

COOK
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Writer Suggests Oswald Had Help

Charging that not a single witness who appeared before the Warren Commission saw the slaying of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas the way the commission said it happened, a free lance writer this month joined a number of others in suggesting that more than one person fired more than

three shots at the president on Nov. 22, 1963.

He is Fred J. Cook, a veteran crime reporter whose 2-part series in The Nation Magazine on June 13 and June 20 is critical of the commission for its refusal to give more emphasis to testimony of

witnesses who saw a different version.

Cook does not question that fact that Oswald was guilty of his role, as some writers have done.

"To contend that Oswald was innocent is to endorse absurdity," he wrote. "But, in all logic, it is just as hard to believe that Oswald acted alone."

IN COOK'S FIRST installment he examines portions of evidence to refute the findings of the commission. In the second he points to testimony that he believes strengthens the version that more persons and more shots were involved in the assassination plot.

In his refutation of the Warren Commission version, Cook cites these portions of testimony and evidence:

1. Frames of a film taken of the president and Gov. John Connally during the time of the assassination show that it is unlikely the first bullet which hit Kennedy also hit Connally, as the commission said it did.

2. Gov. Connally's own testimony and that of his wife differ from the commission's findings.

3. The time it took for the best and fastest marksmen of the Federal Bureau of Investigation shows that it was unlikely Oswald was able to match the required speed and accuracy of the commission version—and with a faulty gun and

telescopic sight.

Cook bases most of his refutation on the 8-mm. film from a movie camera which had been operated by Abraham Zapruder. The camera exposed 18.3 frames per second, authorities determines. Fifteen frames during the crucial period were obstructed by a "Stemmons Freeway" sign.

COOK NOTED that at frame No. 210, when President Kennedy vanished behind the sign, he apparently was in good health and his hand was in a half wave.

In frame No. 225, when he emerges from behind the sign, his hands are beginning to jerk toward his throat, and he evidently has been shot, Cook wrote. By frame No. 231, the president is shown at the climax of his reaction to the first wounding of the shot.

"Both arms are raised to the shoulder level and hands are clutching at his throat as if trying to tear out some offending object, the spasmodic reaction of the suddenly wounded."

"Yet there, directly in front of him, facing forward with face still serene, is Governor Connally. It seems inconceivable that the body of this man, as the Warren Commission contends, has already been penetrated and furrowed by an almost lethal bullet.

"The Warren Commission was to conclude that the first shot to hit the President pierced the middle of his back on a line straight in from the shoulder joint, exited at high velocity from his throat slightly below the Adams apple, lunged into Governor Connally's back on the right side, exited below the right nipple, fractured his wrist and ploughed a furrow in his thigh.

"The Zapruder film clearly disputes this reconstruction of events."

HE ALSO USED the film sequence and time to point out that

at least two of the bullets would have to have been fired within a shorter interval than the best time recorded by the FBI marksmen—2.3 seconds.

Cook also pointed to testimony from various persons, including two Secret Service agents, that shots came rapidly—some saying the first two were almost like one, and others saying the last two shots were close together.

Cook also bore down on Governor Connally's testimony in which he said he thought the second shot hit him, adding: "It couldn't conceivably have been the first one because I heard the sound of the shot."

Cook also said experts knowledgeable in operation of the 6.5 mm. Mannlicher - Carcano rifle said they doubted it could have been fired so rapidly and accurately.

In his second article, Cook stresses that many witnesses said they heard shots in another direction, and that there were more than three. He pointed to the testimony of Mrs. Jean Hill, who said she heard shots from a knoll directly opposite her on the right-hand side of Elm Street.

COOK QUOTED her as saying she had complained to a Secret Service man about the 3-shots theory and the agent told her:

"Mrs. Hill, we were standing at the window and we heard more shots also, but we have three wounds and we have three bullets, three shots is all we are willing to say right now."

Cook adds this comment:

"This remark so perfectly expresses the official mentality that had botched the aftermath of tragedy in Dallas that it carries a ring of truth. To digress for a moment: every law-enforcement agency on the scene that day had disgraced itself . . ."

Cook notes that Oswald, before he was killed, told reporters he

was made the "patsy." The writer makes the suggestion that, since Oswald had a dislike for Connally, it could have been that someone, knowing of his hate and intentions, perhaps stimulating them, took advantage of the situation.

"THE POSSIBILITY remains that Oswald, though clearly involved and guilty, may still have been a decoy for others more intent than he on killing the president," wrote Cook. "Who would these others have been? There is no evidence on which to base a judgment since the very possibility was shunted aside, first by authorities in Dallas and later by the commission. The kind of deep-digging investigation that alone could have found the answer was never made."

Cook has been a regular contributor to The Nation for the last 10 years. He formerly was a writer for a New York newspaper. He is author of numerous books, including "The FBI Nobody Knows," "The Warfare State" and "The Corrupted Land."

The publication of Cook's series follows by a few weeks the release of a book, "Inquest," by Richard Jay Epstein, which also questions the work of the Warren Commission. The book suggests that the commission failed to prove that Oswald had no accomplice.