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Lee Harvey Oswald; Beyond Legal Doubt?

THE OSWALD AFFAIR. by
Leo Sauvage (World, \$6.95.)

Reviewed By
JAMES LEHRER

"The Oswald Affair" may well be the toughest book thus far written on the assassination of President Kennedy.

It's toughness comes not only from author Leo Sauvage's healthy swats at the competency of Dallas law enforcement, the FBI, and the Warren Commission, but also from the jarring effect it may have on one's "hush-the-matter's-closed" peace of mind.

Sauvage, American correspondent for the French publication Le Figaro, states flatly that the Warren Commission did not prove beyond a reasonable doubt—or any other kind of doubt—that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin of President Kennedy.

And that's it. He's peddling nothing else.

NASTY REMARKS

He takes a painstaking, detailed look at the Warren Report and, using the Commission's own evidence, shows that it does not support the report's final conclusions.

Stuck in between this excellent reporting job, are several truly nasty remarks about some people involved in the investigation. This begins with the members of the Warren Commission and works down through J. Edgar Hoover and his boys and finally to Dallas—no, not all of Dallas as has been the case in some critiques, just those folks responsible for investigating violations of the law.

District Attorney Henry Wade

is his favorite target, although former Police Chief Jesse Curry and Homicide Captain Will Fritz get their share of whacks.

Some of his cracks are childish and the obvious result of anger rather than reason—but not all of them.

And even if one wishes to castigate Sauvage for them and rush to the defense of Wade, et al, these asides do not invalidate the author's over-all points.

Coming as it does on the heels of Mark Lane's "Rush to Judgment" and Edward Jay Epstein's "Inquest," two other critical looks at the Warren Commission and its findings, "The Oswald Affair" could get lost in the shuffle. That would be unfortunate.

THE OPEN QUESTIONS

All three are basically saying the same thing though. The cited discrepancies in the evidence—testimony as to the number of shots fired and the ability of Oswald to have fired them, the reliability of some witnesses compared to others, etc.—are similar in the three books.

They also make the same point—Sauvage in no uncertain terms—that the Warren Commission obviously went into its investigation with its mission to prove that Oswald, the "lone crazed killer," did it.

The obvious question is what happens next? Here we have three very critical looks at the Warren Commission's findings. Isn't somebody going to do something about it?

The answer is probably no—at least, not on their own. The FBI certainly isn't. After all it's on the record along with the

Warren Commission. It has a position to defend, too.

It would take Presidential or congressional action, most likely, to re-open the investigation of the assassination and this would occur only if the American people demand it, which they are unlikely to ever do.

But Sauvage's book should be read. The author is a Frenchman who has lived in the United States for 18 years. He is no kook. He is not advocating a specific theory that supports some wild international conspiracy. As a matter of fact, he spends a lot of time tearing to shreds some of the more far-out ones that have emanated from Europe, Thomas Buchanan, the John Birch Society folk and others.

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