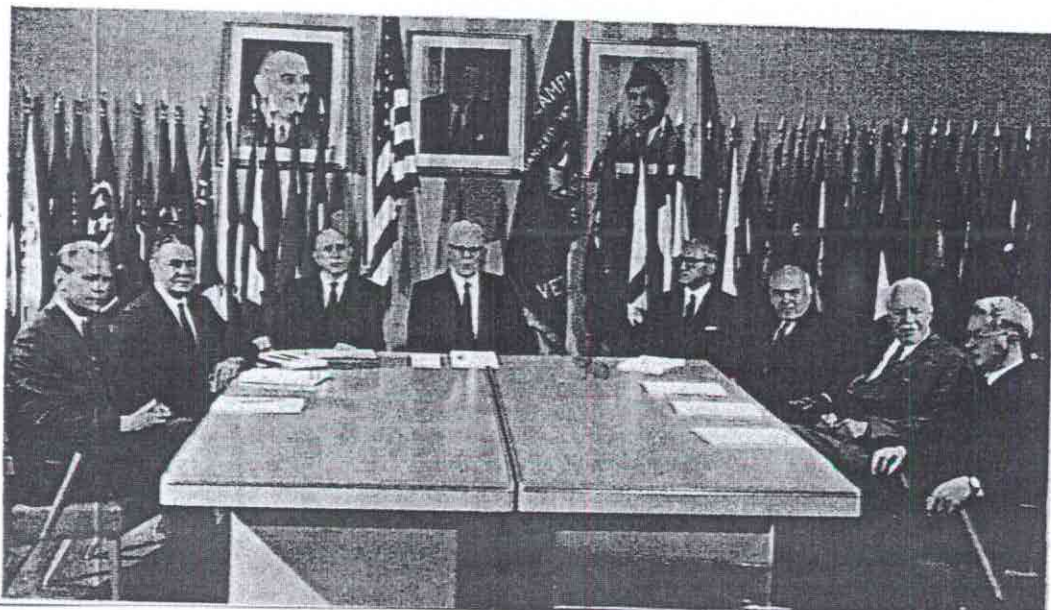
The question haunted the Warren Commission in its investigations into the death of President Kennedy. In the ten months of its existence the Commission heard 552 witnesses, staged re-enactments and ballistics tests, sifted through 10 million words of testimony and presented its conclusions in the 888 closely reasoned pages of the Report. Those findings are now being challenged by critics whose arguments have

created widespread skepticism about some of the Report's key conclusions.

The critics have little fresh evidence, nor do they claim to. They base their dissent on the Commission's own 26 volumes of evidence which, the critics claim, do not bear out the Commission's own conclusions and sometimes flatly contradict them. They are particularly aroused over the Commission's evaluation of John Connally's testimony.

Testifying before the Commission, Connally insisted—as he does today (*p. 48*)—that he heard what he instantly identified as a rifle shot. As he was turning to look at the President, he felt a second shot hit him. When the Commission ran off the Zapruder film for him, the governor identified certain frames as ones during which he believed he had been hit. The moment he selected was at most 1.3 seconds after the earliest moment when Kennedy, according to the Commission, could have been hit. Experts have proved that the murder weapon could not be fired any faster than once every 2.3 seconds. If the Commission is right about the timing of the first bullet that hit Kennedy, and if Connally is right about his own wound, Oswald could not have had time—in 1.3 seconds—to fire at both Kennedy and Connally. There would have had to be a second assassin.

The governor's testimony shook the Commission. Three of the seven members



expressed doubt that the single-bullet theory had been proved. A separate FBI report on the assassination also maintained that Kennedy and Connally had been struck by different bullets. But in the end skeptical commissioners went along with the majority and signed the Report, which—for reasons summarized on page 48B—states that Connally must have been mistaken; that he and the President were probably hit by the same bullet and that in any case this question was “not necessary to any essential findings of the Commission.” This last statement shocked critics.

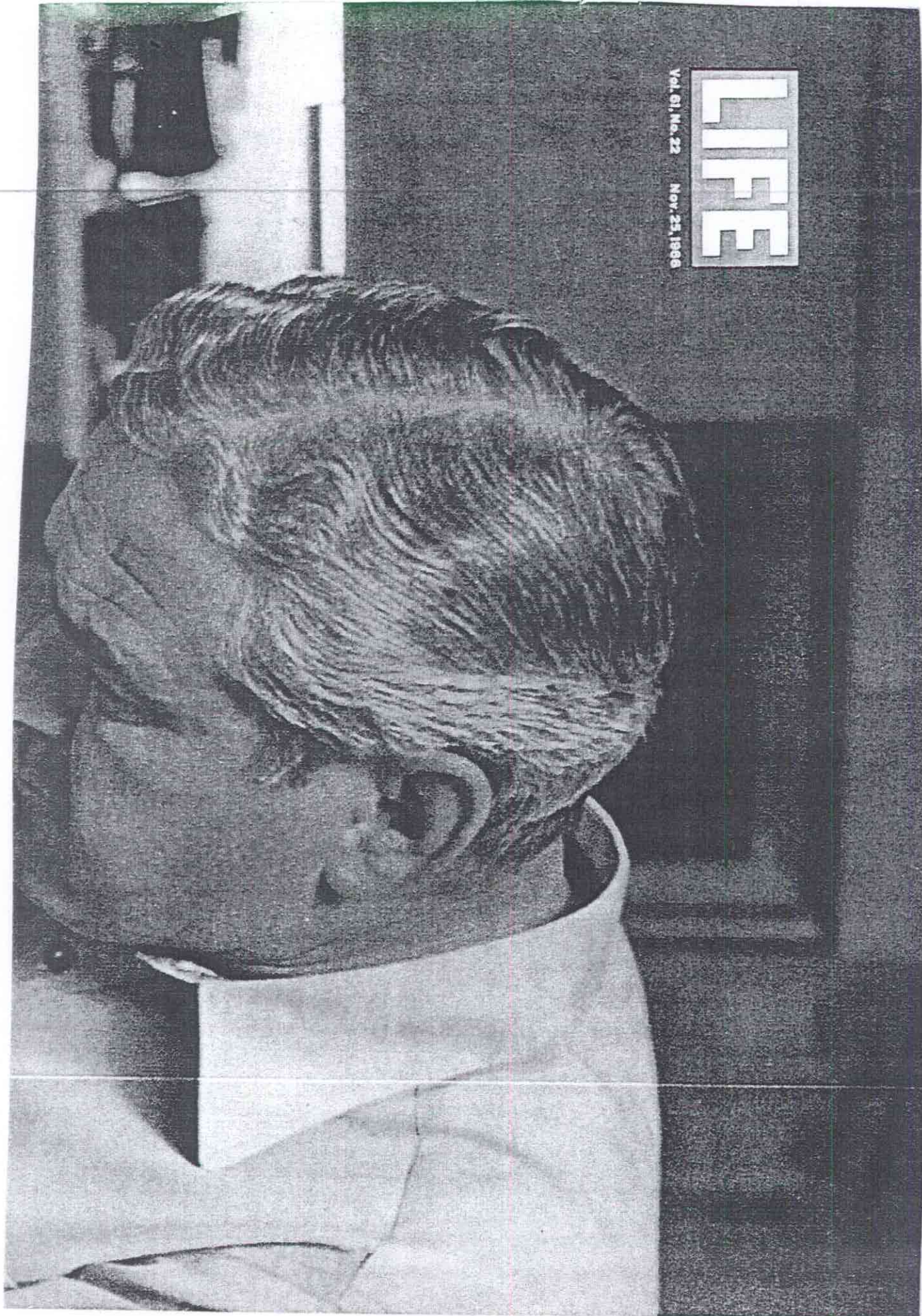
Early this month, at LIFE's request, Governor Connally looked at the disputed frames from the Zapruder film once again. This time he got more than just the screen showing that the Commission had given him. He was also given enlargements of every frame, which he could examine in detail under a magnifying glass. Ever since he testified before the Warren Commission the governor had kept silent, preferring to let the Report speak for itself. But as he examined the individual frames he was able to see and recall a number of significant details that he had missed in the Commission showing and had never brought up in his testimony. These confirmed in his mind what he had previously told the Commission—that he had been hit by a second bullet. What he saw and said is presented on the following pages.

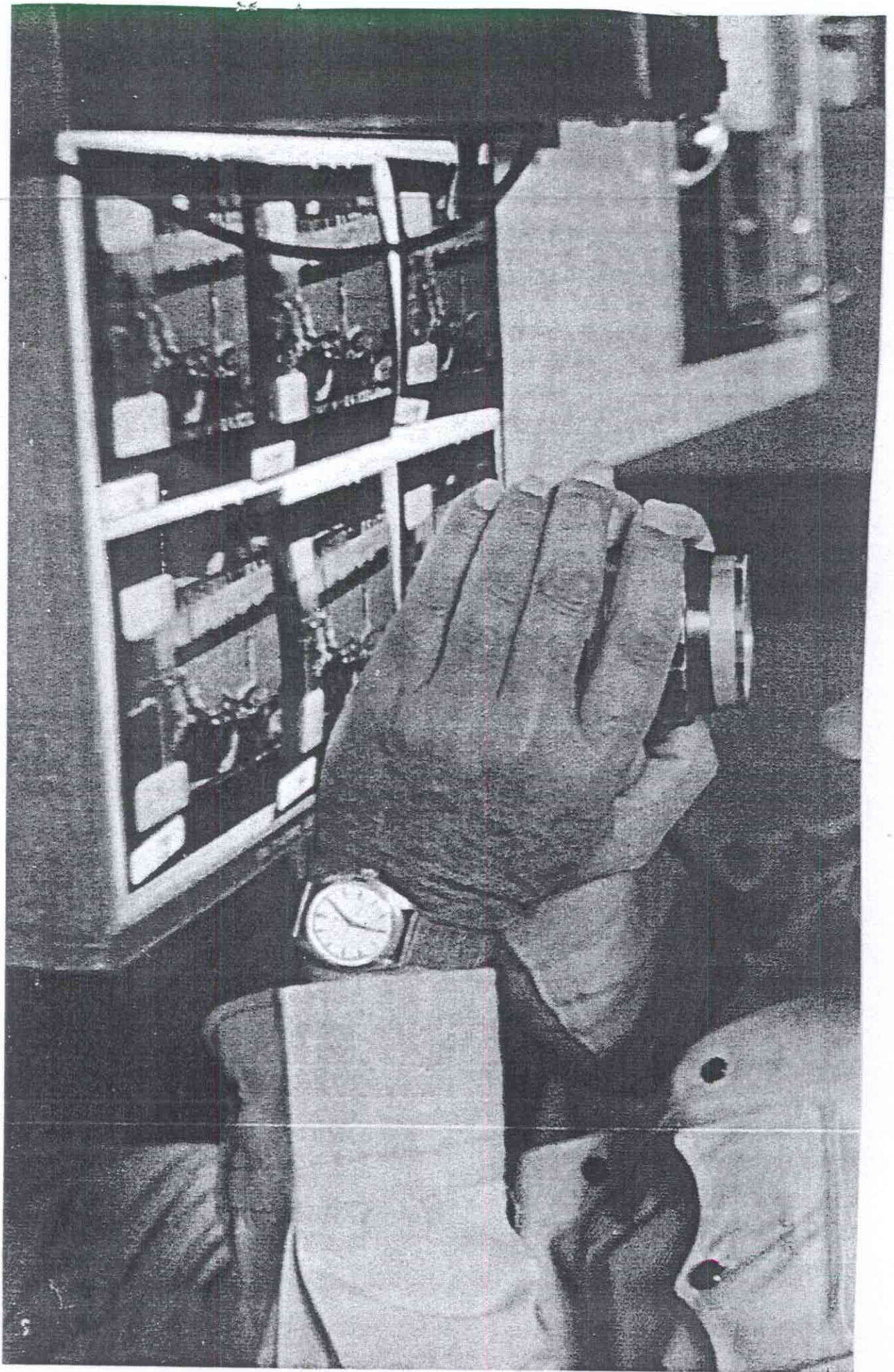
THE WARREN COMMISSION. From left: Rep. Gerald Ford of Michigan; Rep. Hale Boggs of Louisiana; Sen. Richard Russell of Georgia; Chief Justice Warren, Commission Chairman; Sen. John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky; John J. McCloy, former High Commissioner for Germany; Allen W. Dulles, the former CIA chief; J. Lee Rankin, chief counsel for the Commission.

EVIDENCE. At light table, Governor John Connally of Texas peers through a magnifying glass at enlargements of frames from Abraham Zapruder's assassination movie.

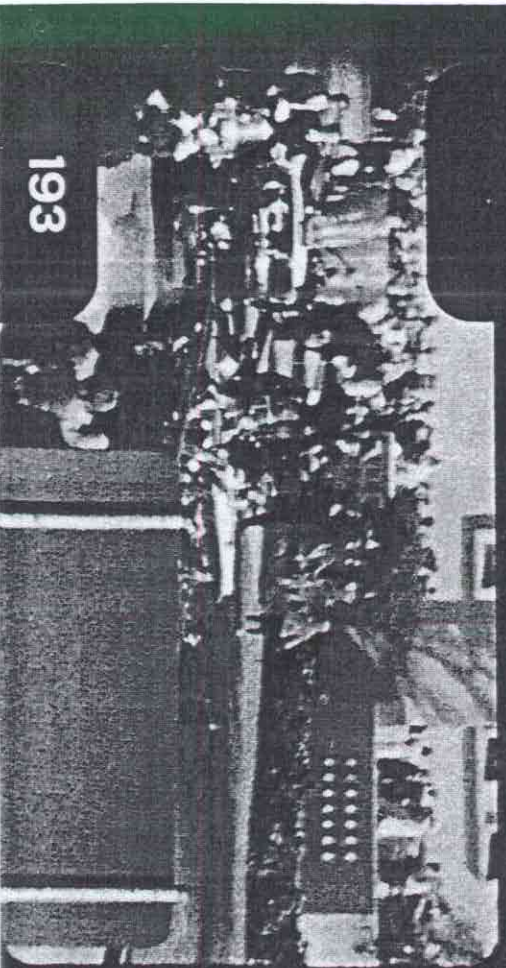
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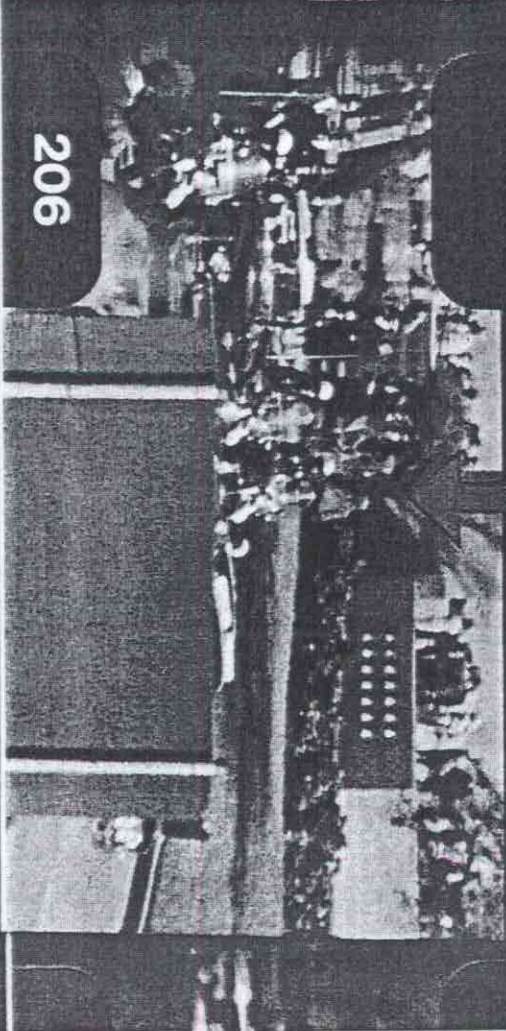




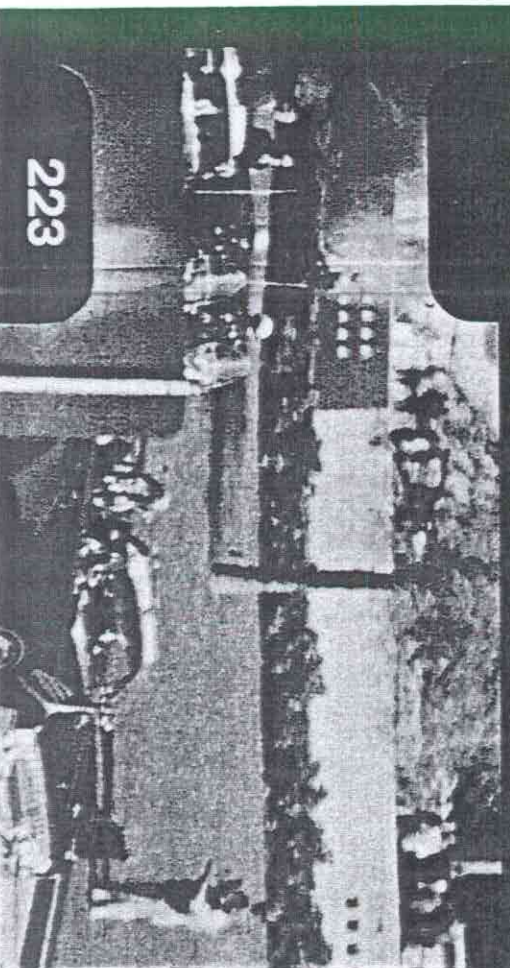
The Commission said Kennedy and Connally
were hit behind the sign: **HERE**



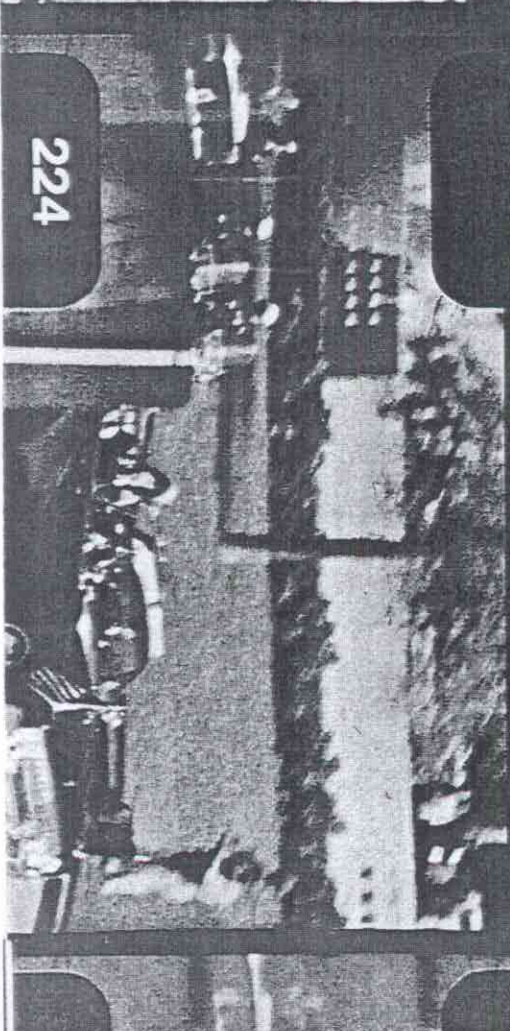
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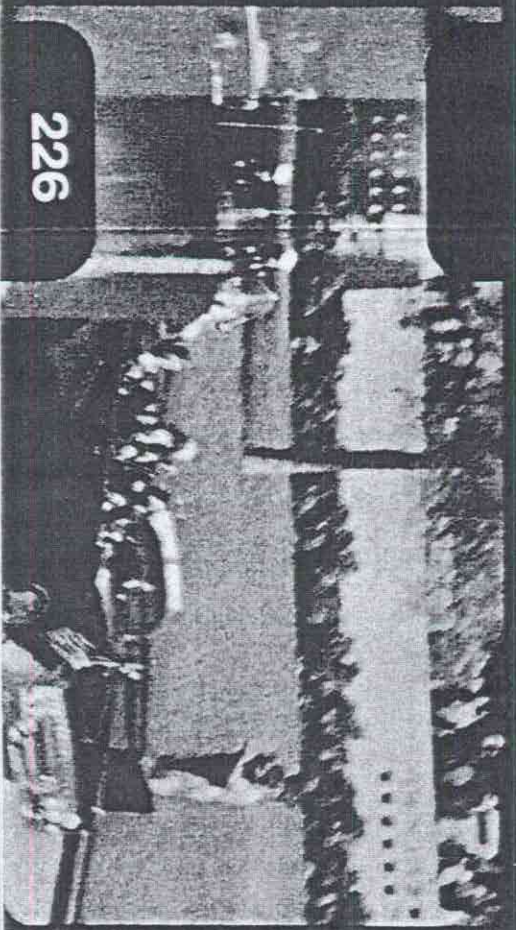
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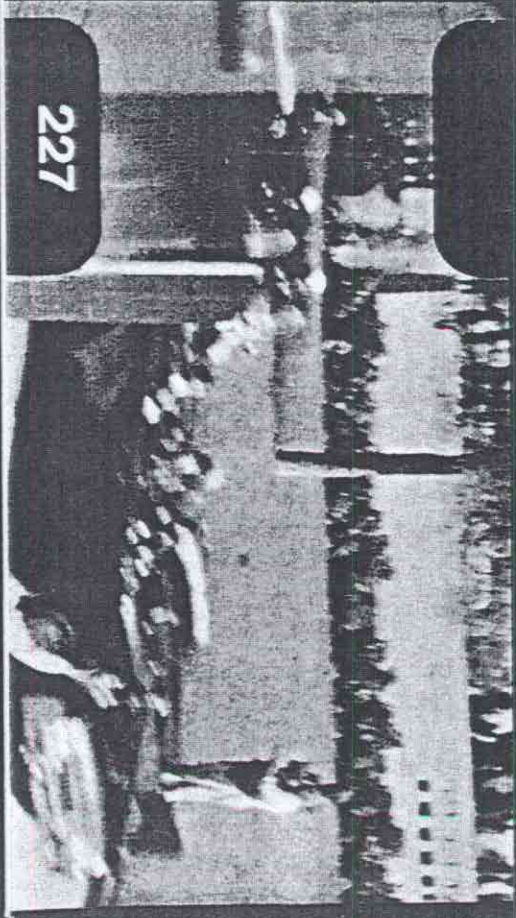
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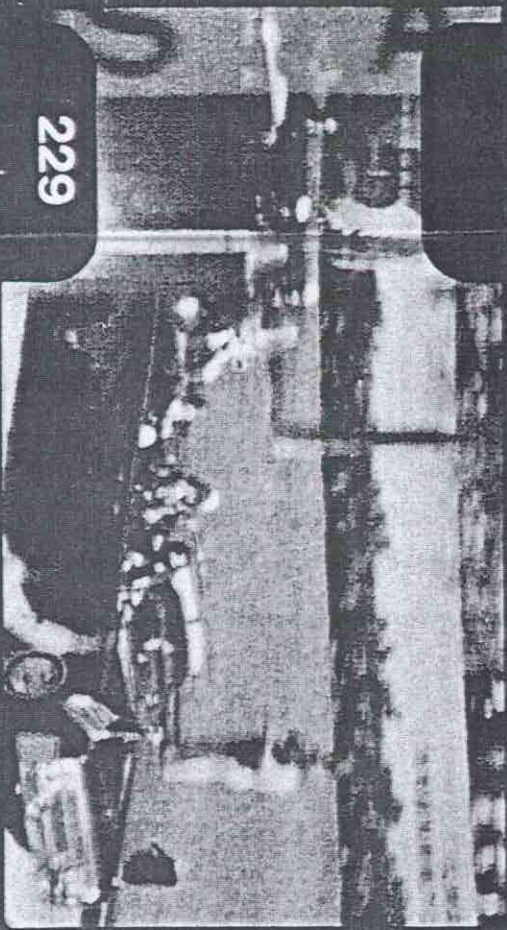
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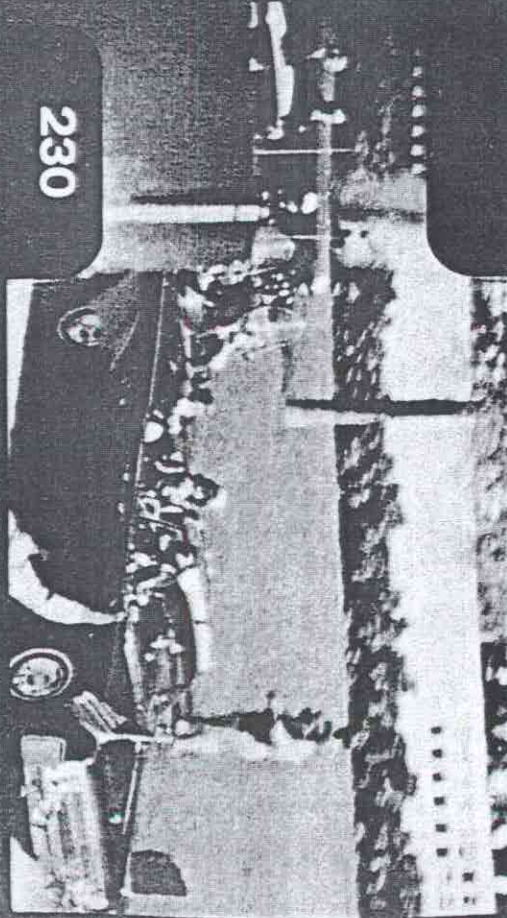
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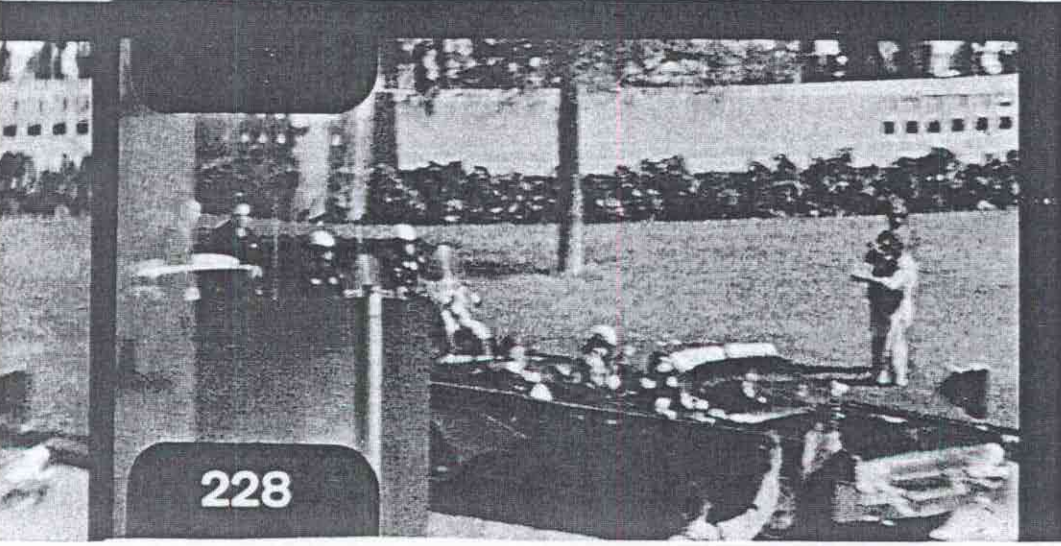
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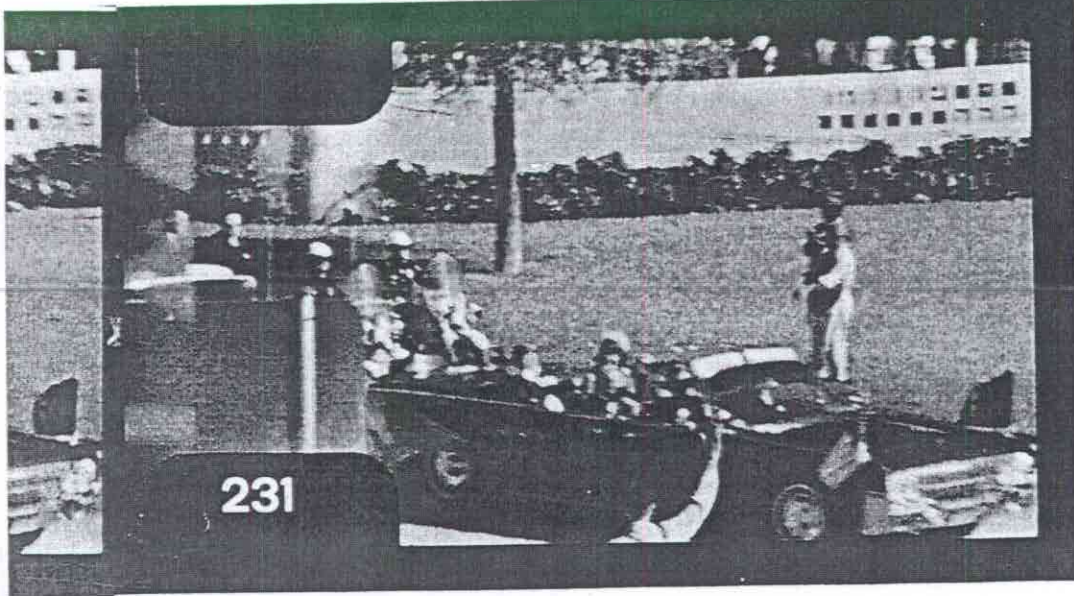
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225



228



Of all the witnesses to the tragedy, the only unimpeachable one is the 8-mm movie camera of Abraham Zapruder, which recorded the assassination in sequence. Film passed through the camera at 18.3 frames a second, a little more than a 20th of a second (.055 sec.) for each frame. By studying individual frames one can see what happened at every instant and measure precisely the intervals between events.

On these pages and the next, the significant passages of the film are reproduced, frame by frame. The numbers printed on them, counted in sequence from the beginning of the film, are those used by the Commission to identify the frames. At the left side of each frame the sprocket holes and the light-struck areas around them can be seen.

The disagreement between Governor Connally and the Commission arises over how to read the Zapruder pictures. Of the three bullet strikes—the President's neck wound, the governor's wounds and the President's head wound—

only the mortal blow to the President's head is easy to mark on the film. This occurred in the 313th frame and is not shown here because it does not bear on the controversy. The two earlier hits are harder to pin down. President Kennedy, according to the Commission, was out of Zapruder's sight behind a road sign when the first bullet hit him in the neck, and the film seems to confirm it. He was out of sight for 18 frames—one second. No one can say for sure in which of them he was hit.

Governor Connally, according to the Commission, was hit at the same time as the President—and therefore also out of view. Connally testified to the Commission that it happened otherwise: "I heard this noise which I immediately took to be a rifle shot. I instinctively turned to my right . . . but I did not catch the President in the corner of my eye. . . . Failing to see him, I was turning to look back over my left shoulder . . . but I never got that far in my turn. I got about in the position I am now facing you, looking a little bit to the left of center, and then I felt like someone had hit me in the back."

Mrs. Connally was even more specific in her testimony. "I heard . . . a frightening noise, and it came from the right. . . . I turned over my right shoulder . . . and saw the President as he had both hands at his neck. . . . He made no utterance, no cry. Then, very soon, there was the second shot that hit John."

The Zapruder film seems to bear out what the governor says and raises a reasonable doubt about the Commission's version. In the sequence on this page, two preliminary frames establish the scene. In frame 193 the presidential limousine approaches the highway sign.

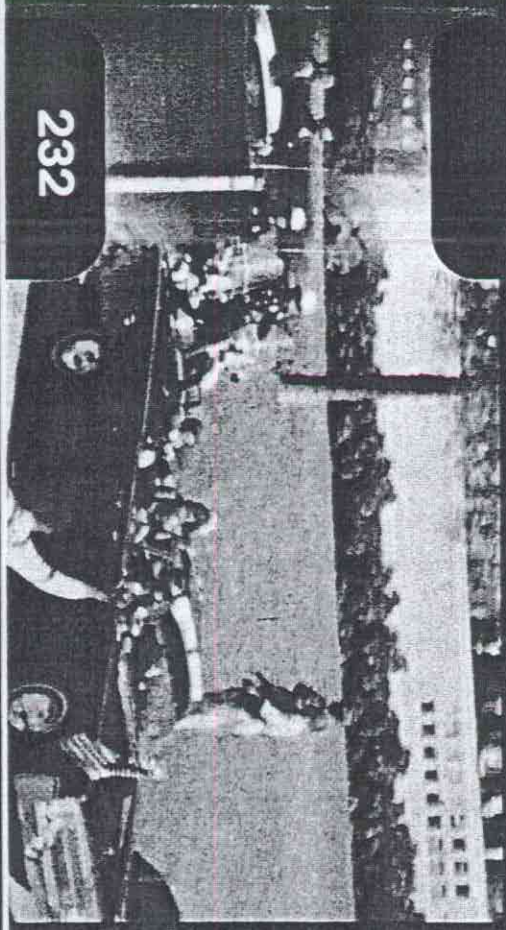
Kennedy, with Mrs. Kennedy beside him, has his right hand raised as he waves to the crowd; his left hand rests against his coat lapel. Both he and Governor Connally look off to their right. The President's hand is still raised in salute in frame 206, the last view of him before he vanishes behind the sign. He could have been hit, the Commission says, as early as frame 210.

The crucial sequence begins in frame 222 as Governor Connally emerges from behind the sign looking to his right. A sixth of a second later, in frame 225, the President emerges and it is clear that he has been hit. His face is distorted, although Connally's seems unperturbed. The President's left hand is still on his lapel but his right is rising toward his neck. By frame 230, just .27 second after coming into view, his shoulders are hunched and both hands are at his throat, a position in which he remains frozen until the end of the sequence (frame 244, *next page*).

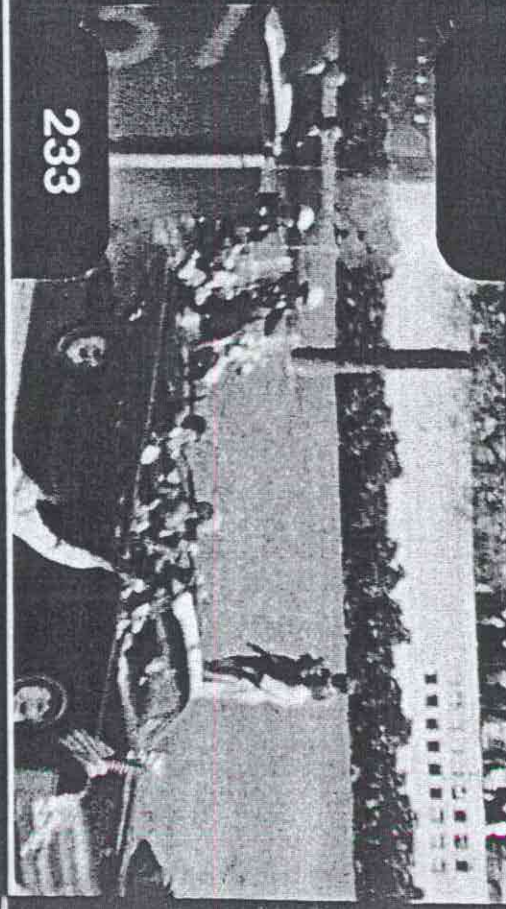
Beginning at frame 225, Governor Connally quickly turns his head leftward until, in 228, he faces straight ahead, remaining in this position through the last frame on this page. "You can see my leftward movement clearly," Connally told LIFE as he studied these frames. "I had turned to the right when the limousine was behind the sign. Now I'm turning back again. I know that I made that turn to the left before I was hit. You can see the grimace in the President's face. You cannot see it in mine. There is no question about it. I haven't been hit yet."

**Connally: 'I haven't
been hit yet'...**

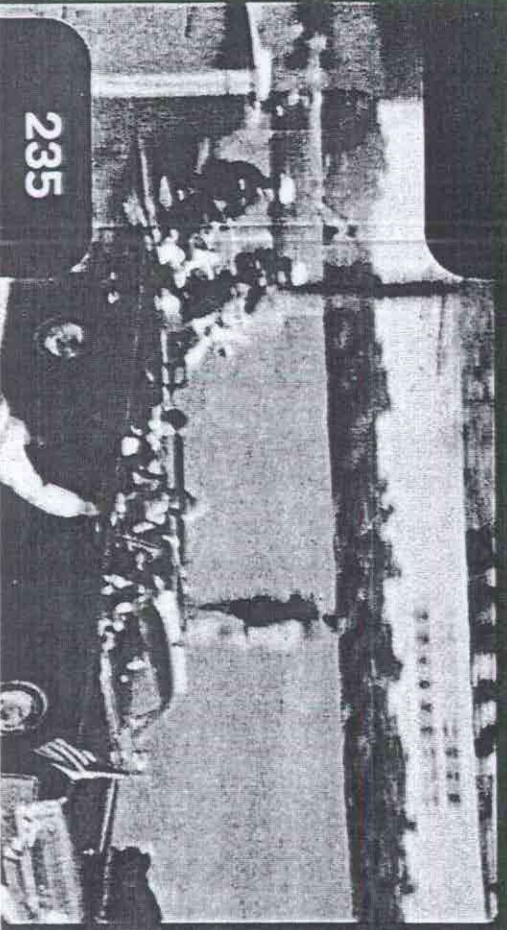
... Connally chooses a point nine frames later and says he wa:



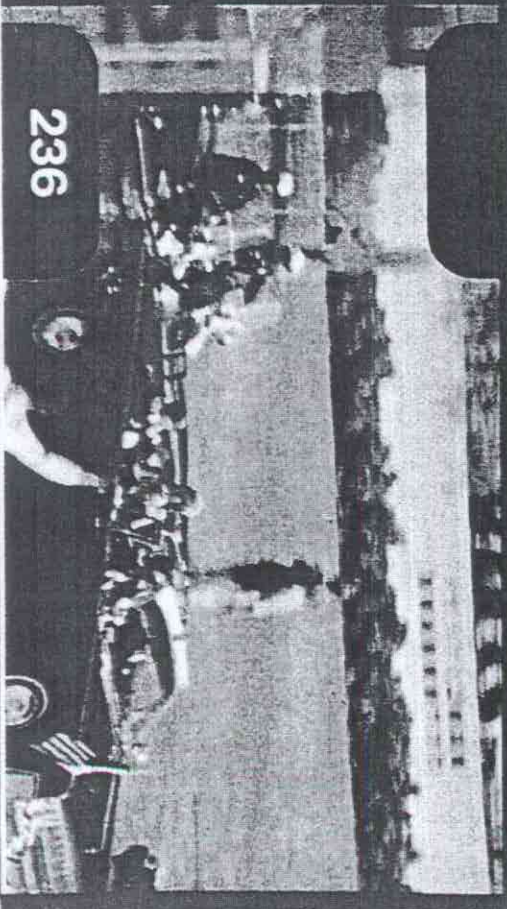
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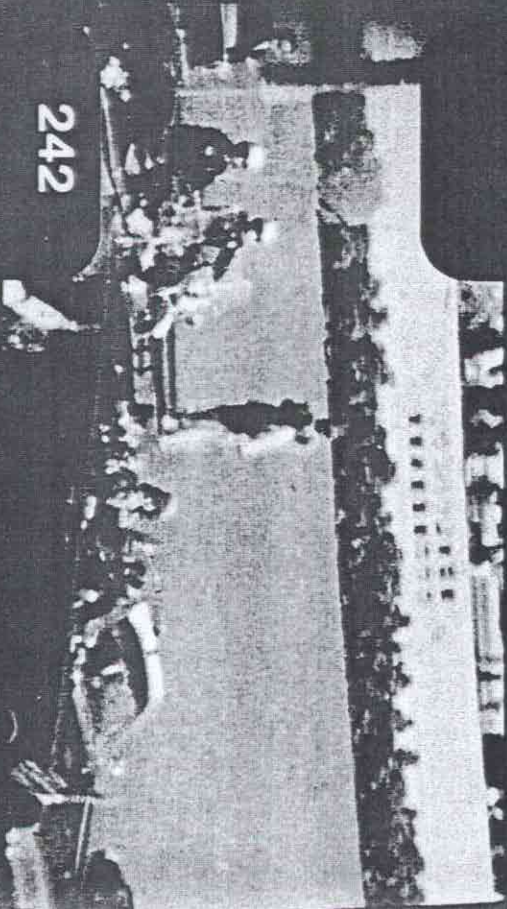
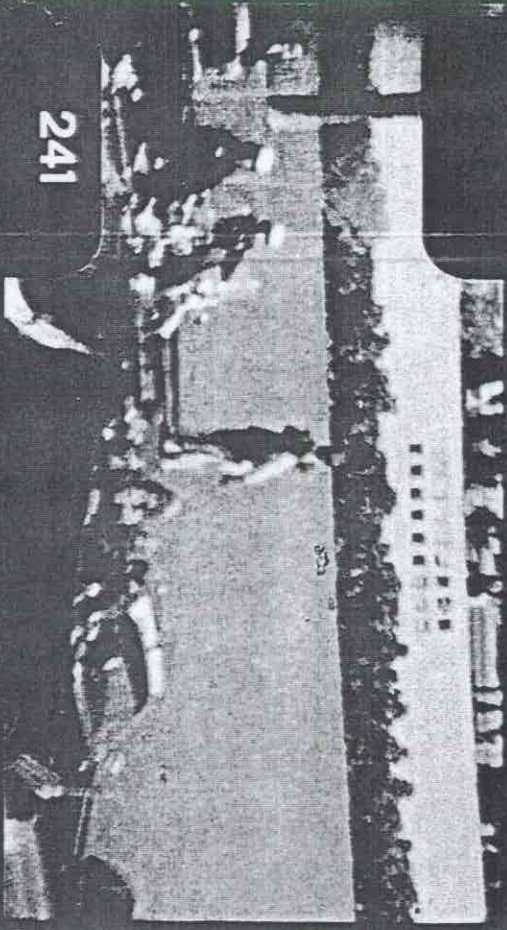
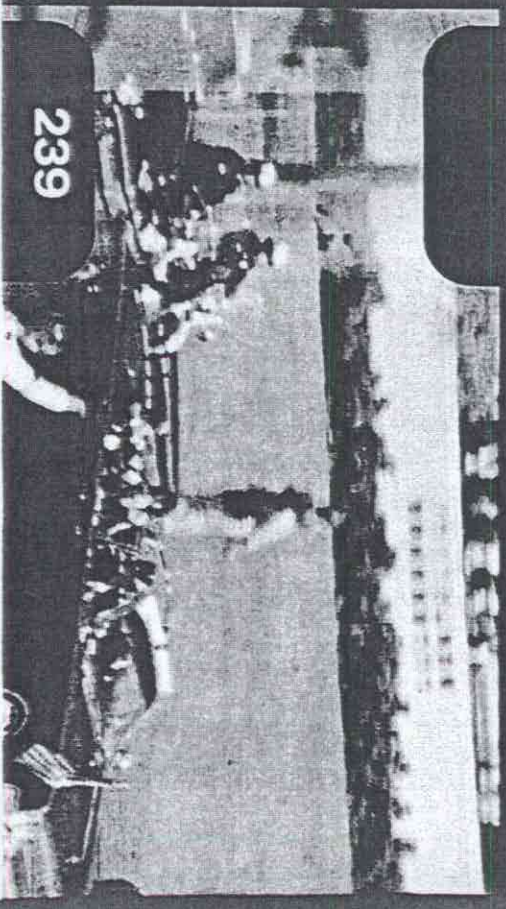
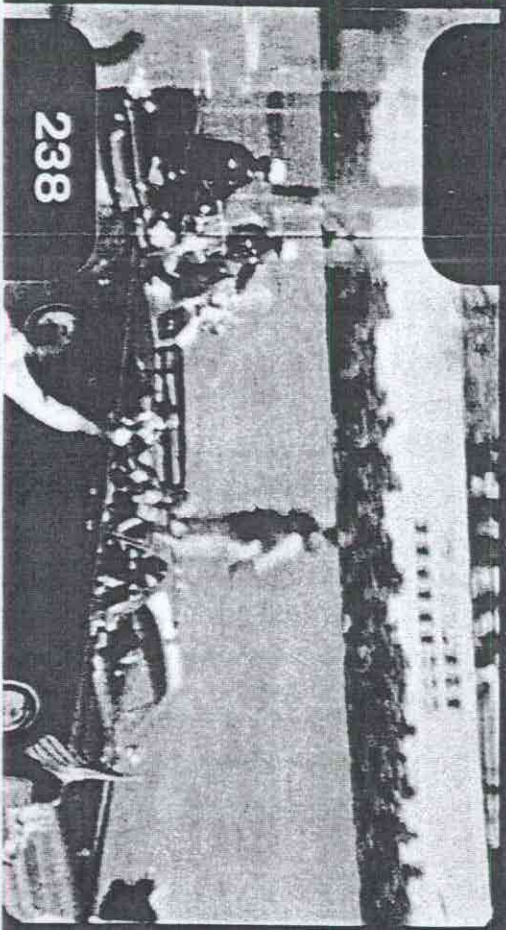
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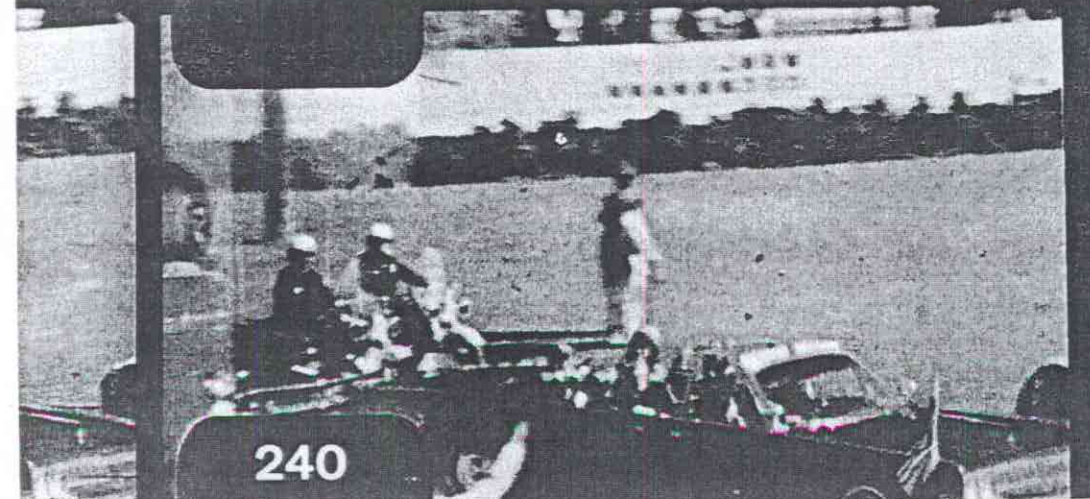
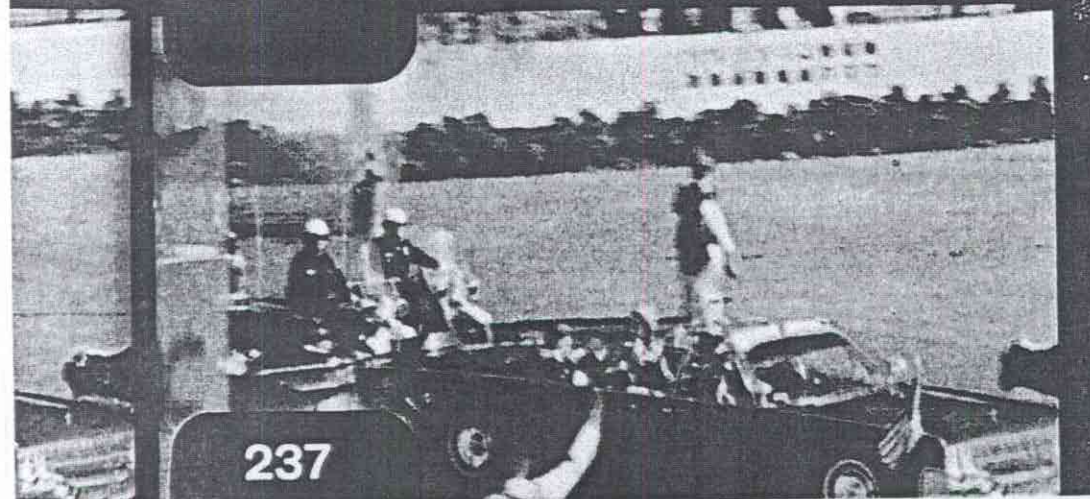
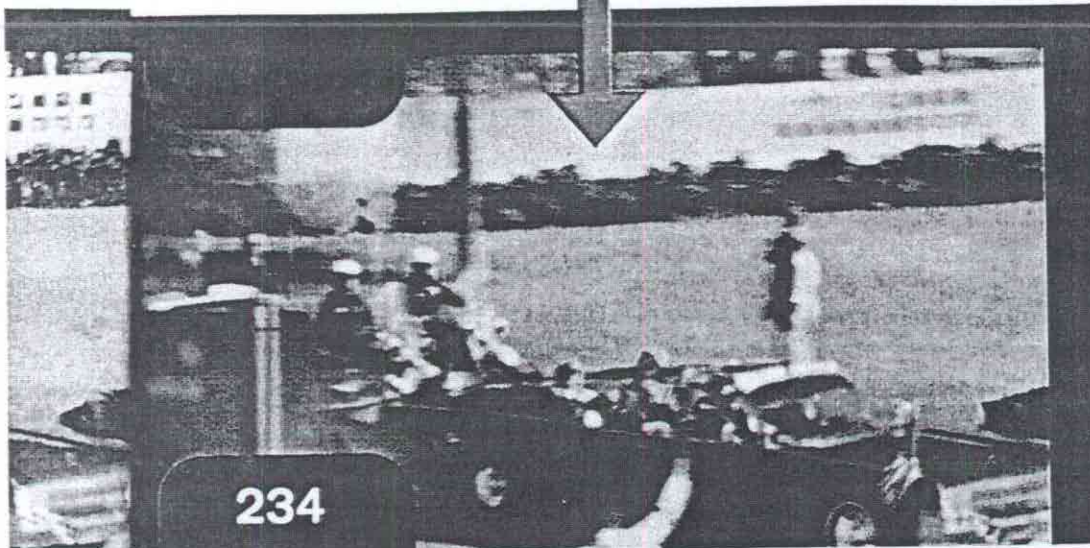
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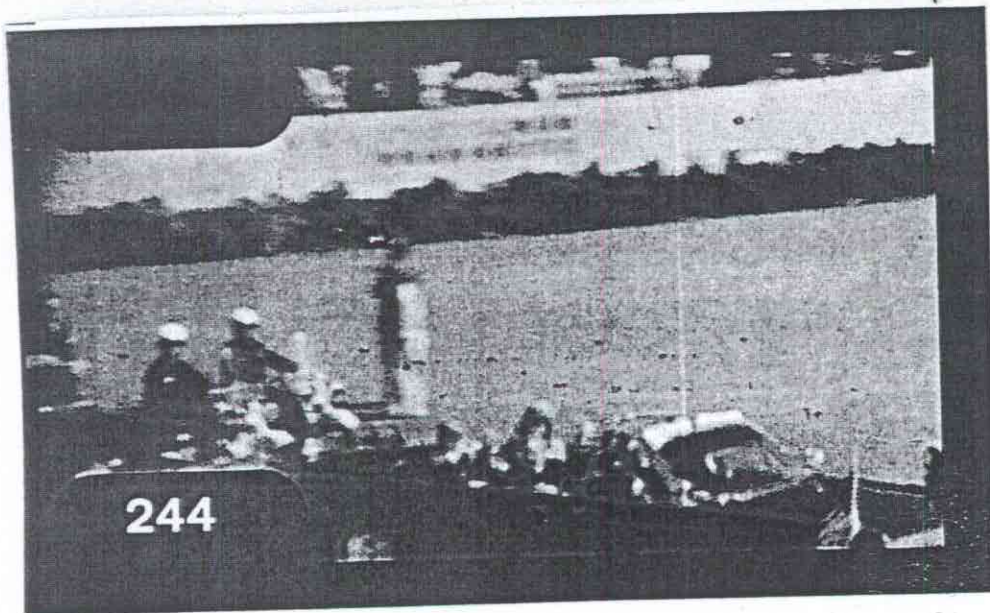
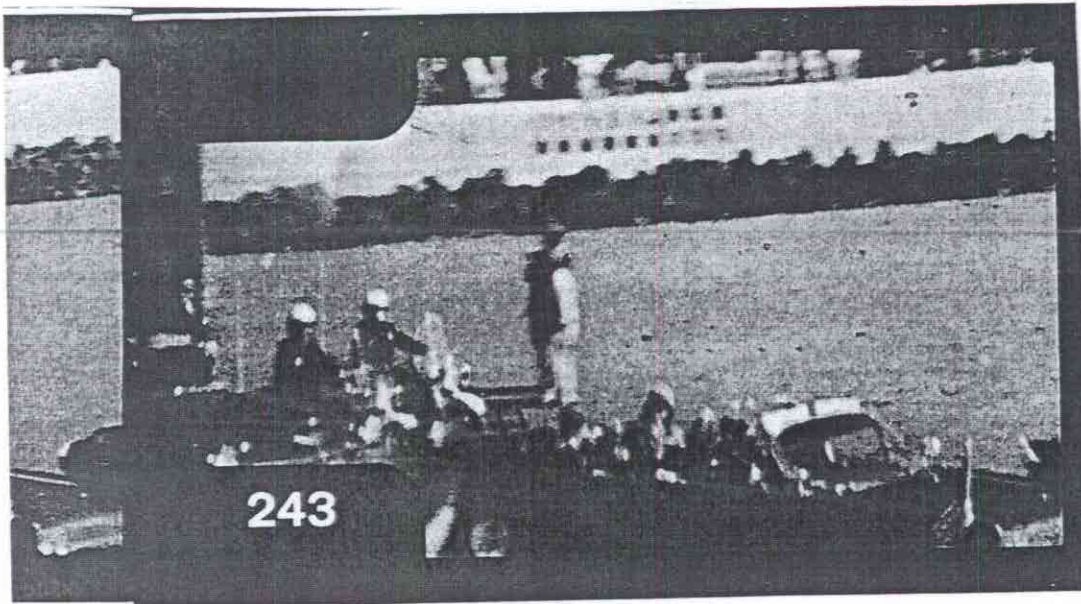


236



s he was hit **HERE**





'It felt like a doubled fist in the back'

Governor Connally believes, as nearly as he can judge it, that the bullet struck him in the 234th frame. This is at least nine frames and one half second later than the Commission says he was hit. He might, Connally admits, possibly have been hit a frame or two earlier but no more. "Having looked at frames 233 to 235," he said to LIFE, "I can begin to see myself slump in 234. The slump is very pronounced in 235. I am hunched. It looks as if my coat is pulled away from my shirt. My mouth is elongated. I don't think there is any question that my reaction to the shot begins in this time sequence."

Nor is there any question in Connally's mind where the shot came from. It was from behind him, from the direction of the Texas School Book Depository building. The medical facts bear him out. The bullet, as traced by the doctors who treated Connally at Parkland Hospital, tunneled into the governor's back close to the armpit, making a small, neat hole typical of an entrance wound. It shattered a rib, ripped open a lung and exited through a large, gaping hole in the governor's chest just below his right nipple. The bullet next crashed into his right wrist, probably the back of it, to judge by shreds of cloth from his coat that were found in the wound. It smashed the wrist bone into at least seven or eight pieces, shed several metal fragments and exited from the front of his wrist to finish its course in the governor's left leg, a few inches above the knee.

Connally vividly remembers the jolt of the shot. It felt, he told the

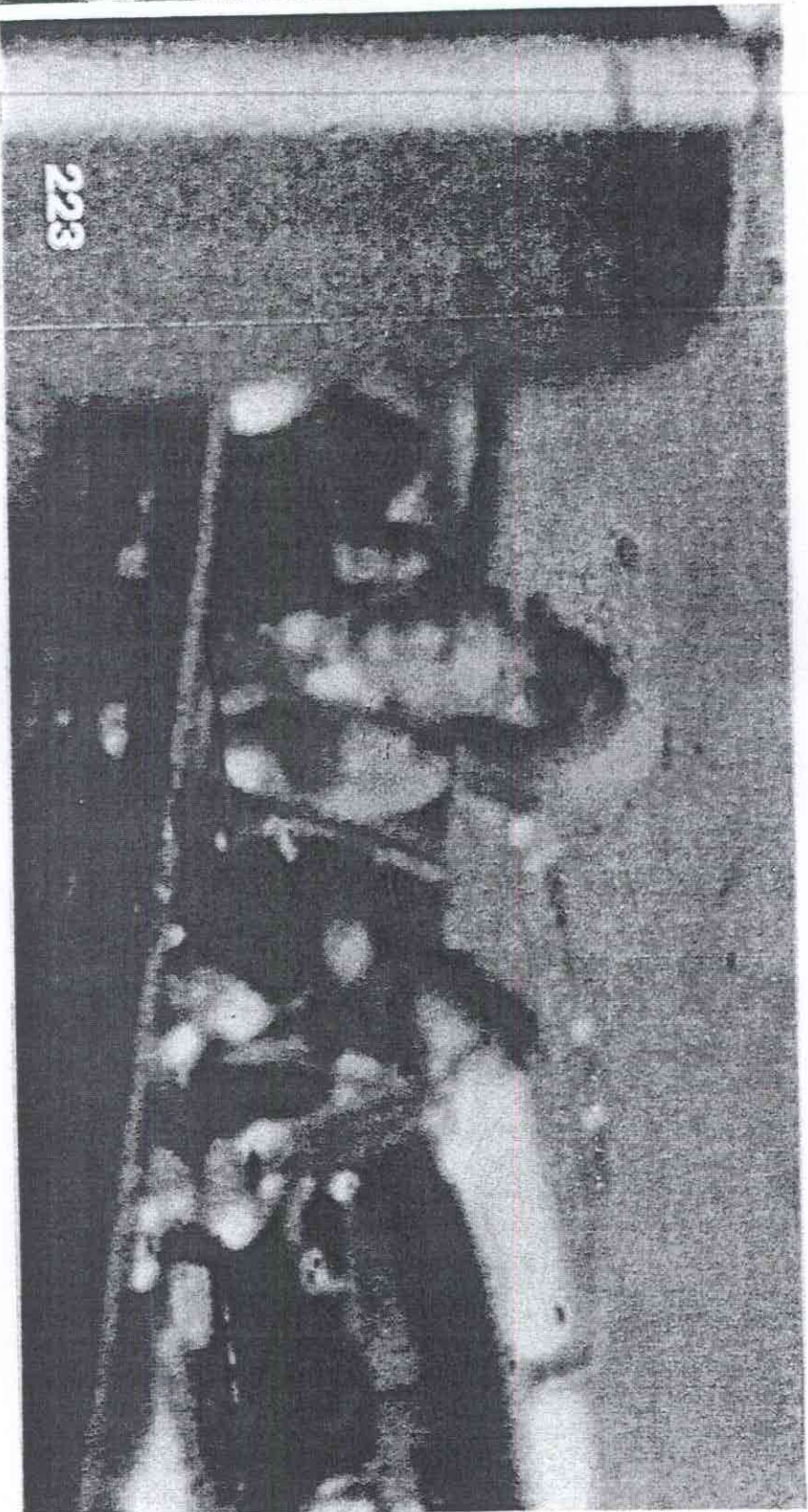
Commission, "as if someone doubled his fist and came up behind you . . . and with about a 12-inch blow hit you in the back, right below the shoulder blade." He did not notice that his wrist and leg had been injured until much later, when he was in the hospital.

After frame 235 and for the remaining nine frames of this excerpt from the Zapruder film, the other characters of the drama seem to be almost in a state of suspended animation—Kennedy still clutching his throat, Jackie gazing at her husband with an expression of uncomprehending surprise, the Secret Service men and the police staring stolidly ahead as if nothing had happened. But Connally in this last half second is now reacting dramatically to his wound. In 236 his mouth flies open and he starts to twist around toward his right. In 238 his right shoulder suddenly buckles as he sways toward the limousine door.

Throughout his ordeal, the governor claims today, he knew exactly what was happening to him. "I knew it," he told the Commission, "when I looked down and I was covered with blood; and the thought immediately passed through my mind that there were either two or three people involved." He remembers hearing Agent Kellerman in the front seat flip on the intercom and say: "Let's get out of here fast!" He was still conscious a moment later when he heard the shot that killed the President.

For a closer view of key moments in the assassination evidence, turn the page to enlargements of details in the Zapruder film.

ENLARGED DETAILS REVIEW CRITICAL MOMENTS

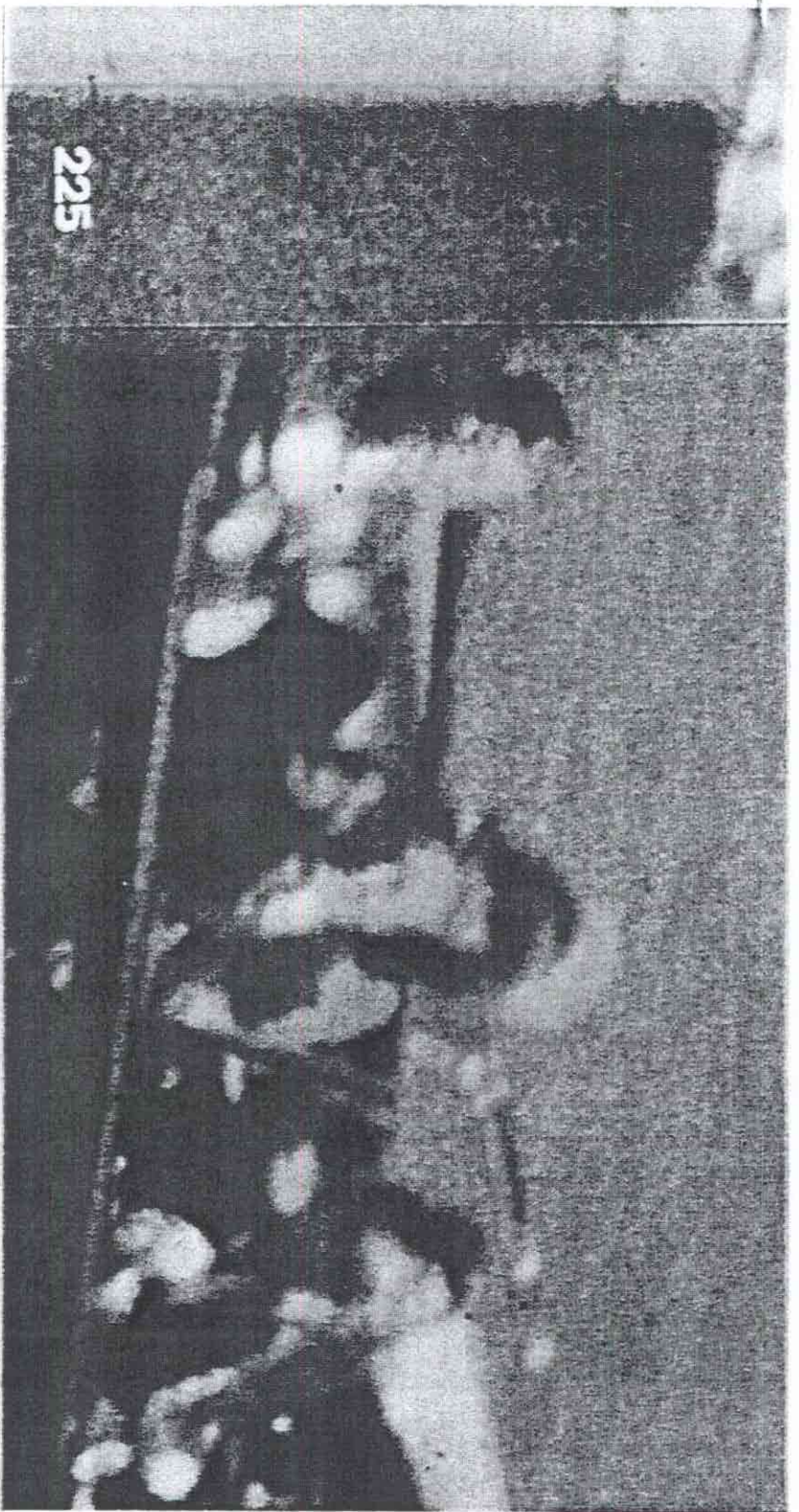


Clear of sign, Connally is unhurt, he says

The pictures on these pages are magnifications of key frames of the Zapuder film shown in the previous sequence. Here in frame

223 Connally is out from behind the highway sign (left) which still conceals the President. It is probable, says the Commission, that

the President has been shot and so has Connally. The governor recalls that at this point he was turning to his left, trying to see the President.

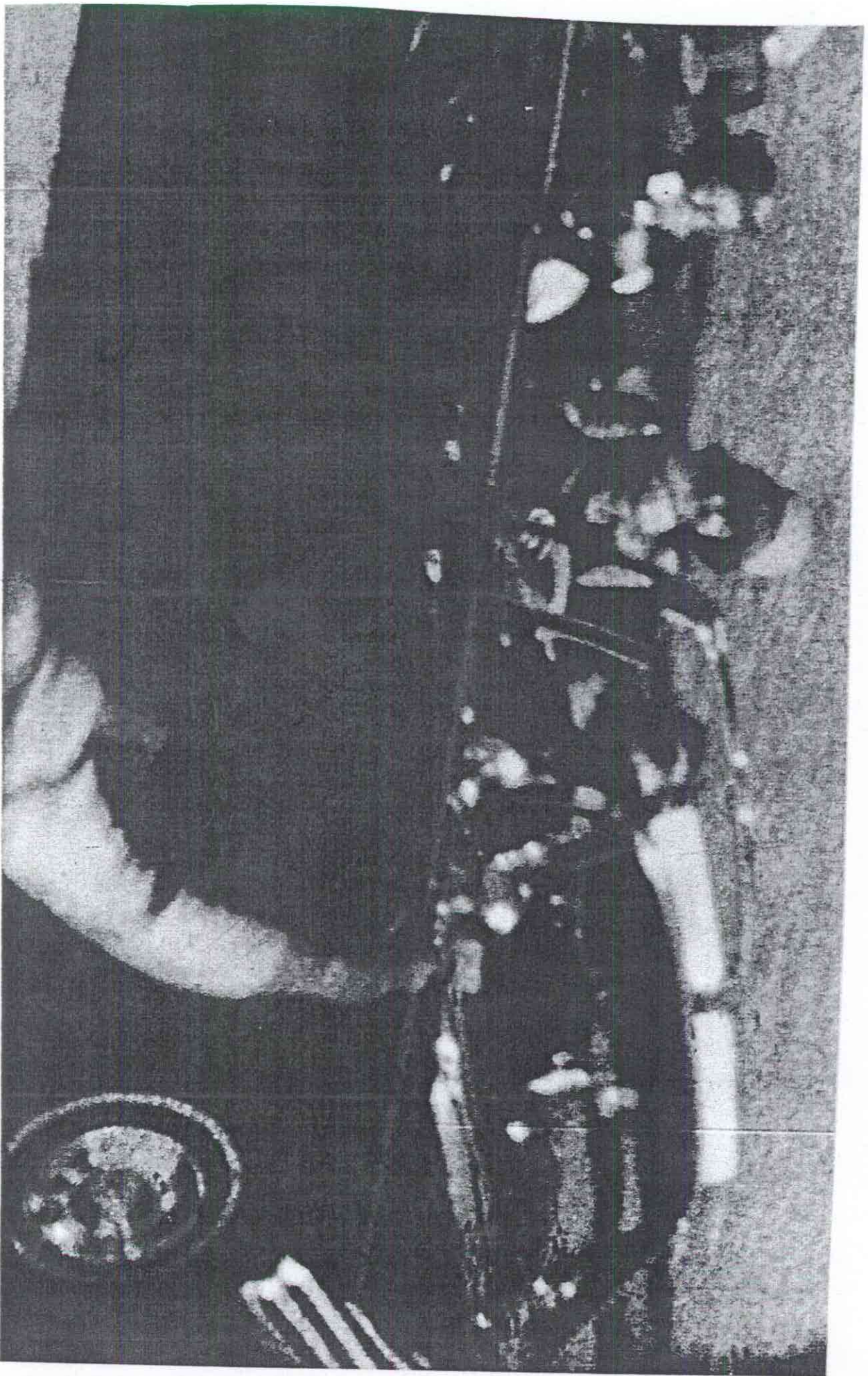


Kennedy, emerging from behind sign, is wounded

In frame 225, a ninth of a second after frame 223, the President also emerges, his hands rising toward his throat. Connally shows no dra-

matic change. One commissioner asked Dr. Robert Shaw, who operated on Connally, whether so long a delayed reaction was possible.

"Yes," said the doctor, "but in the case of a wound which strikes a bony substance such as a rib, usually the reaction is quite prompt."



Kennedy clutches his throat. Connally says he still felt nothing

Still calm five frames and .27 second later, Connally sits in front of the stricken President with the fingers of his right hand—the one

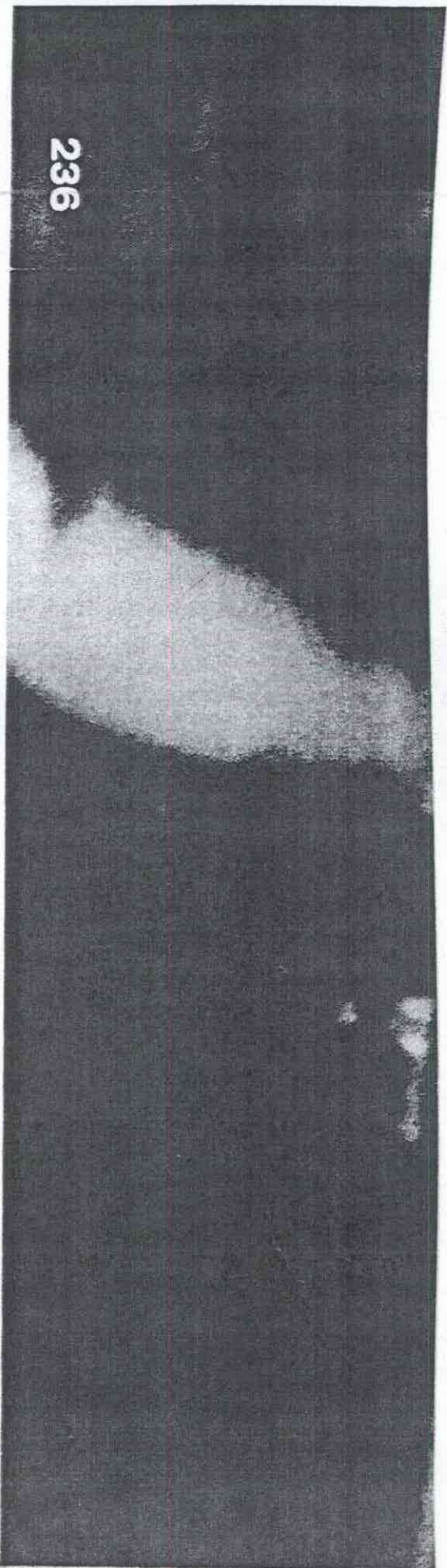
supposedly shattered at the wrist one third second or more before—gripping the brim of his hat. Dr. Charles Gregory, who oper-

ated on Connally's wrist, thinks it conceivable that Connally could have kept hold of his hat after being hit. But in reviewing the film

Dr. Gregory told LIFE: "If he had been hit by the same bullet that hit the President, I would expect to see him thrust forward much sooner."



236



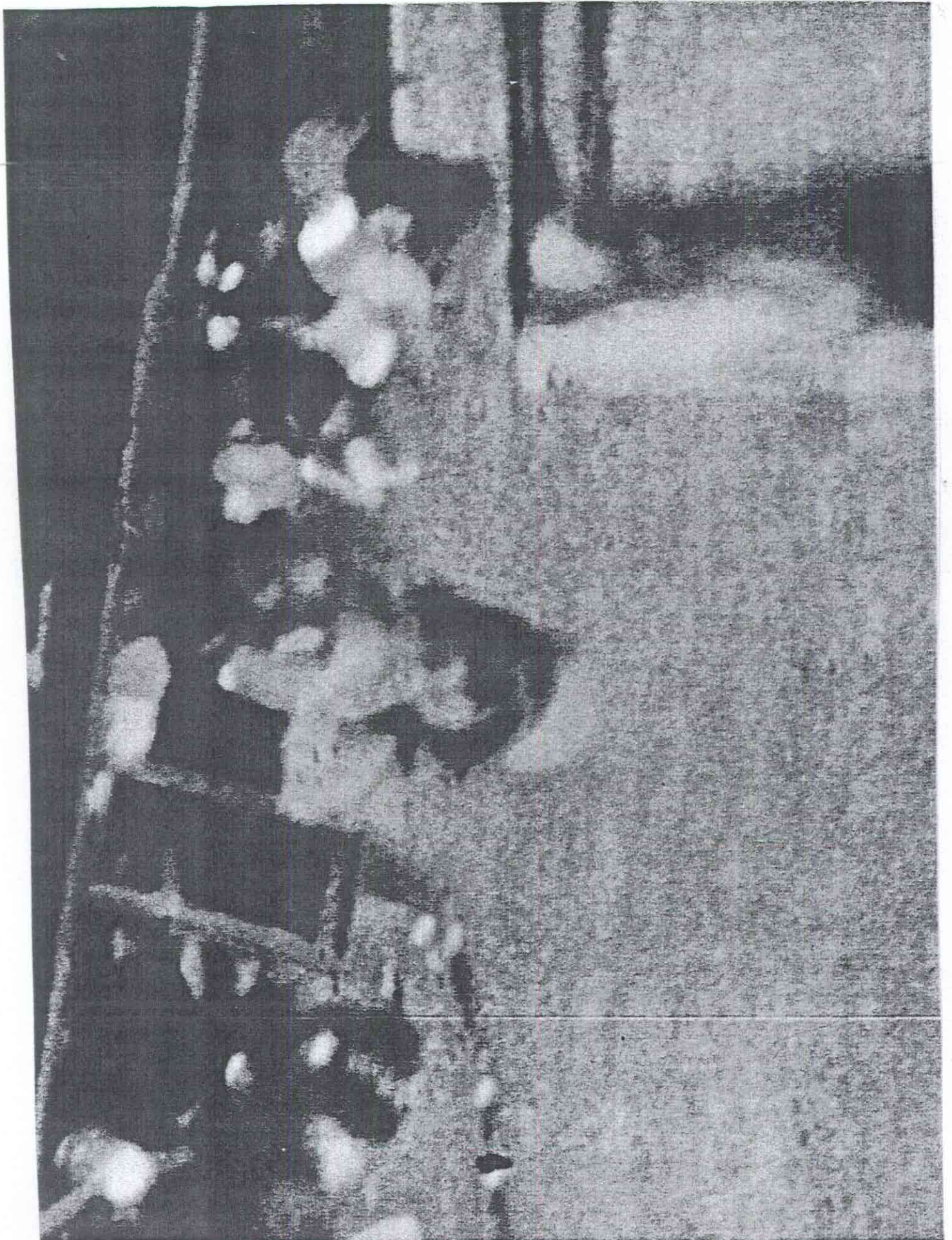
Connally reacts to the bullet that hit him

In this enlarged detail of frame 236, Connally is now reacting to the bullet. This is one ninth of a second later than frame 234, which Connally marks as the moment he

was hit. It is two thirds of a second since Kennedy began responding to his neck wound, and this raises an important question: is it likely that Connally would have

had a delayed reaction to the hit while Kennedy's reaction was almost instantaneous? In frame 236 Connally's mouth has flown open; his right shoulder

sags. But he still appears to be holding on to his hat with his right hand, which is now to his right and level with the top of the car door. In frame 242, one third of a sec-



His shoulder buckles, he starts to slump

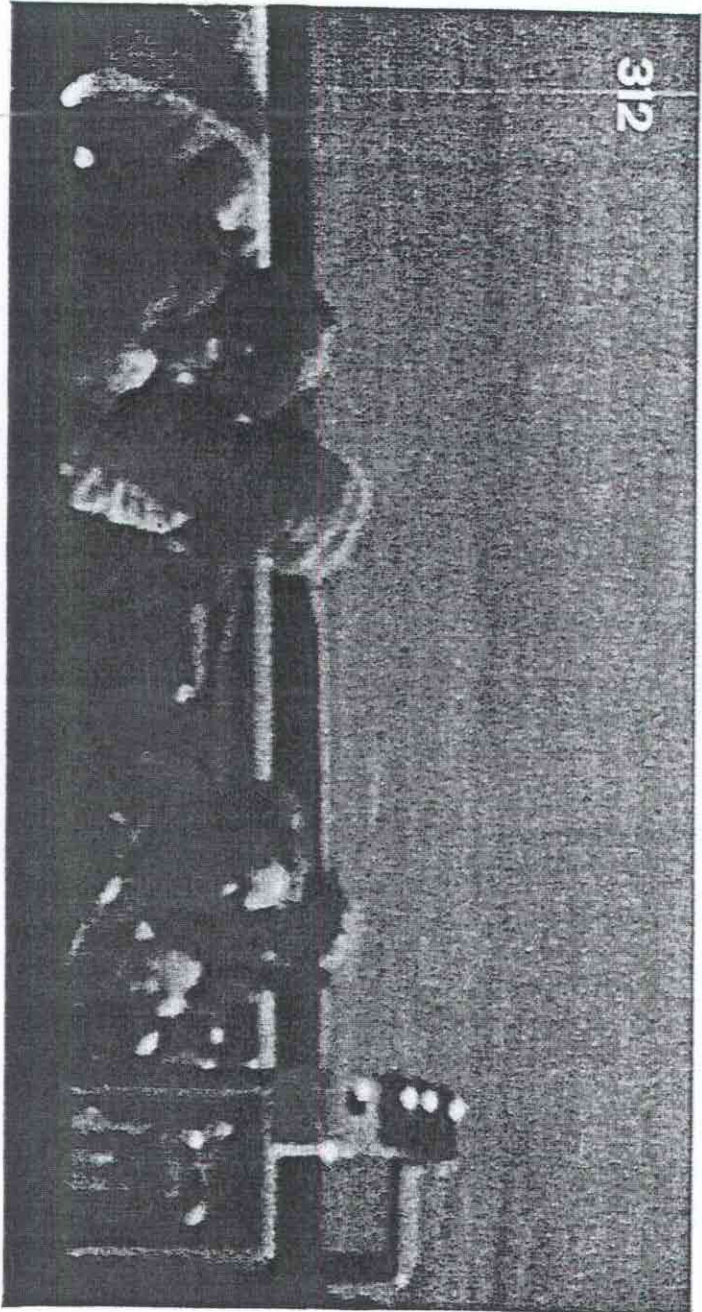
end later, Connally is caving in. His right shoulder has slumped dramatically. The change can be seen best by noting the red patch behind him which was identified as

a bunch of red roses lying on the seat next to Mrs. Kennedy. In 236 the roses are only barely visible behind Connally's right shoulder. In 242 much more of the roses can

be seen, showing that Connally's shoulder has been jerked downward and perhaps also forward by the impact of the bullet. His head has snapped around to the right

and his mouth seems to be framing a cry, perhaps the exclamation that his wife heard him utter soon after he was hit: "My God! They are going to kill us all!"

312



CONNALLY COLLAPSED. In frame 312, 4.3 seconds after he says he was hit, the governor collapses. In next frame the President received his fatal head shot.

Mrs. Connally: 'I heard a second shot and saw him hit'

Governor John Connally and his wife, Nellie, studied the Zapruder film and the enlargements in the kitchen of their Picoosa ranch house outside of Floresville near San Antonio. Connally sat hunched over the light table on which the pictures were laid out. Mrs. Connally sat to his left, just as she had in the presidential limousine on Nov. 22, 1963. As he reached the crucial sequence in which he says he was struck, the governor put down the magnifying glass and sat back, elbows on his knees, head tilted forward, his eyes staring at the floor. Until then, he had been commenting on each photograph. Now he paused to sum up the key moments:

"Between the time I heard the first shot and felt the impact of the other bullet that obviously hit me, I sensed something was wrong, and said, 'Oh no, no, no.' After I felt the impact I glanced down and saw that my whole chest was covered with blood."

The governor and Mrs. Connally are absolutely convinced that their memories of that day are total and precise. "I'll bet," he challenges friends, "that you can recall every detail of the circumstances under which you heard of the assassination—or Pearl Harbor Day or the death of F.D.R."

"And that's why I know every split second of what happened in that car until I lost consciousness. When I heard that first shot and was starting to turn to my right to

see what had happened, Nellie saw the President's hands reaching for his throat. I started to look around over my left shoulder, and somewhere in that revolution I was hit. My recollection of that time gap, the distinct separation between the shot that hit the President and the impact of the one that hit me, is as clear today as it was then." To Connally, a corroborative detail is that he remembers *hearing* the first shot before he felt a bullet hit him. Bullets, he reminded the Commission, travel faster than sound, and therefore the shot he heard could not have been the shot he felt.

Mrs. Connally's recollection is as vivid as her husband's. "As far as the first two shots go," she says, "my memory is divided into four distinct events. First I heard the shot, or a strange loud noise—I'm not that expert on rifles—back behind us. Then next I turned to my right and saw the President gripping at his throat. Then I turned back toward John, and I heard the second shot that hit John. . . . I must have been looking right at him when it hit because I saw him recoil to the right. . . . so you see I had time to look at the President *after* he was already hit, then turn and see John hit by a second shot. Then, of course, he slumped, and I reached to pull him toward me." Governor Connally bears a scar on his back, one on his chest, one

on either side of his right wrist, and one on top of his left thigh. "The doctors tell me there's still a little metal left in me, but they did a beautiful job. I never have any pain whatsoever. But I can't turn my right hand past a certain point. . . . I can't even turn it palm up. It's not even a handicap, just an occasional inconvenience, but it's a reminder."

The governor and his wife made only one appearance before the Warren Commission. He was questioned less than an hour, and she for approximately five minutes. "As a matter of fact," says Mrs. Connally, "it was almost two months before any of the investigators showed any interest in examining John's clothing. When he went into surgery they gave me his tie, trousers and socks in a paper bag. We finally located John's shirt and suit coat, which we were concerned about because of the wallet and personal papers in his breast pocket, in Congressman Henry Gonzales' clothes closet in Washington. I told the Secret Service and I guess the FBI that I had the clothes, but nobody seemed interested. After about seven weeks I took John's shirt. . . . it was all smeared with his flesh and blood, and dipped it in cold water several times to try and preserve it. Someone finally came to pick up his clothes. I think the Commission said his shirt was useless as evidence because it had been 'laundered.' But I never laundered it,

I just soaked it in cold water." Connally says he has never read any of the Warren Report, not even his own testimony before the Commission. "I lived that day. My being wounded was only an incidental part of it. The horror was losing our President. Unless there's some purpose to be served, I just don't want to fan the flames."

He agreed to look at and comment on the Zapruder pictures, presented to him in a far more detailed form than they had been by the Warren Commission, because "history is bigger than any individual's feelings. I don't want to discuss any other facets of the controversy except my wounds as related to the first shot that hit the President.

"They talk about the 'one-bullet or two-bullet theory,'" he continued, "but as far as I'm concerned, there is no 'theory.' There is my absolute knowledge, and Nellie's too, that one bullet caused the President's first wound, and that an entirely separate shot struck me."

"No one will ever convince me otherwise," added Mrs. Connally. "It's a certainty," said the governor, "I'll never change my mind."

DESCRIBING THE MOMENT.
Seated next to his wife, just as he was in the car, Governor Connally shows what his position was when she pulled him into her lap.





Rebuttal by the protagonist of the one-bullet verdict

The Warren Commission, in interrogating Governor Connally, respected both his veracity as a man and his importance as a witness—"He was perhaps the most important witness," says Arlen Specter, the Commission lawyer who interrogated the governor. Yet in the end the Commission disagreed with him, and did so on a basic principle of criminal investigation. That principle, in Specter's words, is: "Beware of isolated bits of evidence. To understand the whole picture, you must know evidence beyond what was experienced by any single witness. We re-examined facts in the light of Connally's account. But when we compared his sensory perceptions with other evidence we were forced to find his conclusions incorrect."

Before the Warren Commission began its work, the generally ac-



COMMISSION'S DEFENDER. Arlen Specter, 36, handled Commission's investigation of the shooting. He is now district attorney of Philadelphia.

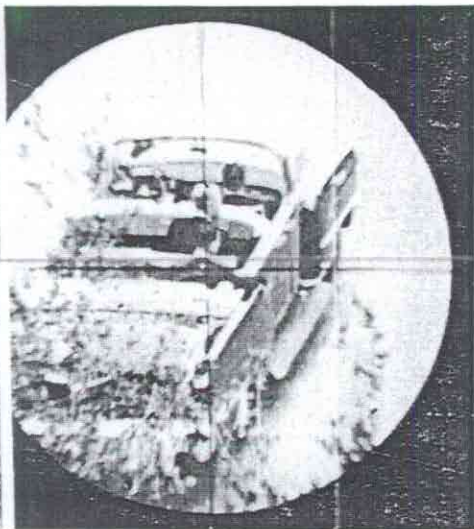
cepted theory held that separate bullets struck the President and Connally. The FBI subscribed to this theory in a three-part report published in 1963. Specter himself believed in it at first. It was also believed that there was only one assassin—Lee Harvey Oswald.

When it became clear that it would require at least 2.3 seconds between shots for Oswald to have fired twice, Specter and his investigators began trying to see if Kennedy could have been hit 2.3 seconds before Connally. This would mean placing Kennedy's neck wound at least as far back as frame 192 in Zapruder's film, well before the President vanished behind the highway sign. But efforts to establish an early hit got nowhere. First there was the Zapruder film itself, which shows the President still waving cheerfully as late as frame 206 (p. 40), just as he disappears behind the sign. The clincher was the Commission's discovery that at frame 192, and for some time before and after, the assassin's line of vision from the Texas School Book Depository building was obscured by a tree.

This was discovered during a slow-motion, on-the-scene re-enactment of the crime. It was staged by the FBI, using a Secret Service follow-up limousine in place of the presidential Lincoln and FBI sit-ins for the presidential party. Early one morning in the spring of 1964, Elm Street in Dallas was sealed to traffic and the car was pushed slowly down the road. It was halted at every point where its position matched a frame in the Zapruder film. Up in the sixth-floor window of the School Book

Depository building, another FBI man sighted through the scope on Oswald's rifle, to which he had attached a movie camera. Every time the car stopped, the FBI cameraman snapped a picture. The result was a sequence of still pictures that matched every Zapruder frame, but taken from Oswald's presumed point of view.

When the Commission saw the FBI re-enactment film, it was at



FBI RE-ENACTMENT. View through Oswald's rifle scope as seen in FBI's reconstruction shows the crosshairs on Kennedy's stand-in as he emerges from behind tree. This is the earliest moment, the Commission says, that the President could have been hit.

once obvious that the tree, looming large in Oswald's telescopic sight, was crucial for fixing the earliest point at which the President would have been hit. The FBI frame in which Kennedy went under the tree corresponded with Zapruder frame 166. The FBI frame in which the President rode out clear of the tree and became a target for Oswald corresponded to most unlikely to the Commission hit as early as Zapruder 166—because Kennedy was still waving at the crowd more than two seconds later in frame 206. Nor did a hit seem likely around Zapruder 186, when for a fleeting instant Kennedy flashed across the assassin's line of vision through a parting in the foliage. And it seemed even less likely—though still possible—for Oswald to have fired blindly through the tree when he had a long stretch of clear road ahead of him.

Studying the FBI film, the Commission concluded that the earliest moment the President was hit was in Zapruder 210. By then, Kennedy was already well behind the highway sign in Zapruder's film and only 1.3 seconds away from the moment Connally claimed he was hit—too close in time for the assassin to have fired twice.

Having virtually ruled out an early hit on President Kennedy, the Commission was forced next to consider what is potentially the most damaging single argument

against Connally's account of the crime: what happened to the bullet that hit the President?

According to the official autopsy report on the President, Kennedy was wounded by a bullet that pierced the base of his neck in back and exited from his throat below the Adam's apple. Since it struck no bone in the President's neck, it could hardly have been deflected and flown out of the car. It did not bury itself anywhere in the car. "One of our most impressive pieces of evidence," says Specter, "is the FBI report on an examination of the limousine. It concludes that no part of the car's interior was struck by a whole bullet."

The only remaining place the bullet could have logically gone was into Connally. The FBI film shows that he sat directly beyond Kennedy in the assassin's line of fire. As Specter sums up the Commission's case, "Given the trajectory from the Book Depository window, the autopsy, about which I have no doubts, and the FBI

report on the limousine: where, if it didn't hit Connally, did that bullet go? This is the single most compelling reason why I concluded that one bullet hit both men."

As Specter describes it, the Commission arrived at its single-bullet theory by the elimination of possible alternatives. This is a risky procedure in any court of law since no one can be sure he knows all

the alternatives. But there is some evidence to back up the theory. The path traced by the bullet through Connally's chest, according to careful measurements made for the Commission, is directly in line with its path through President Kennedy's neck, which suggests that the same bullet wounded both men. Nevertheless, the measurements are not finally conclusive, since any slight difference in the assumed posture of either the President or Connally would upset the calculations.

Specter interprets the Zapruder pictures differently from Connally. To follow his reasoning, look back to the sequence reproduced in the previous pages.

Specter, like Connally, was fascinated by frame 230 (p. 45), but for different reasons. "First of all," he says, "it looks to me as if his face is wincing, indicating a probability he's been hit. Now look at that wrist. You don't see it from frame 223 to 228 [pp. 40-41]. Kennedy's hands are up, grasping for the throat, but Connally's are down, at least until frame 229. But his wrist is very clear in 230. I would like to make two points. First, we're pretty sure from the medical evidence that when Connally was hit, his right wrist was down in his lap. The alignment of holes strongly indicates it. How else could a bullet travel a straight path through his back and chest emerging just below his right nipple, pass through his right wrist and end up in his left thigh?"

"Secondly, in frame 230 the wrist is too high to be hit and throughout the rest of the sequence—all the way until Connally collapses—that wrist stays raised. I am convinced that that wrist has been hit before it comes into view in frame 229. When it was hit, his hand was probably forced forward and down. But you never see that happen; and I say you don't because by 230 the wrist has already been hit, and that hand coming up is a natural reflex action."

But doubts still remain. Specter sees Connally wincing in frame 230: LIFE's photo interpreters think he looks unharmed, as does Connally himself. Nor is there any medical evidence, despite Specter's claim, that Connally's right hand was in his lap when he was hit. In fact, the illustration published by the Commission to show Connally's

position when he was hit has his right hand not in his lap but raised level with his chest. (Although that illustration is wrong also, since the hand is turned palm inward, and from the medical evidence it is clear that Connally's wrist was struck on the back and not on the palm side.) Nor can much importance be given to lining up Connally's three wounds—Specter's "alignment of holes" theory. Hitting a rib would probably have deflected the bullet from a straight course; Connally's wrist could have been almost anywhere and still have been struck by it.

Specter's—and the Commission's—case for the single-bullet theory relies heavily on the medical evidence, especially the official autopsy report on the President, which states that the President's neck wound was caused by a bullet coming at him from behind. Yet nothing in the case is more confused than the medical evidence.

The doctors who treated Kennedy at Parkland Hospital in Dallas thought that the wound in front of Kennedy's throat looked like an entrance wound. This would mean that Kennedy had been fired at from in front—which would automatically rule out the single-bullet theory and establish a second assassin. The theory that this first shot came from the front has been supported by most of the witnesses to the assassination, who testified that the first shot came from the direction of a grassy knoll which lay ahead of the motorcade.

The Parkland doctors, to be sure, drew their conclusion under a severe handicap: they did not know about the wound in the back. In the frantic effort to save the President's life by a tracheotomy, they never turned him over on his stretcher and the back wound was overlooked.

The doctors at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Washington who performed the autopsy seven hours later were no better informed. They quickly found the back wound, but they completely missed the throat wound which had been obliterated by the tracheotomy incision performed at Parkland. Unable to probe the back

wound deeper than a finger's length and finding no sign of any bullet in the X-rays, the autopsy doctors figured that the wound was shallow and the bullet had somehow worked its way out.

It was only later on that they learned of the throat wound, and by then it was too late to re-examine the President. The autopsy was over; the body had been removed. The autopsy had to be thought

out all over again without a body to re-examine. The official autopsy report stated that the bullet had gone clear through the President's neck from behind.

That report has been repeatedly challenged. X-rays and photographs of the President's body taken during the autopsy disappeared immediately afterward. When Dr. Humes, chief examiner, testified before the Warren Commission four months after the assassination, what he showed was an illustration of Kennedy's neck wound drawn from memory. Critics have declared that this was not consistent with the location of holes found in the President's clothing.

In its most crucial conclusions, the autopsy report is not an on-the-spot record but a remembrance and reinterpretation of things irrevocably past. As such, while not necessarily in error, it is at least open to doubt and therefore vulnerable support for the Warren Commission's single-bullet theory.

The single-bullet theory is, of course, only one of the objections raised against the Warren Report. Others are taken up with varying degrees of objectivity in critical books. Although these books have done much to make the Report a matter of concern across the nation and the world, they have—for the most part—been shoddily thought out and unconvincingly presented. In *The Oswald Affair*, Léo Sauvage, U.S. correspondent for the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, tries to prove that there were two assassins. Neither of them, he says, was Oswald, and Oswald

himself was framed. He puts forth a far-fetched theory about a racist conspiracy. Sauvage's tone is shrill and his facts are questionable.

Whitewash, by Harold Weisberg, a writer who printed his book at his own expense, is a broadside against almost every statement the Report makes. It has solid nuggets of criticism, but they are lost in a sea of irrelevancies. *The Second Oswald*, by Professor Richard Popkin, philosophy department chairman of the University of California at San Diego, gives credence to reports by various people who said they encoun-

tered a man who called himself Oswald and looked like him at a time when Oswald himself was known to be elsewhere. Popkin proposes that a second Oswald participated in the conspiracy and in the assassination. His book is strictly for detective story fans.

The most successful book—so far as sales are concerned—has been Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment*, which last week stood at the top of the nonfiction best-seller list. Lane, a New York lawyer, appointed himself from the moment of the assassination as Oswald's defender, and his book shows his bias. The best criticism of it comes from Yale Law Professor Alexander Bickel, who (in *Commentary* magazine) calls it "a grab-bag of virtually all the conceivable theories that offer an alternative to the findings of the Commission. The book is wildly speculative . . . peripheral and indiscriminate."

The most nearly objective book so far is *Inquest* by Edward Jay Epstein. It started out as a master's thesis in political science. Epstein, then a graduate student at Cornell, conceived it simply as a study of a government investigating body at work. In interviewing Warren Commission members and staff, he found bureaucratic bungling, hasty research to meet a deadline and a tendency to tailor evidence to fit a preconceived notion of Oswald's sole guilt. Epstein's own speculations on the assassination are open to question. But his report on the workings of the Commission is enough by itself to throw doubt on the Commission's conclusions.

The critics of the Commission

are on sounder ground in their objections to its procedures than in their dissents from its conclusions. But in the central issue, of whether the President and Connally were hit by the same bullet or separate bullets, the questions of doubt that have arisen since the Report were anticipated within the Commission itself by the semantic problem of how to evaluate the single-bullet thesis. According to Epstein, three of the members—Senator Richard Russell, Senator John Sherman Cooper and Representative Hale Boggs—believed that there might have been separate bullets. The drafters of the Report originally wanted to describe the evidence supporting the single-bullet theory as "compelling." Senator Russell proposed it be called merely "credible." A compromise was reached: in the final report the evidence is described as "persuasive."

The evidence, particularly that given by Governor Connally and his interpretation of the Zapruder film, does not prove that Oswald had a co-conspirator. Nor does it disprove it. It does show that reasonable—and disturbing—doubt remains.

One conclusion is inescapable: the national interest deserves clear resolution of the doubts. A new investigating body should be set up, perhaps at the initiative of Congress. In a scrupulously objective and unhurried atmosphere, without the pressure to give reassurance to a shocked country, it should re-examine the evidence and consider other evidence the Warren Commission failed to evaluate.

end

Conclusion: the case should be reopened

ZAPRUDER ON CAMERA. This picture was taken by Phillip Willis, a spectator, at approximate time Kennedy was hit. It shows Zapruder (circled) in background. At this point Kennedy (also circled) was screened from Zapruder by the highway sign.

