

Case Closed but JFK Assassination

NEW YORK (AP)—To many persons, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy still remains an absorbing mystery, an incredibly complex (and potentially lucrative) detective story in which the last chapter is yet to be written.

The ghost walks, despite the fact that the commission headed

by Chief Justice Earl Warren investigated the case for 10 months, examined mountains of subjective and objective evidence, and then issued a report containing these principal conclusions:

Lee Harvey Oswald fired the rifle that killed Kennedy and wounded Texas Gov. John Con-

nally, shooting from a window position behind the car in which they were riding;

Oswald acted alone from motives unknown. No foreign or domestic conspiracy brought about the assassination;

Oswald was not acquainted with Jack Ruby, the Dallas nightclub operator, who shot him to death two days later outside the Dallas Police and Courts building.

The Warren Commission issued its report Sept. 24, 1964, officially closing the case.

Since then, however, doubts have been expressed by lawyers, writers and at least one historian. Books challenging the commission's over-all conclusions, and questioning the subsidiary findings on which they were based, regularly come off the presses.

The latest's "Rush to Judgment," by attorney Mark Lane.

Lane says he became involved in the case in response to a request from Mrs. Marguerite Os-

wald who said to him in December 1963, "Will you be my son's lawyer before the Warren Commission?"

Lane writes that he interviewed numerous persons who, in his judgment, had important information about the assassination but were not called to testify before the commission.

Why? He states the core of his contention in the words, "I believe that . . . the report of the President's commission . . . is less a report than a brief for the prosecution. Oswald was the accused. The evidence against him was magnified, while that in his favor was depreciated, misrepresented or ignored."

Elsewhere, Lane contends that the Warren report was designed mainly to be a kind of tranquilizer for the nation, to assure millions of Americans that no conspiracy accounted for Kennedy's assassination.

He wrote ". . . and such an effort could be successful only if the commission found that the lone assassin had been apprehended. A finding indicating that unknown assassins were still at large would have offered little assurance."

Similarly, in the book's foreword, the British historian, Prof. Hugh Trevor-Roper, wrote, "The writers of the report have selected such evidence as may seem to sustain their conclusion. They have chosen to ignore a great deal of evidence which does not support but even traverses that conclusion."

Of the many points raised in Lane's book, these are some of the major ones:

Direction of the shots that struck Kennedy and Connally—

The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald fired at the President's car from the sixth floor of the Texas Book Depository Building. The car was moving away from the window.

Lane points a finger at a grassy knoll toward which the car was approaching. He writes, "Witnesses heard shots come from the knoll. Witnesses saw smoke on the knoll. One witness even smelled gunpowder behind the fence."

This would suggest that Kennedy was caught in a cross-fire, with bullets striking him from behind and in front. The Warren report said, "In contrast to the testimony of the witnesses who heard and observed shots fired from the depository, the commission's investigation had disclosed no credible evidence

that any shots were fired from anywhere else."

Accuracy of the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle:

Lane quotes from a magazine article dated October 1964, which calls this rifle "... crudely made, poorly designed, dangerous and inaccurate . . . unhandy, unreliable on repeat shots, has safety design fault."

The Warren Report said "The various tests showed that the Mannlicher-Carcano was an accurate rifle and that the use of a four-power scope was a substantial aid to rapid, accurate firing."

The question of fingerprints on the rifle:

Lane wrote, "Asked specifically about the existence of a palm print on the weapon (Sebastian) Latona (an FBI expert) replied that when he conducted his examination of the weapon at the FBI laboratory he found no trace of one."

The Warren Report said "The Dallas police developed by powder some faint ridge formations on the metal magazine . . . the faint ridge formations were insufficient for purposes of effecting an identification, but the latent palm print was identified as the right palm of Lee Harvey Oswald."

And so on, through the maze of testimony given by expert and by lay witnesses, through the multiplicity of details surrounding the assassination, Lane raises questions.

Concluding his summation of the Warren Report, Lane wrote, "Hearsay evidence was freely admitted, while crucial eyewitness testimony was excluded. Opinions were sought and solemnly published while important facts were rejected, distorted or ignored. Dubious scientific tests were said to have proved that which no authentic test could do . . . Those few (witnesses) who challenged the government's case were often harassed and transformed for the time being into defendants . . . The secrecy which prevailed at the hearings was extended, in respect to many important details, for another 75 years."

All this is emphatically denied by Congressman Gerald Ford of Michigan, who was a member of the Warren Commission.

"The conclusions of the Warren Commission were valid when published and they are valid today," he said. "There is no new evidence that I am familiar with. Speculation, yes—but no new evidence."