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# Accepting Report?

## Dare We Rush Into Criticism of the Warren

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**M**URDER of the chief of a powerful, wealthy nation is a matter of worldwide concern, inciting reckless, inflammatory, sustained suspicion, rumors, and gossip. Since great shifts of personal power follow, affecting the future of great masses living and to be born, deep fears, anxieties and passions are stirred. Men, organizations, and nations who opposed the policies of the victim, or who succeeded to power and influence on his death, immediately become the subject of an uncontrolled wildfire of suspicion, unverified rumor, and reckless accusation.

So when in Lee Harvey Oswald's case, the impudent, taciturn, alleged assassin of President Kennedy and Officer Tippit was arrested, paraded before the public on live television and then was himself murdered in view of untold millions, while surrounded by police officials, the usual wildfire of suspicion, rumor, and accusation was escalated to hysterical and imminently dangerous proportions. The stability and international reputation of our government was threatened.

In these circumstances the great talents and, more important, the immense national and international personal and

**RUSH TO JUDGMENT**, by Mark Lane (478 pages; Holt, Rinehart & Winston; \$5.95).

**INQUEST**, by Edward Jay Epstein (224 pages; Viking; \$5).

judicial prestige of Chief Justice Earl Warren was drafted by President Johnson. Then the Warren commission hastily assembled.

One principal unspecified purpose of the commission was to discredit, quickly, unfounded speculation and rumor. The other, specified purpose was quickly to find and publish the whole truth about the assassination of the President and the killing of the alleged assassin, Oswald. Edward V. Epstein and Mark Lane, critics of the commission, assert plausibly that both purposes could not be achieved if any principal speculation and rumor was true.

**AFTER TEN MONTHS** and the hearing of 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits the commission reported its findings that:

1. Oswald acting alone without any accomplice or co-conspirator fired three shots from the sixth floor of the book depository above and behind the President.
2. The three shots were aimed and fired from an Ital-

least one other. Although Epstein purports to criticize only the composition and procedures of the commission, the non-professional reader will be more interested in the criticism of the findings.

In this area both Epstein's "Inquest" and Lane's "Rush to Judgment" come directly to the point, relying upon the evidence heard by the commission and the FBI summary report and supplemental report. On the pivotal finding of the commission that the bullet from the same shot penetrated the body of the President and of Governor Connally (a finding required by the established short time between two wounds of the President and the comparatively slow firing rate of the "Italian" rifle), Epstein and Lane quote the conflict be-

lan bolt action rifle within a span of 4.8 to about 7-plus seconds; a maximum of 5.6 seconds elapsed between the two wounds of President Kennedy.

3. The same bullet from one shot first struck the President near the base of the back of the neck slightly to the right of the spine, passed through his body, then passed through Governor Connally's chest and wrist.

4. One bullet struck the President in back of the skull, exiting on the right side, breaking into fragments, causing death.

5. Oswald acting alone without any accomplice or co-conspirator killed Officer Tippit with a revolver seized in Oswald's possession at the time of his capture at the Texas theater.

6. Jack Ruby, acting alone without any accomplice or co-conspirator shot and killed Oswald.

**EPSTEIN AND LANE**, in essence, challenge the sufficiency of the evidence that Oswald was a lone assassin. Epstein is careful not to assert that there was another assassin. But he implies clearly that probably there was at

we quote the FBI reports of the autopsy findings and the findings of the commission. Epstein and Lane both make the startling suggestion that the autopsy report on the nature and location of President Kennedy's wounds was altered. The quoted FBI reports stated:

"Medical examination of the President's body revealed that one of the bullets had entered

just below his shoulder to the right of the spinal column at an angle of 45 to 60 degrees downward, that there was no point of exit and that the bullet was not in the body." (Report, December 9, 1963)

"Medical examination of the President's body had revealed that the bullet which entered his back had penetrated to a distance of less than a finger length." (Supplemental Report, January 13, 1964)

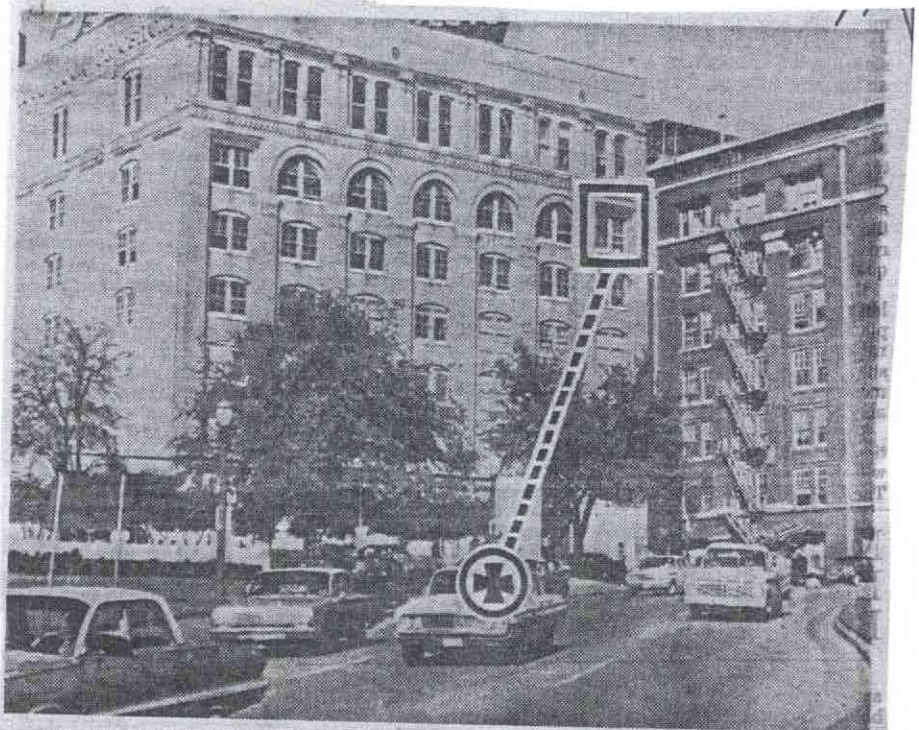
NEVERTHELESS the Commission found in part:

Seconds later shots sounded in rapid succession. The President's hands moved to his neck. He appeared to stiffen momentarily and lurch slightly forward in his seat. A bullet had entered the base of the back of his neck slightly to the right of the spine. It traveled downward and exited from the front of the neck, causing a nick in the left lower portion of the knot in the President's necktie. Before the shooting started, Governor Connally had been facing toward the crowd on the right. He started to turn toward the left and suddenly felt a blow on his back. The governor had been hit by a bullet which entered at the extreme right

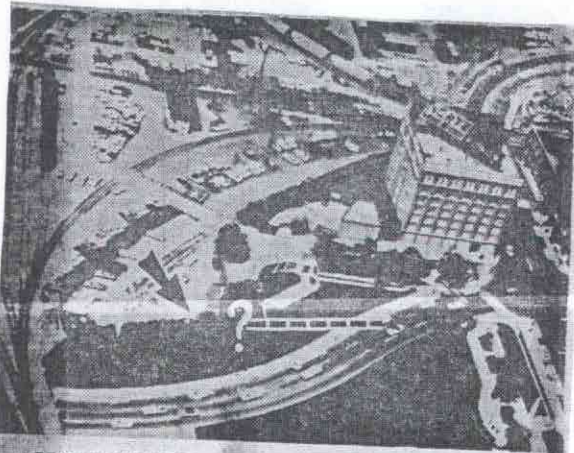
side of his back at a point below his right armpit. The bullet traveled through his chest in a downward and forward direction, exited below his right nipple, passed through his right wrist which had been in his lap, and then caused a wound to his left thigh. The force of the bullet's impact appeared to spin the governor to his right, and Mrs. Connally pulled him down into her lap. Another bullet then struck

President Kennedy in the rear portion of his head, causing a massive and fatal wound. The President fell to the left into Mrs. Kennedy's lap."

EPSTEIN AND LANE imply that the FBI report was an accurate report of the wounds; that the published Commission exhibits, the FBI photographs of President Kennedy's bloody shirt and coat, and the pathologist's diagram



WERE THE ASSASSINATION SHOTS fired from this building? This photograph, widely accepted as an accurate representation at the time of President Kennedy's murder, is now being challenged by writers who have carefully studied the Warren Commission Report.



MANY WITNESSES TO THE MURDER were certain that the shots came from in front of the President's car. They ran toward this park area (arrow) where an assassin might have concealed himself behind a wooden fence (hidden by trees), fired somewhat as indicated, then escaped through the crowded parking lot.

ble evidence and arguments are in. The sincerity and honesty of the Warren Commission should not be doubted. A discussion of its organization and findings is inevitable in a free society.

A book on this subject may be published in hope of monetary reward, because of passion, in response to a sense of public duty, a desire to be im-



portant or for other reasons. The reader must judge the book and the reason.

The Warren Commission, under extreme difficulties, impressively opened the case for its conclusions. Now, undoubtedly the critics will have a public hearing. But it would be a mistake to reach a conclusion before the answering arguments are in.

It is significant that no complaints concerning the findings of the Commission have come from the directly concerned Kennedy family.