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RESEARCH ON THE ASSASSINATION

Having been a subscriber of yours for about 2½ years, I have felt a constant and profound sense of indebtedness to you for the superior quality of your magazine, for the consistently perceptive, penetrating editorials which reflect both advanced thinking and the finest humanitarian traditions, and for the excellent articles

Devil's Advocate PAGE 30

Of all the critiques of the Warren commission report on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, few have been as impressively documented as one published this week by lawyer-author Mark Lane, who cast himself in the role of devil's advocate from the outset. Lane's new book, "Rush to Judgment," seems at first to shake almost every major conclusion of the Warren commission. But a full examination of Lane's critique also suggests that he himself has worked the same tricks of perspective that he imputes to the commission, and Newsweek's interviews with commission experts bear this out. Associate Editor Kenneth Auchincloss wrote the analysis of the latest dissent from a judgment that will still fascinate scholars 100 years from now.

THE WAR IN VIETNAM

Warren, to the staff's dismay, agreed "Rush to Judgment," at a quick reading, is an impressive document. Its style, except for some sarcastic sallies, rivals the Warren report itself for spare, dispassionate prose—for which Lane is heavily in debt to Benjamin Sonnenberg Jr., who edited the final version. Its massive substructure of research juts prominently into the text in the form of 4,526 footnotes. Yet once all this is said, the fact is that Lane has adopted the very trick of which he accuses the commission—carefully selecting the evidence to fit his case. It is perhaps more excusable for him—he is an advocate, not an impartial board of inquiry—but it is just as damaging to his assertions.

Bizarre Web: Throughout the book, Lane has taken advantage of the bizarre web of chance and coincidence that weaves through everyone's lives but stands revealed only when, as in the Dallas tragedy, a gigantic investigation digs into the tiniest crannies of history. Why, Lane asks darkly, did an automobile horn sound twice in the police headquarters basement—once when Oswald was brought out, and once just before Ruby stepped forward to fire his fatal shot? What was the significance of the rifle attack on witness Warren Reynolds and its astonishing aftermath? A few days after Reynolds told the FBI that the man he saw running from the Tippit murder scene did not seem to be...

Oswald, he was shot in the head without apparent motive. An arrest was made, but the suspect was released when his alibi was supported by Nancy Jane Mooney, a stripper who once worked at Ruby's nightclub. Miss Mooney herself was arrested eight days later for disturbing the peace. Two hours after being jailed, she was found hanged in her cell and her death was ruled a suicide. The Warren report and testimony, thanks to its very thoroughness, contains plenty of the makings for tales of conspiracy—and Lane makes use of them all. But despite its flaws and its overreaching, Lane's book deserves a reading, albeit a critical one. The Kennedy assassination was one of those epochal events that will command attention and debate for many years to come. If there are major flaws in the commission's work, doubts now scattered will only congeal in the course of time into widespread suspicion that this notorious murder was never fully solved. Better that the doubts should be resolved promptly—in a confrontation of Lane's one-sided but exhaustive case for the defense, with the voluminous record of the commission's own findings. Lane believes the final failure of the commission to be that it has prepared a fertile ground for the cultivation of rumor and speculation. His book, at the least, will put that proposition to the test.

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