

The Warren Report—Fact or Fictio

By ROGER KARBAKER

The crosshairs of the telescopic sight were aligned on the back of the President of the United States. A stealthy finger began to squeeze the trigger of the Italian Garcano rifle.

Five seconds later John F. Kennedy was dead, murdered from ambush by crazed Marxist Lee Harvey Oswald.

But do the events in Dallas, Tex., on Nov. 22, 1963, conform to the sequence of events described by the Warren Commission?

Recent criticism of the Warren Commission report has been so intense, so widely based—and so probing—as to cast considerable doubt on many of the major findings of the commission.

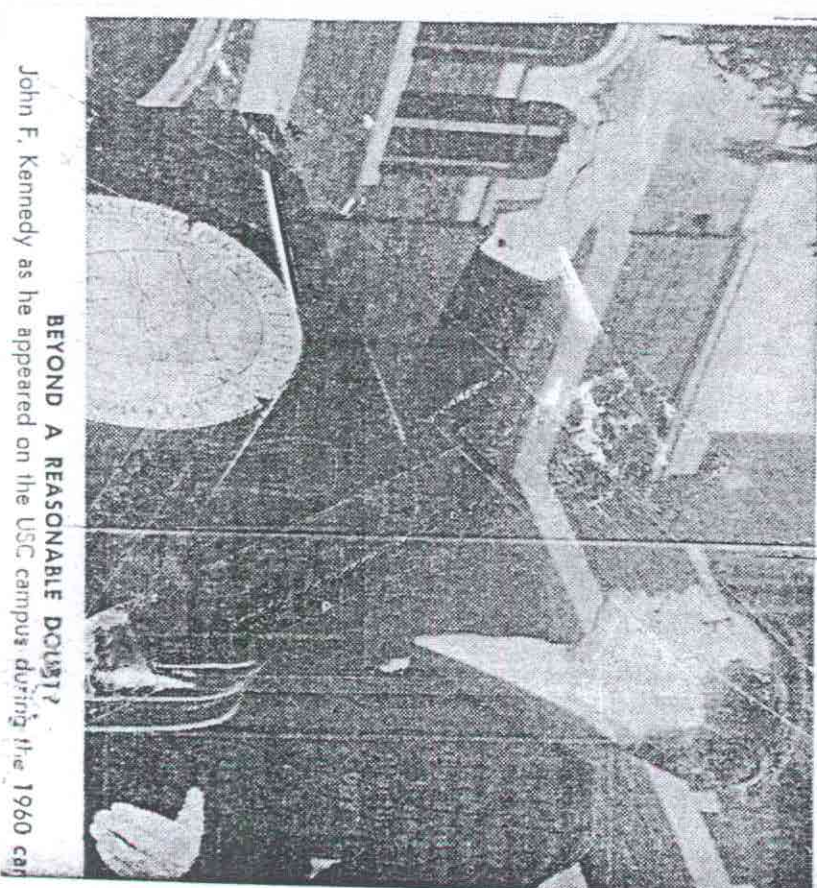
The more responsible and successful critics of the commission report have based their skepticism on what they consider to be inherent flaws in the commission report as presented—disregard of expert testimony, failure of the commission staff to fully investigate unclear areas, and even direct conflict of facts with the commission's findings. Of the many alleged con-

ditions within the commission's report the most serious seem to be those concerning the bullet that struck Kennedy in the throat, its origin and end; the bullet that struck Texas Gov. John Connally; the entry wound on the President's back; the bullet on

the stretcher; the autopsy report(s); and the location of the shots and their number.

The Warren Commission concluded that the first bullet fired struck the President at the rear base of the neck, passed through his throat, exited in the front, and then passed through Gov. Connally, traversing his chest, shattering his wrist and finally lodging in his thigh.

The commission reached this conclusion after viewing perhaps the most important, and reliable witness to the assassination: the 8mm motion picture taken by amateur photographer Abraham Zapruder. The Zapruder film, which provided a clear, precise account of the events in the



John F. Kennedy as he appeared on the USC campus during the 1960 campaign.

BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT?

President's car, showed the President reacting to the first wound in his throat, Connally reacting to his wounds at least a full second later, and finally the fatal shot that shattered the President's skull five seconds after the shooting began.

This time span between the first and last shots indicate that there was time for only three shots to have been fired. And at first many commission members felt the two Kennedy wounds and the Connally wound were each caused by separate bullets.

But then there were disquieting rumors of a bullet entirely missing the Presi-

dential limousine, ricocheting off the pavement and wounding a bystander.

Investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Dallas police provided the answer — the rumors were true. FBI experts found lead traces on the pavement of Main Street and bystander James Tague was struck by a bullet fragment, which he believes came from the second bullet.

TWO ASSASSINS

Since the assassin, the Zapruder film shows, could have only fired three shots, and since further evidence The Warren Report Cont. . proved that one of the bullets did miss the Presidential car, the commission was faced with a dilemma: either Connally and Kennedy were struck by the same bullet, or there were two assassins.

By the time the commission was confronted with this interesting dilemma, in the spring of 1964, Lee Harvey Oswald had been identified innumerable times in the press as the sole assassin of President Kennedy.

The commission's answer: "Two bullets probably caused all the wounds suffered by President Ken-

nedy and Gov. Connally . . . the three shots were fired in a time period ranging from approximately 4.8 to in excess of 7 seconds."

Critics of the report score the commission on several grounds. Primarily, they complain the commission worked backwards on its

conclusion, accepting that evidence which substantiated the three-shots, all from the Schoolbook Depository theory, and rejecting any evidence that conflicted with that.

For instance, in formulating its conclusion that Kennedy and Connally were hit by the same bullet, the commission was obliged to disregard the testimony of Gov. Connally, who believes he was hit by the second bullet; the testimony of Connally's wife, who substantiates his recollections; the testimony of the driver of the limousine, Secret Service Agent William

Greer, who saw Connally fall after hearing the second shot; and of several witnesses who heard a hearing more than three shots.

Interestingly, the President's widow, Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, testified that she felt her husband was hit by the first two shots, not the first and third.

SECRET SERVICE

Secret Service Agent Roy Kellerman, sitting immediately in front of Gov. Connally, heard "a flurry of shots," within five seconds of the first shot, casting further doubts on the commission's finding that the

Italian Carcano rifle found on the sixth floor of the Schoolbook Depository fired all of the shots involved in the assassination.

Subsequent tests with the Carcano rifle revealed the bolt-action weapon could be reloaded and fired in no less than 2.3 seconds.

When the commission became apprised of this fact, it provided further impetus for it to conclude that one bullet struck both Kennedy and Connally, since the reactions of both men in the Zapruder movie show the two men were shot within a maximum of 1.8 seconds.

Again the dilemma: either Kennedy and Connally were shot with the same bullet, or there were two assassins.

But to again support its contention that both men were struck with the same bullet, the commission had to ignore further eyewitness testimony.

Eyewitnesses of the assassination were divided in their opinion about the number of shots fired, well as many bystanders.

Several police officers as thought there were four or more shots, and many of those, including the aforementioned Secret Service Agent Kellerman, felt at least two of the shots were fired very quickly.

If so, that would discount

the theory that Lee Harvey Oswald, perched in a sixth-floor window in the depository, was the sole assassin, since his rifle could not possibly be fired any faster than once every 2.3 seconds.

BOOK DEPOSITORY

But was the Schoolbook Depository the source of the shots, what their number? Many critics of the Warren Report question the commission's absolute statement that this was so.

The critics point out that

of 80 eyewitnesses who formed an opinion about the origin of the shots, only 38 felt they came from the depository, while 52 felt the shots came from a grassy knoll farther up Elm Street.

In fact, seven witnesses on the triple underpass ahead of the Presidential limousine and Dallas Policeman J. M. Smith, even claimed to have "caught the smell of gunpowder" over the fence.

Support was lent to this theory when film editors for United Press International in New York discovered a frame in the 8mm motion picture of the assassination taken by hobbyist Orville Nix.

One scene in the film shows a car behind the picket fence with what could be a man holding a rifle.

UPI, in following up the

tip sent reporter Jack Fox to Dallas. In Dallas, Fox interviewed Lee J. Bowers, Jr., who described the frame from the Nix movie, as, "exactly what I saw."

S. M. Holland, who was on the overpass during the assassination, told of four

shots. The first shot came from the book building and hit the President. The second came from the same place and hit Gov. Connally. . . The third shot came from behind the picket fence to the North of Elm Street.

"There was a puff of smoke under the trees like someone had thrown out a Chinese firecracker and a report entirely different from the one which was fired from the book building. . ."

The Warren Commission concluded "the shots which killed President Kennedy and wounded Gov. Connally were fired from the sixth-floor window at the Southeast corner of the Texas Schoolbook Depository Building."

These conflicts in the findings of the Warren Report, along with many others of both major and minor importance, form the basis for the recent criticisms of the Warren Report, and the gnawing doubt that pervades the minds of a majority of United States citizens.

The tenuous facts upon which the Warren Commission has based its conclusions have now come under attack from Congressional leaders, lawyers and even prestigious Life magazine. All have called for another investigation into the death of President Kennedy.

The basis of our judicial system is the belief in acceptance of facts "beyond a reasonable doubt."

The Warren Commission has failed in its attempt to establish the facts concerning the death of President Kennedy. A reasonable doubt remains. A new investigation should be called for to allay these fears. (END)